



LIFE & STYLE

Fossil Ridge excels in setting and wines



Last updated 11:36 08/02/2011

New Zealand has many delightful vineyards. Some have magnificent facilities, some are in stunning locations and in others, the natural beauty has been enhanced by sympathetic development.

Fossil Ridge's vineyard, cellar door and cafe are located at the end of Hart Rd in the Richmond foothills, and the premises fall firmly into the last category.

The tasting room and cafe is perched on the edge of a pond that supports a range of wildlife, and is surrounded by little dining areas.

Added to this are delightful decks that give space to sample the wines and enjoy super food in the shade.

Of course, they also sell wine. Fossil Ridge has six wines available. You can taste them by buying a tasting plate that includes four wines, a bowl of nuts and a bowl of estate-grown olives.

Aside from the rose, Fossil Ridge wines are aged before they are released, so you get to enjoy wines that have developed complexities that only come from age.

As an example, its 2007 riesling (\$20) has fresh citrus aromas with a hint of richness in the background, while the flavours are packed with zesty lemon citrus flavours held together with powdery minerality.

The wine is just starting to show deep honey characters, and there is enough fruit and acidity to ensure it will continue to live for a long time yet.

Unlike many others on the market, Fossil Ridge 2010 pinot noir rose (\$22.50) is made in a dry style, so it works exceptionally well with food. With a delicate pale salmon pink colour and crisp, clean raspberry and red berryfruit flavours this is vibrant and fresh, rather than sweet and creamy.

When you visit Fossil Ridge you can't help but notice the manicured vineyards. The huge effort that goes into keeping the vineyards in the best possible condition is one reason owners Darryl and Tranja Fry are able to produce a very good wine from the very fickle gewurztraminer grape.

The current release is 2008 (\$22.50) and everything about this wine reflects the effort in the vineyard – from the sparkling pale lemon gold colour with a blush of pink to the sweet Turkish delight and rose petal aromas, followed by flavours of Turkish delight and slightly honeyed lychees, and a lush texture. It is a delightful anytime wine.

This weekend, Fossil Ridge is clearing out some back vintages it found tucked away at the back of the cellar.

I tried both of these wines recently, and both come with my stamp of approval.

The 2003 pinot noir (\$65 for six bottles) is so easy to drink, but packed with flavour and character and a great example of how pinot changes with a bit of age, while the 2004 chardonnay (\$65 for six bottles) is bright and surprisingly fresh, with balanced oak and layers of fruit flavours. Look for the mandarin zing in the finish.

Fossil Ridge is open from Wednesday to Sunday each week, but will be closed on Waitangi Day.

I have been drinking

Neudorf 2010 Nelson chardonnay, \$29 at the cellar door.

This used to be the little brother to the renowned Neudorf Moutere chardonnay, but it now stands as a fantastic wine in its own right. Rather than having layers of flavour, the characters in this wine are already in complete harmony.

The powdery mineral texture, flavours of subtle peach with a twist of lemon and delicate toasty oak come together to make a complete wine. This is another delight from Neudorf Vineyards.

Woollaston Estates 2010 pinot gris, about \$20. Made in the same very popular elegant style Woollaston has produced for years, this is off-dry and packed with flavour – ripe pears, a touch of ginger, soft nectarine and plenty of stony minerality. A beautiful pinot gris with flavour and character.

- The Nelson Mail