

One thing became blindingly obvious when our winning wines were announced, and that is our little land of the long white cloud can produce great gewürztraminer pretty much everywhere. With wines hailing from Auckland, Gisborne, Marlborough, Nelson and North Canterbury in our Top 12 and some solid, High Bronze awarded examples from Hawke's Bay and Central Otago, we can safely claim to be an equal opportunities piece of gewürz-friendly ground here in Godzone.

There are clear aristocrats in the field, however. When companies such as Lawson's Dry Hills and Pegasus Bay succeed in placing not one but two separate wines each in our Top 12, that's a clear flag that they're seriously flash at guiding great gewürztraminer into the bottle at multiple price points. What's the secret to

their success? For Marcus Wright, long-time winemaker at Lawson's Dry Hills, it's all about the vineyard. "It's very cliched, but it's the single most important factor," he

says. Their gewürztraminer comes from their Home block around the winery and Peter and Julie Woodward's block a few hundred metres down the road.

"Both have heavy clay soils which provide lovely weight and mouthfeel without the need for loads of residual sugar to fill the mid-palate. Our viticulturist Mark Ludemann seems to be able to get the most out of any block he works with, and the quality of fruit off these blocks has steadily increased over the past decade."

## WOW FACTOR

In terms of winemaking, Marcus is all about making an impact rather than chasing pure delicate fruit expression. "We add complexity through fermenting the pressings with wild yeast in barrel and blending this portion of wine back before bottling. The Pioneer, first made in 2009, is all wild in barrel and is quite different to any other local example – it's rich, round and has amazing depth and mouthfeel. Both our wines age really well despite breaking the traditional rules around acidity and pH (both are low acid and high pH) and our Estate Gewürztraminer from 2007 is just starting to peak!"

Mat Donaldson of Pegasus Bay explains gewürztraminer is relatively new to their stable, having released their first in 2007. "It's totally different to all the other varieties we do," he says. "We were inspired by Cloudy Bay's gewürz, and when James Healy was still there, he gave us his recipe and we've been following it ever since. Our secret is getting the fruit really ripe and bringing in some botrytis for extra richness. That results in higher alcohol, which is great because gewürztraminer is so low in acidity, the alcohol actually gives it the prickle and texture it needs. We also use the pressings (which we don't do for any other varieties), because they inject structure – plus we do a full solids fermentation in old oak puncheons and that gives it a bit of funk and an extra dimension. You have to go with the flow with gewürz and we'll change each style according to what each vintage gives us."

*"You have to go with the flow; we'll change each style according to what each vintage gives us"*

Gewürztraminer is a style so many of us say we love, and yet New Zealanders aren't buying enough of it, which means it is a variety on the

decline. Perhaps it's because it's hard to pronounce (gah-wertz-trah-meener)? Or we tend to go for safe, dependable options like sauvignon or chardonnay when we're at the supermarket – either way, we go gaga over gewürztraminer here at *Dish* and implore you to sip your way through the most delicious dozen in the land...



Marcus Wright

## 1 Lawson's Dry Hills The Pioneer Marlborough Gewürztraminer 2016 (\$30)

★★★★★ Gold Medal

The second our judges put this wine to their lips, there were sighs of delight. "I love how focused, flavoursome, concentrated and multi-layered this gewürztraminer is," gushed Yvonne, while Jo agreed it was nicely styled, showing old world spice and floral complexity and buckets of stonefruit "It's big, rich and generous – just what good gewürz should be," she added. Cameron noted how exotic and bold and beautifully balanced in every department this wine is. "So well made, I could drink this all day" he said.

## 2 Villa Maria Single Vineyard Ihumatao Gewürztraminer 2017 (\$29.99)

★★★★★ Gold Medal

Grown in a sheltered volcanic basin on the edge of Manukau Harbour, this wine has developed an enviable reputation. "This vintage is a great example of aromatics being subtle, elevated yet elegant and understated" noted Yvonne. "The Turkish delight perfume, gorgeous ginger notes and soft spices saturate through onto the palate, leaving a



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# TOP OF THE TASTING

juicy, beautifully balanced, slippery texture and long, exotic finish." Jo and Cameron praised the lychee syrup and rosewater notes alongside citrus and lemonade layers. "The balance is spot-on," Jo added.

