Winemaker: Miles Dinneen
Generation: 1st

MATAHIWI
ESTATE

ME Sauvignon Blanc Wairarapa

Full of tropical New Zealand fruit and plenty of zing, this classic Sauvignon Blanc hails from the cool yet sun-drenched Ruamahaunga River valley. A complex nose of passion fruit, gooseberry, and fresh herbs paves the way to a vibrant, concentrated palate of citrus grove and green peach. A perfectly dry, mineral-driven finish rounds out the experience. 91 pts James Suckling

WINEMAKER BIOGRAPHY

With their mantra of making friendly, crowd-pleasing wines, owner Alistair Scott and winemaker Miles Dinneen focus all their efforts on showcasing clean, streamlined fruit. While less known overseas, the Wairarapa district is lauded in New Zealand for its cool climate Pinot Noir and whites made in a vibrant, tropical style.

ENOLOGIST

Karina Southey

TASTING NOTES

Color	Bright lemon with green highlights
Nose	Passion fruit, lime leaf, gooseberry, and fresh herbs
Palate	Crisp citrus and vibrant stone fruit
Finish	Clean, dry, and mineral-driven

VINEYARD & VINIFICATION

	12
Vineyard Location	Masterton, Wairarapa
Vineyard Size	70 ha
Varietals List	100% Sauvignon Blanc
Farming Practices	SWNZ Certified Sustainable; dry-farmed
Elevation	150 m
Soils	Alluvial river terraces and gravel, topped with light sandy loam
Maturation Summary	In Steel for 3 months and Bottled for 3 months
In Steel	3 months
Alcohol	12.5 %
Acidity	7.8 g/liter
Residual Sugar	2 g/liter
Annual Production	400,000 bottles

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MATAHIWI ESTATE

After a successful career overseas, Matahiwi founder Alistair Scott moved his family home to New Zealand to (in his case literally) throw down some roots. In 1998, having surveyed all the major winemaking zones - from Malborough to Martinborough - Alistair decided upon the vibrant but lesser known Wairarapa region, located in the southeast corner of the northern island. In the late 1800s, this district had been home to the first Pinot Noir ever planted in NZ, but following prohibition had largely fallen off the enological map. Helping to restore and elevate cool climate Pinot Noir here has, in fact, become incorporate to the estate's raison d'etre: "Matahiwi Estate is proud to be part of that revival and rebirth of winemaking in this special region - hence the totem of the phoenix on our labels." Hyper-focused on vine management, both enologist Karina Southey and chief winemaker Miles Dinneen remain integral to this process. In the case of Matahiwi's Pinot Noir, they have helped oversee the planting of no fewer than 8 different clones across 48 hectares, allowing for a remarkably wide range of flavor profiles and a staggered ripening window. While the region's soil is similar to Burgundy's and therefore well suited to PN, Matahiwi is also well-known for its quintessential Sauvignon Blanc, whose crowd-pleasing style they liken "to Oyster Bay, but a bit more tropical".

The estate's location also tells a big story: its 75 contiguous hectares are centered around an old riverbed which was lifted up by a massive 8.2 earthquake in 1855. (Mata means "raised" in Maori and hiwi is "plain"). The result was a baseline of free-draining gravel topped with light sandy loam which naturally curbs canopy density and also helps keep disease in check. Located at the northern end of the Ruamahanga River Valley, the vineyard is sheltered on all sides, including by the snowcapped Tararua Range; a set of coastal hills some 35 miles to the east. Despite all the natural barriers, wind remains a defining feature here as it does elsewhere in New Zealand – especially in the spring, when it can reduce flowering and lead to moderate yields. In addition, the natural water table is "ridiculously deep" and Matahiwi lies in a rain shadow that sees some of the North Island's lowest annual rainfall (800–1200 mm per year). Long story short, this cool, dry, semi-maritime clime is ideal for aromatic grape varieties such as Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc. The long, even-keeled ripening period allows for fully developed fruit and tannins while still preserving plenty of freshness and acidity.

REGION

WAIRARAPA

Although just one percent of New Zealand's wines are produced in the Wairarapa district, it can claim the country's highest percentage of small and independent producers, including Matahiwi. Viticulture here began in the 1880s, when Marie Zelie Beetham — the French wife of early settler William Beetham — brought Pinot Noir cuttings from her native Burgundy to their farm in the town of Masterton. She went on to produce what's widely considered to be New Zealand's first Pinot Noir vintage in 1897. Despite the region's early winemaking promise, however, the rise of the Temperance movement and the onset of Prohibition in the early 20th century saw viticulture all but disappear from the Wairarapa landscape.

It wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s that a new generation of growers returned to the region, replanting vineyards and laying the foundation for Wairarapa's wine industry as it's known today. Pinot Noir is once again a mainstay here – known for its complexity and elegance - along with Sauvignon Blanc and a handful of others. Located an hour's drive north of Wellington, just over the Rimatuka Hills, Wairarapa has three subregions: Opaki (aka Masterton, to the north), Gladstone (central), and Martinborough (south) all named after their main towns and differing slightly in elevation and soil types. Connecting the three is the Ruamahanga River, flowing from the Tararua mountain range and surrounded by the alluvial cliffs and terraces that lend Wairarapa much of its character.

MASTERTON

The northernmost of Wairarapa's three sub-regions, Masterton (also known by its Maori name Opaki) has a landscape dominated by the gorgeous Tararua Mountain Range, which protects this area from north-westerly winds and allows exposure to long, sunny summer days. This is one of the factors that contributes to the elegance of Masterton's reds and tropical vibrancy of its whites. In addition, the Ruamahanga river begins its journey to the rugged east coast in Masterton. Thanks to the wider, ancient riverbed, stony, free-draining soils are common and help promote racy, fruit forward characteristics in the wines. Some vineyards see higher clay content (adding viscosity) and others limestone, (underscoring acidity and ageability). Along with one of the Wairarapa's largest and best-known producers, Matahiwi, Masterton is home to a number of small vineyards that were all planted in the early 1990's.