

& FOR AGAINST



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FOR

Marlborough sauvignon blanc is distinctive due to the climate and soil types of the region. The fruit expression of these wine styles jump right out of the glass. Here in Marlborough, we have a number of different soil types, but they all create grapes that scream Marlborough. You don't get that anywhere else.

I believe a dry climate, warm summer days but cool nights create the best fruit for this wine. The cool temperatures leading into harvest extend the growing season, building intensity of flavour and retaining natural acidity in the wines.

In the North Island, sauvignon blanc doesn't have the same level of acidity and therefore the wines aren't as bright. Further south than Marlborough and the acidity levels are too high, and greener notes are predominant. For me, the ideal sauvignon blanc has a nice mix of herbal and tropical notes.

In terms of flavour, Marlborough sauvignon blanc is about grapefruit characters and citrus notes. Some styles capture ripe green characters and green olive and green pepper aromas, along with herbal and basil elements. There are others in the fruitier spectrum, with ripe peach and nectarine notes, through to full-blown passionfruit and ripe, tropical flavours.

I believe Australian sauvignon blanc has a different expression - the styles don't jump out of the glass as much as New Zealand styles. They are usually a riper expression with softer acidity, and while it doesn't all have to be about overt characters, I find Australian styles just aren't as bright.

There is definitely enough diversity across the varietal to keep people interested in sauvignon blanc. It has become my wine of choice as a greater range of styles has emerged. As winemakers, we have been exploring the sub-regions of Marlborough and experimenting with winemaking techniques. There's a focus on building structure in the wines and introducing subtle oak, rather than just relying on aroma. There is still so much scope for different styles, which is really exciting, especially for people who enjoy trying new wine styles.

To anyone who has turned their back on New Zealand sauvignon blanc, I would highly recommend food-matching. Sauvignon blanc is a food-friendly wine and a natural fit with seafood and modern cuisine. I love them for their structure and the fact you can enjoy them for every day occasions.

Marlborough sauvignon blanc has a special place in the wine world but Australia also produces this varietal. Two winemakers from either side of the ditch tell us why they love their own style.

AGAINST

I am totally in favour of sauvignon blanc. How could anyone serious about wine deny the wines of Sancerre, Pouilly-Fume, Graves or the dessert wines of Sauternes? I am even for the sauvignon blanc of Marlborough. Being from Nelson [in NZ], I grew up loathing the power and might from the other side of the mountains, but I accept sauvignon blanc and Marlborough have a special synergy and relationship. It's conquered the world and put the wines of New Zealand on the map.

I believe Marlborough is capable of making some of the very best sauvignon blanc in the world, but it has to observe the rules of quality and greatness that exist everywhere. Great wine comes from great grapes grown on great sites for great winemakers who are passionate and driven - not just to make money by filling container after container of beverage, but also to make wines with the qualities that all great wines share - personality, subtlety, uniqueness, complexity and longevity.

The better Marlborough producers are certainly working towards that and starting to evolve, but there is still room for others. There's a void in the New World for sauvignon blanc that offers something other than the Marlborough style template. As Australian producers, we are not harnessed by the wishes of powerbrokers wanting to fill supermarket shelves with wines under four quid. This hasn't helped to evolve, mature, polish and hone the raw prodigious talent that exists in Marlborough. We, however, can do whatever we want, and it's our role to do just that. Marlborough's success has left the door ajar for producers from elsewhere to fill a void left vacant for serious sauvignon.

Our own sauvignon blanc attempts to reflect our unique place on this earth and we are exploring all avenues of winemaking to achieve a different, exciting expression. In ours, we find smoke, gravel and flint notes, and acacia puncheons give a subtle honeysuckle character. Some years, we get guava and rockmelon, but we always maintain that herbal "sauvage" varietal character too. We don't pursue the full-on gooseberry and asparagus like some traditional Marlborough styles, we prefer texture and mouthfeel, which is vital to sauvignon blanc's role as a food servant. It is utter madness to attempt to copy Marlborough, or any region for that matter - all wine roads lead to the truth that is terroir.



MICHAEL GLOVER
Bannockburn Vineyards, Victoria

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