## 3 Wairau River Marlborough Gewürztraminer 2017 (\$25)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

The Rose family sure know how to inject roses into their gewürz! "Such a lovely palate, spicy, fruity, energised and exotic," said Cameron, while Yvonne was seduced by the floral aromas and frisky texture. Jo correctly identified it as a Marlborough example. "I really like the palate; it's clean, bright and slippery, with some judicious sweetness and an attractive lightness that's very appealing."

## 4 Waimea Nelson Gewürztraminer 2017 (\$21)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

"Sniffing this wine is like someone poured honey, white pepper and ginger herbal tea into Nana's makeup purse," Yvonne declared. "This should be a go-to gewürz." Cameron felt it had great fruit concentration and layers of spice, while Jo agreed it was really well made and creamy-textured to finish.

## 5 Pegasus Bay Waipara Gewürztraminer 2016 (\$30)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

This wine had our judges reaching for the adjectives. "Golden in the glass, incredibly rich and luscious and edged with gingersnap,

lychee syrup and fragrant spices" said Yvonne. Cameron loved how fruity, ripe, floral and expressive it was. A hint of honeysuckle on the finish completes the picture.

## 6 Lawson's Dry Hills Marlborough Gewürztraminer 2016 (\$25)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

Lawson's do it again. While lovely on the nose, this gewürztraminer reveals far more on the palate. "I like the attractive, aged barrel character and rich bouquet. It has so much complexity and interest," said Jo. "Highly complex, saucy and spicy, and boasting buckets of personality," added Yvonne.

## 7 Main Divide North Canterbury Gewürztraminer 2016 (\$20.99)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

Named after the Southern Alps which form the South Island's spine, Main Divide started life as a sister-brand to Pegasus Bay, as a second-tier, but now sits up front with its sibling. "Has good balance, freshness and fruit focus," said Jo. Yvonne loved the classic musky aromas and creamy, rich macadamia notes, while Cameron enjoyed the spicy edge, solid fruit concentration and peppery finish.

## 8 Blackenbrook Nelson Gewürztraminer 2017 (\$25)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

Daniel and Ursula Schwarzenbach have an enviable track record with gewürztraminer and this vintage is no exception. "It's very varietal, with good solid white nectarine,

peach and sweet apple characters. Very easy to drink," said Cameron. Yvonne enthused, "The nose is very sexy. I love the Turkish delight, ginger and cardamom characters and its luscious textures."

## 9 Spy Valley Handpicked Single Vineyard Marlborough Gewürztraminer 2017 (\$22)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

Our judges loved this wine's delicacy, subtlety and sophistication on the nose, yet overdelivery on the palate. "Very fruity with obvious spices on the palate, and an intensely flavourful mouthfeel," noted Cameron. "Ripe, punchy pineapple, sweet apricot, apple and a pinch of ginger; very well made," he added.

## 10 Torlesse Omihi Road Waipara Gewürztraminer 2014 (\$25)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

"So bright, aromatic and loaded with lychee, citrus zest and musky spices," Yvonne noted. Cameron added, "It's really well made, with white fleshed peach, white pepper, fresh herb notes and a deceptively long finish." Despite being a couple of years older than most entries, this wine is still seriously fresh with loads of flavour, slippery texture and very good length. Maturing beautifully.

## 11 Soljans Estate Gisborne Gewürztraminer 2017 (\$19)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

An instant hit with Jo: "This wine has great glossy colour, it's bright and ripe with spicy fruit, and really fresh acidity." Yvonne and Cameron agreed, noting the "super-luscious lychee, ginger and spice at the fore, loads of fresh fruit, white pepper and lovely bruised apple complexity.

## 12 Hihi Gizzy Gisborne Gewürz 2014 (\$20)

★★★★★ *Silver Medal*

"I really like this toasty, roasty style with intriguing layers of complex botrytis, characters of beeswax, ginger and spice mixed with tropical fruit characters," said Yvonne. Jo seconded that: "Lots of textures, extremely satisfying", adding "It's highly floral, honeyed, fresh and has elements of cooked apple, clove and a touch of candy."



LOOK FOR THE DISH TASTING PANEL SELECTION STICKER, WHICH CAN BE WORN BY OUR TOP WINES.