

The full NELSON

4 TOP TASTES

Greenhough Hope Vineyard Nelson Riesling 2010 \$22

★★★★½

Deliciously crisp, complex aromas of oatmeal, beeswax and chalky minerality which lead the way to a burst of vibrant apple and citrus before leaving a long, delicately textural finish. Gorgeous with five-spice squid and Asian slaw. www.greenhough.co.nz



Seifried Nelson Gruner Veltliner 2011 \$22 ★★★★★

This wine has talc, lime and wildflower aromas and is dry in the mouth, but is also incredibly lush and punchy, finishing with taut acidity and complex mineral notes. A superb example of a signature Austrian style which clearly thrives in our Antipodean climate. www.seifried.co.nz



I REMEMBER deciding Nelson had the "cool factor" when Courtney Love changed the opening lyrics to her song *Rock Star* and belted out "When I went to school... at Nelson College for Girls..." with a lopsided, lipstick-smear on stage at the Big Day Out in 1995.

Before then the only thing I'd known about the region was that it was sunny and hippies went there to pick apples and buy patchwork-leather pants and, until I began working in wine, the region just dropped off my radar.

But in 2008 I was given a magazine assignment to write about the newly built Woollaston winery, a gravity-fed architectural masterpiece out in Mahana.

I drove into Nelson on a quint-inducingly sunny day and immediately fell jaw-to-the-floor in love with the place.

Everything about it sparkles, including — I found on a recent trip back — a couple of absolutely lovely methode-traditionnelle styles.

The Kaimira "June" Nelson Methode Traditionnelle 2007 (\$26, four stars) has a back label which reads "don't read about it — drink it!" — and drink it you should because its fine bead and persistent mousse lead the way to lemon and grapefruit pith aromas and a rich, toasty, creamy mouthfeel. Two years resting on lees gives it delicious length of flavour and I love it.

Likewise, the new Woollaston "Mahana" Methode Traditionnelle NV (\$25, four-and-a-half stars) is an elegant 50/50 blend of chardonnay and pinot noir grown on Moutere Clay soils in the Upper Moutere region. Aromas of brioche, almonds, soft lemon and toasty notes, followed by a smooth, creamy finish make this a new favourite.

"My ambition is to produce an organic, biodynamic blanc de noirs' style, to release around 2013," says Philip Woollaston. Blanc de noirs is a sparkling white wine made solely from pinot noir, but Nelson pinot will have to wait for another column.

Today I'm all about Nelson riesling, and the Seifried family (stalwarts of the Nelson scene) are absolutely fizzing because each of their three rieslings (the Seifried Winemakers Collection "Sweet Agnes" Riesling 2011, Seifried Nelson Riesling 2011, and "Old Coach Road" Riesling 2011) were all awarded gold medals at the New Zealand International Wine Show last month. A rare feat for a small company and it speaks of the dedication of Austrian-born Hermann Seifried, patriarch of the family who began growing riesling in Nelson 38 years ago.

"The 2011 harvest arrived earlier than usual, and at full steam," winemaker Chris Seifried says.

"It was short and intense, with a small amount of rain near the end. Fortunately, the fruit came in

Yvonne Lorkin



"The 2011 harvest arrived earlier than usual, and at full steam. It was short and intense, with a small amount of rain near the end."

Chris Seifried, winemaker

clean with beautifully balanced fruit acid, making the job in the winery more a matter of retaining what we already had, rather than trying to work our magic.

"To receive such recognition for a variety we enjoy so much ourselves gives the team a great buzz."

Hermann's daughter Anna is the company's sales manager and she's thrilled with the recognition.

"With all three of these brands widely available around the country we are hopeful that even more consumers will venture back to the world of riesling to experience why it's such an interesting and versatile variety."

Charging through a raft of rieslings at a regional tasting Anna had set up for me during my visit, two other wines really stood out. The Waimea Classic Nelson Riesling 2009 boasts more medals than one of Gaddafi's old uniforms and it's a superstar wine. It develops delicious honeyed, mealy, nutty aromas and in the mouth is ultra clean, flavoursome and holds incredibly good depth and complexity.

The other was the Greenhough Hope Vineyard Nelson Riesling 2010, which I've reviewed (above right). But be on the lookout for Andrew Greenhough's Apple Valley Riesling 2011 because it has intense granny smith and jazz-apple crispness, concentrated, spritzy, lime-laden sweetness and is absolutely stunning.

"In addition to my Hope vineyard I have two other little vineyards in the Moutere," says Andrew, "one in Apple Valley Rd and one in Holly Rd and they're both on little roads which lead down to the estuary, lovely little north-facing slopes which used to be planted in orchards — and the Apple Valley vineyard fruit always gives this gorgeous apple character to the wine".

If you're a riesling fan, seek this little gem out immediately — and buy some leather pants while you're at it.