



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT: Results Published from NZ Wine Rater's tasting of Sparkling, Rosé and Reds other than Pinot Noir – February 2022

DATE: 23rd March 2022

Local rosé wines have undergone a recent quality revolution. Not that many years ago much local rosé was insufferable, made from insufficiently ripe grapes and propped up with residual sweetness much like an insipid shandy.

How things have changed. Rising international demand has incentivised producers to improve their focus and the results are impressive.

Our top wine of the tasting scoring 96/100 (Exceptional) went to Quartz Reef Bendigo Pinot Rosé 2021. Several other rosé wines scored 93+ (Excellent) including the Waipara Hills Rosé 2021 from north Canterbury Pinot Noir and the Esk Valley Rosé 2021 based on Hawkes Bay Merlot. Both wines retail below NZ\$20 and illustrate just how improved this category is across a spectrum of varieties and regions. Unsurprisingly rosé exports are up to nearly 3% of volume from 0.5% a decade ago.

Sparkling wine is still a little over 1% of our export volume and is mainly a local phenomenon. Qualitatively our sparkling wines have also much improved with more elegance and finesse than they once did.

The past decade has seen plantings of New Zealand's fifth most popular variety Merlot reduced by 20%. Cabernet Sauvignon has fared worse, with a 60% reduction. Contradictorily this has had a positive effect on the quality of Bordeaux-style reds as the remaining producers have refined their product.

Syrah has the potential to make compelling, high-quality wines and two decades of perseverance by our top producers have paid off. Impressive examples were tasted from Marlborough to Martinborough and from Hawkes Bay to the far North. Nonetheless, the scale remains small. Syrah represents just 1% of our vineyard area.

A special mention to Gordon Russell and his team at Esk Valley who proved that as well as making excellent, affordable rosé they can also do it with more challenging thick-skinned red varieties as evidenced by this trio: Artisanal Malbec Merlot Cabernet 2019 RRP NZ\$25 (94/100), Artisanal Syrah 2019 RRP NZ\$25 (93/100), and Estate Cabernet Merlot Malbec 2020 RRP NZ\$20 (93/100). Bravo. Our tasting format is soon to change to meet the ever-changing market.

An announcement will be forthcoming on the website next month.

Steve Bennett MW & Lynnette Hudson.

steve@nzwinerater.com