

SERESIN

New Zealand: Mainly Marlborough by Joe Czerwinski
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By Joe Czerwinski | March 31, 2020

Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc is what put New Zealand on the world stage, and it still accounts for the vast majority of the country's production. According to NZ Winegrowers latest annual report, Marlborough grows approximately three-fourths of New Zealand's wine grapes, and about three-fourths of the country's wine grapes are Sauvignon Blanc. Measured by volume, Sauvignon Blanc accounted for 86% of New Zealand wine exports in 2019.

While there is no denying the wine's commercial success—and I point out some good examples in this report—the category as a whole, from the standpoint of a wine critic, is not the most exciting. The large-scale blends—heavily cropped, recipe-made with selected yeasts in huge stainless-steel tank farms—are often technically correct, refreshing and superficially pleasing beverages, but too many are at the same time soulless, devoid of individuality and downright boring.

Enough negativity. The good news for consumers is that more and more producers are realizing this and are experimenting with small-lot vinification, regional expression and barrel fermentation (and aging), among other techniques, to highlight special terroirs or build in additional complexity.



The rich, silty soils of Marlborough's Dillons Point subregion, in close proximity to the sea, yield flamboyant, thiol-rich Sauvignon Blanc



Also, on the plus side, the 2019 vintage was naturally lower-yielding, thanks to cool weather at flowering and an exceptionally dry summer. Many of the wines do show more concentration and richer textures than the rain-plagued 2018s, and more ripeness than the cool 2017s.

For readers willing to venture beyond Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough produces an ever-increasing diversity of wines, including Chardonnay (experiencing a domestic resurgence), Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Grüner Veltliner and Albariño, among other white wines. Reds are mainly Pinot Noir, although I include a notable Lagrein in this report, and there is the occasional Syrah or Merlot. Herzog has made something of a name for itself in this realm, growing such exotica as Tempranillo and Montepulciano. I expect the 2019 reds will be something special, and I plan to visit New Zealand early next year to report on them.

All of these reviews are based on wines tasted at home during the first quarter of 2020, from samples either provided by the wineries via NZ Winegrowers or via their American importers.



Wine Advocate Reviews by Joe Czerwinski

2016 Seresin Marama Sauvignon Blanc

The current release of Seresin's barrel-fermented luxe Sauvignon Blanc, the 2016 Marama almost exactly matches the color of my 14-karat gold wedding band. Exotic notes of honey, dried spices, ripe peaches and clementines emerge from the glass, while the wine is expansive on the palate, showing ample density, richness and concentration without seeming heavy at all. The finish is fine and long, tinged with hints of mocha and cit

2020-2023 **(92 points)**

2016 Seresin Chardonnay Reserve

Toasty and rich but still fresh, Seresin's 2016 Chardonnay Reserve is a terrific effort. Pain grillé joins ripe peach and lemon curd on the nose, while the palate is full-bodied without being overly weighty, balancing size and refreshment in an ideal manner. Capping things off is a long, lingering finish that delivers nuances of cinnamon, clove, stone fruit and citrus. The 15% new oak is noticeable but in balance with the concentrated fruit. Drink this over the next few years.

2020-2023 **(93 points)**

2018 Seresin Leah Pinot Noir

The Seresin Pinot Noir style tends to emphasize elegance and red fruit, and the 2018 Leah Pinot Noir follows along in the same vein. Pinches of cinnamon and clove accent delicate aromas of dusty red raspberries on the nose, while the palate is fine and medium-bodied, with silky tannins that linger gently on the finish.

2020-2024 **(90 points)**