

## How to market at the top

by **DIANA DOBSON**

**M**IKE Spratt is connected. He's a published author of a book that remains one of PricewaterhouseCoopers bestsellers.

*Five Frogs on a Log* was co-written with Mark Feldman, Destiny Bay's distributor in the United States. Spratt and Feldman were partners in PwC and The Rubicon Group.

PwC alone has more than 5000 partners and 50,000 employees.

"We became celebrities of a sort within PwC because of that book," said Spratt.

Those partners – with disposable incomes most of us can only dream of – have been waiting not-so-patiently for a tasting. It's coming.

"We have a very limited production – at best 2000 cases a year so even if we were to serve only our former PwC partners and staff, we would not have enough wine."

Spratt said while it was difficult to break into the American market at the price they commanded for their wines, they were able to connect with networks and people who others "wouldn't even know how to contact".



*Mike Spratt skimps on nothing to produce his idea of the perfect wine.*

Destiny Bay Wines is also listed through a high-end collection club that specialises in "limited additions from special boutique wineries".

A small allocation sent to the US sold out within 48 hours.

Private tastings are planned for New

York, Chicago and Washington DC.

"Our passion is making a remarkable wine that honestly expresses this amazing island and unique vineyard site. This is how we respect our collectors."

He is sure the Spratt-Feldman partnership is as exceptional as their wines.

"This isn't something I was going to let just anyone distribute in the States. I fret about the wine until I know it is safely in someone's glass or cellar. It is one thing to make it on the other side of the world, but entirely another to get it from there to our collectors in pristine condition."

And they don't skimp on any part of the wine making or packaging. Their bottles are French, their capsules are Portuguese and they use only cork – the best in the world of course.

"I think it is an antiquated closure but that is what we have to do because of what our collectors expect."

If you want to peruse their website, you can only go so far before you have to register.

"This way we know and can provide personal attention to all our customers. We are not just open to anyone."

[www.destinybaywine.com](http://www.destinybaywine.com)

### IMPORTERS AND SUPPLIERS OF WINEMAKING AND BOTTLING EQUIPMENT



**Wine & Beverage Systems**

**AUCKLAND**  
Ph 09 834 8796  
Fax 09 834 2413  
Mobile 021 967 074

**NELSON**  
Ph/Fax 03 541 0650  
Mobile 021 445 105

[www.wbsystems.co.nz](http://www.wbsystems.co.nz)

### EcoGrape : SUSTAIN-ABILITY

#### ORGANIC & BIODYNAMIC VITICULTURE & HORTICULTURE

Expert advice from the practitioner to OWNZ standards

Supplying BIO-GRO and DEMETER accepted inputs & services

**ANDREAS WELTE B.SC.AG.**  
PO Box 64 Motueka, New Zealand  
**Tel** +64 3 527 8095  
**Fax** +64 3 527 8395  
**Email** [awelte@clear.net.nz](mailto:awelte@clear.net.nz)  
**Web** [www.ecogrape.com](http://www.ecogrape.com)

# Fate played a hand in destination of vineyard

by DIANA DOBSON

It could be said fate played a big hand in the creation of Destiny Bay Vineyards. Owners Mike and Ann Spratt were on holiday in New Zealand in 1998 – both had high-powered successful and busy careers – Mike as a business consultant and Ann as a micro-electronics engineer.

Almost reluctantly they had agreed to take a month's vacation.

"Ann wanted to go to Africa or New Zealand and I couldn't recall ever hearing about someone being eaten by a lion in New Zealand, so that was where we headed," said Spratt.

"It was such a wonderful trip that when we boarded the plane to head home we were already planning our next visit."

Back in the United States and once again fully immersed in their busy lifestyles they both agreed it was time for a big change.

"I wanted to retire, not die in the saddle," said Spratt. "I sold my business and Ann got out of high tech – our family thought we were nuts."

So before they packed up their California home, they headed to New Zealand for a second time. They knew that within a year



Waiheke Island was the paradise Mike and Ann Spratt had been seeking.

or so, they would be moving here for good.

"We wanted to revisit the country and see if it was still as good as we thought it was. While we travelled, we asked people we were staying with, many of whom had become good friends from our first trip, where they thought we should move to."

A friend in Dunedin told them to "move

to Waiheke Island and grow grapes".

"We had never heard of Waiheke nor considered growing grapes."

On visiting the "absolutely enchanting" island, the Spratts decided it was the paradise they had dreamed about.

