



Wine

BY MICHAEL COOPER

A cheeky little red

What's in a name? A selection of stunning new Kiwi wines.

Pinot noir, merlot, cabernet sauvignon and syrah are the grape variety names we look for when buying most New Zealand reds, because they offer valuable clues to each wine's basic flavour and style. But what do you make of a wine labelled simply as Tom, Goldie, Alluviale or The Quarry?

Before the fashion for labelling wines by their principal grape variety swept New Zealand in the 1970s, most table wines were given generic names, such as "burgundy" or "claret", which aped those of classic European wine regions. It was a marketing ploy to give New Zealand wines – then hard to sell – the benefit of association with more familiar and prestigious overseas names.

Today, there's a new wave of red wines marketed without varietal names. Mostly of high quality – some rank among the greatest wines in the land – these non-varietal labels give winemakers greater blending flexibility, together with the chance to create a really distinctive brand.

UNDER \$20

Cheeky Little Red 2007 ★★★

From Babich, this easy-drinking blend has a spicy, slightly earthy bouquet, suggestive of pinotage. Fresh and plummy, with gentle tannins and satisfying depth, it offers fine value at \$10.

Hihi Lock Stock and Many Barrels 2007

★★★★

This hearty Gisborne red was blended from equal portions of cabernet franc, pinotage, merlot and malbec, and barrel-matured. It is fruity, with strong, ripe, berryish, spicy flavours, showing considerable complexity. Priced well at \$18.

Milton Cosmo 2007 ★★★

Grown organically, this is a Gisborne blend of malbec, merlot, syrah and pinot noir (a quartet rarely found in the same bottle). Full-coloured, it is plummy,



spicy, minty and flavoursome, with some savoury complexity. \$20

Morton Estate White Label The Mercure 2007 ★★★

Grown in Hawke's Bay, this merlot-based blend is mouthfilling, with plenty of plummy, brambly flavour, showing a touch of complexity. \$19

Red Wire 2008 ★★★

From Paritua Vineyards, this is a Hawke's Bay blend of merlot, malbec, cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon, partly barrel-aged. Full-coloured and vibrantly fruity, it offers plenty of plummy, berryish flavour and gentle tannins, in a fresh, easy-drinking style. \$15

UNDER \$50

Clearview Two Pinnacles 2007 ★★★★★

Estate-grown at Te Awanga, in Hawke's Bay, this is a densely coloured blend of malbec (mostly) and cabernet sauvignon, matured in mostly French oak barriques. It's a real fruit bomb, with powerful, ripe, plummy, slightly chocolatey flavours. \$25

Crossroads Talisman 2007 ★★★★★

A blend of six varieties whose identities the winery delights in concealing (I see malbec as a prime suspect), this Hawke's Bay red is dark, concentrated and flowing, with berryish, very spicy flavours, deliciously smooth and rich. \$40

Newton Forrest Estate Stony Corner 2007 ★★★★★

This bold, upfront-styled Gimblett Gravels Hawke's Bay red was blended from cabernet sauvignon, merlot and malbec. It is powerful and deeply coloured, with a fragrant, spicy, sweetly wooded bouquet, cassis, plum and

spice flavours with a hint of coffee, and excellent concentration. \$30

OVER \$50

Destiny Bay Magna Praemia 2006

★★★★★

Grown on the south side of Waiheke Island by expat Americans Michael and Ann Spratt, this is a cabernet sauvignon-based blend, with smaller portions of merlot, malbec and cabernet franc, matured in French and American oak casks. Deeply coloured, lush and silky, with gentle tannins and lovely complexity, depth and harmony, it is the country's most expensive red. \$275

Mills Reef Elspeth One 2005 ★★★★★

The peak of the range, this Hawke's Bay red is a blend of merlot, cabernet franc, malbec, syrah and cabernet sauvignon, grown in the Gimblett Gravels. Deeply coloured, with a fragrant, complex bouquet, lovely concentration of ripe blackcurrant, spice, plum and nut flavours, and velvety tannins, it is a very "complete" wine. \$80

Wine of the week

Craggy Range Te Kahu 2007 ★★★★★ \$23

Powerful yet highly approachable, this merlot-based blend was grown in the Gimblett Gravels of Hawke's Bay. Dark and fragrant, it is silky-smooth, with concentrated blackcurrant, plum and spice flavours. A bargain at \$23.