"We hadn't thought about what we would do with our time, but you can only

## Trans Tasman Engineering Ltd

Importers of quality winemaking equipment

See us at Bragato, Auckland  
22/23/24 August  
Stand 39

<p><b>Europress</b> Open, Closed &amp; Dual Presses</p> 	<p><b>Socma</b> Belt Destemmers &amp; Stalk Removal</p> 
<p><b>Inoxpa</b> Centrifugal, Positive, Must and berry pumps</p> 	<p><b>Chemplant</b> Side entry wine tank agitators</p> 
<p><b>Romfil</b> Cross Flow Filters</p> 	<p><b>Romfil</b> Flotation for juice clarification</p> 
<p><b>McClain</b> Ozone sterilizing equipment</p> 	<p><b>Moog</b> Barrel Washing</p> 

**TRANS TASMAN ENGINEERING LTD**  
Phone (09) 636 2047 Email: ed@transtamanengineering.co.nz



# okatsune

Designed for professionals, Okatsune shears are ideal for repetitive, clean no-crush cuts, are renowned for long lasting sharpness and work with fluidity and ease.

Specialist blade types have been designed for debudding, propagation, fruit picking and thinning. Talk to us or your local Horticultural Specialist about which suits you best.



No.301 Curved Blade Shear-  
designed for easy harvesting without damage to fruit and excellent for debudding.



No.304 Pointed Tip Shear-  
harvesting, thinning and propagation, designed for stems and stalks.



No.306 Rounded Tip Blades-  
harvesting and propagation, designed for stem cutting.

Email:  
sales@allendalegp.co.nz



## Something distinctive – at \$489 a bottle

by **DIANA DOBSON**

**P**ERFECTION comes at a cost, but excellence is an achievement. Destiny Bay Wines proudly lay claim to the fact that they produce New Zealand's most expensive wine.

Their Destiny Bay Magna Praemia sells for US\$386 (approx \$489) and Mystae for US\$176 on the wine list at the uber cool Coi Restaurant in San Francisco – or US\$275 for the Magna Praemia bought off their collector website, if you can get it.

What started seven years ago as a rather casual idea has now become a serious operation.

"We wanted to make something we were proud of," said founder and owner

Mike Spratt. "Actually, we couldn't stand to make anything other than the best."

With that in mind, they set out to create something different – "something distinctive and very special".

And it's naturally expensive to produce.

"Handcrafted wine is unlike anything you have tasted but it costs a lot to produce – even at those heady prices, it is still probably costing me nearly as much to make it.

"This is high end and top quality – anyone who drinks it knows that."

Destiny Bay invests the equivalent of eight person days to harvest and sort each tonne of fruit.

The furthest vine is probably a three-wood shot away from Spratt's office above the winery.

The wine is sold to collectors. Spratt said it was a risky business aiming so high.

"New Zealand is not particularly well known for its red wines.

"There are a lot of critics and people in the United States who have some bias about New Zealand wine."

And they carry a lot of weight with others.

"Why create another big shock and awe wine with no balance, sophistication or nuance – something that has nothing distinctive about it."

Spratt said it would have been too easy to make a wine that screamed out.

"Making a wine that whispers is hard."

• *continued page 23*

play so much golf and read so many books – we needed a challenge."

Ann suggested that they plant "a few vines and make some wine". They found the ideal spot to build their home overlooking a north-facing valley. Their buying spree started with a few lots and quickly grew to the whole valley – all 20ha of it.

"Thank goodness we did it then," he said.

Their son heard about the plans and thought that maybe he would join them in a year or so. "He ended up almost on the next plane."

Sean completes the family team, the 35-year-old technology whiz pulls everything together.

"This is a long-term project to build something very special – a brand and a business for our family. And while we are involved in every aspect of the business, we are smart enough to know when to rely on the experts."

Visitors from the US were regular drop-ins at Destiny Bay and now, Spratt said they finally got why he and Ann were so determined to move. The family is all now New Zealand citizens and is quite convinced they have found the real paradise. 🍷

## THE WINE TANK SPECIALISTS



**Plunging Systems, Catwalks and Heat Exchangers  
GRAPE RECEIVAL BINS**

 **CrownSheetmetal**  
LIMITED

Phone 03 214 4817 | Fax 03 218 3354 | Mobile 021 276 9676 | Email [andrew@crownsheetmetal.co.nz](mailto:andrew@crownsheetmetal.co.nz)

## Plenty of sunshine warms expectations

As *New Zealand Grape Grower* goes to press in mid January, almost all of New Zealand is basking in warm, settled weather. Grape growers are crossing their fingers it will continue through to harvest, but all are realistic, there is still a way to go.

### NORTHLAND

[www.matakanawine.com](http://www.matakanawine.com)  
[www.waihekewine.com](http://www.waihekewine.com)  
[www.kumeuwinecountry.co.nz](http://www.kumeuwinecountry.co.nz)

Verasion is just beginning in the Far North and fingers are crossed the golden weather will continue.

Area representative Steve Nobilo said crop levels were looking moderate to good, with just a little "hen and chickening". Fruit set had been reasonable. There was a little powdery mildew but otherwise disease pressure was relatively low.

"It is probably our best January this side of the decade," he said. "Hot and dry – it's great."

But with his joy comes a word of caution. "If it continues to be settled, we are shaping up for a fantastic vintage, but it is early days yet, with two months at least before harvest. We're in the lap of the gods."

### GISBORNE

[www.gisbornewine.co.nz](http://www.gisbornewine.co.nz)

GISBORNE is basking in beautiful weather and fingers are crossed that it will stay.

GISBORNE Winegrowers president John Clarke said vineyards were looking pretty good with most growers happy and looking forward to an average to above-average season.

"There is the potential there for some good yields and quality," he said. "I don't think we will get the yields we got last year but there are certainly some very reasonable sorts of crops out there."

Disease control is well in hand and all are hopeful the kind weather will continue through into vintage.

### HAWKE'S BAY

[www.hawkesbaynz.com](http://www.hawkesbaynz.com)

It's a busy time of year in Hawke's Bay. From late January through till March, there are plenty of promotional events in vineyards around the district – all of which attract thousands. Regional chairman Roc McDonald said crops were looking pretty good for those unaffected by early frosts. The weather is beautiful at the moment.

"It only got unsettled after the Met Service said it was going to be settled."

The rain just before Christmas freshened things up nicely and there is now plenty of counting going on in the vineyards.

McDonald said new regulations surrounding casual labour would have everyone thinking carefully.

### WAIRARAPA

[www.wairarapawine.co.nz](http://www.wairarapawine.co.nz)

Everyone in Wairarapa is happy, according to Wellington Regional Winegrowers chairman Jeff Barber.

"Fruit set has been successful and the vine canopies are growing quickly. We are all raising wires and leaf-plucking like crazy."

The difficulty in finding contract workers has increased and Barber said it is a sign of things to come.

On a brighter note, he's predicting an early verasion by perhaps a week, with picking likely to start at the end of March – if the weather keeps its end of the bargain.

### NELSON

[www.wineart.co.nz](http://www.wineart.co.nz)

Nelson winegrowers are looking forward to a good harvest, according to regional representative Gary Marshall.

"Those who didn't get hit by the frosts are looking good. Fruit set, by and large, was very good and the crops were now looking outrageously healthy," he said.

Weather has been extremely warm so there is good growth. Trimming is ahead and leaf plucking is being done to open up bunches and get more air movement.

Marshall said he had seen no disease pressure at all and only time would tell if they got any botrytis.

### MARLBOROUGH

[www.wine-marlborough.co.nz](http://www.wine-marlborough.co.nz)

It's right back into it for Marlborough growers who took a little time off over the festive period, with leaf plucking, thinning, mowing and irrigation all priorities, according to board member Dominic Pecchenino.

"The bunches and vines are looking very good. I have heard some people feel there are a few shot berries, but overall, they are good." Disease pressure is high from powdery mildew but Pecchenino was confident everyone was on top of the problem.

With another hot dry period coming through, irrigation was very important.

### WAIPARA

[www.waiparawine.co.nz](http://www.waiparawine.co.nz)

It's like New Zealand summers used to be, according to Andrew Moore.

"We've had the best flowering in at least three or four years," he said. "There's been lots of warm weather."

He said Waipara had been basking in lots of 30-degree-plus days, with no rain.

"If we weren't affected by frosts early on, the vines have a good crop on them. Our Chardonnay is a little 'hen and chickenie', which could have come from the cooler weather early on. The Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Riesling are all looking good."

*continued page 24*

### • from page 21

They chose to grow red grape varieties because of Waiheke's climate of warm days and cool nights, which allows them to hang their grapes out long enough to develop high sugar levels and rich varietal flavours," said Spratt.

"In many respects, the terroir is more like Bordeaux than Bordeaux."

When they arrived in New Zealand for good, they wasted no time. Two days after getting off the plane, they were on their hands and knees planting the first vines in the ground at Destiny Bay.

Merlot went in first and over the next

three years they planted nearly 15,000 vines. Half is Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot and the balance in Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot varieties.

They had an "experimental harvest" in 2002 that produced 800kgs of Merlot that they processed in the garage.

"We'll never do that again."

The 2003 harvest yielded about four tonnes, and their first wines were released in late 2006.

The roots in young vines are shallow and the fruit delicate, so it has to be handled very carefully.

"We aim to create wines that are very

balanced, delicate and nuanced, with inviting aromas, smooth mouth feel and rich varietal flavours," said Spratt.

He described the 2004 and 2005 as much more full bodied, due to the maturity of the vines and advancements in wine making, but still elegant and nuanced.

Ninety per cent of their wines are reserved for collectors and customers in the United States.

As of 2006 they are at full production and don't have plans to expand by planting more vines.

So there will never be any question of bargain bin specials. 