



# Family formula delivers for Nelson winemakers



**O**H COOL — what are you killing, Dad?" my 9-year-old son craned his neck to see my husband drowning a white-tailed spider in a flood of Black Flag.

"It was a big bugger, son," said my husband as he flicked it out the window, "it almost crawled into your shoe."

"Should have let it Dad," sniped the older sister, "the smell would've killed it for sure."

Immediately, a loud and lengthy dispute erupted about who smelled the worst, who was the ugliest, who had the stupidest haircut, the un-coolest friends and — this is where it got violent — whose turn it was on the computer.

I did what any sensible modern mother would do. I quietly grabbed a bottle of wine and a large glass then snuck out of the room leaving my husband to cope with the carnage.

The wine was a bottle of Blackenbrook Nelson Riesling 2009. It was diamond-bright, smelled beautifully floral, lime-laden and in the mouth it oozed crisp citrus, beeswax and apple flavours; so it was no surprise to learn that it collected the prize for Best Riesling at the First Fifteen Wine Challenge staged in Nelson recently.

Inspired by the rugby celebrations, the competition was open to New Zealand, Italian and United States wineries. Each country was charged with

entering its own team of 15 wines comprising a mixture of pinot gris, riesling and gewurztraminer — the classic "aromatic" varieties.

After a day of intense judging to decide on the top 15 wines overall, the best pinot gris emerged as Etude Carneros 2010 from the US and the best gewurztraminer was Cantina Tramin Alto Adige Nussbaumer 2009, from Italy. A trophy was awarded to the best of each variety, and the region with the most wines won the overall award. Nelson romped away with seven out of the 15 spots, winning the riesling section and the overall title.

Daniel Schwarzenbach and his wife, Ursula, from Blackenbrook Vineyard, are two of the hardest-working young winegrowers I've ever met. Both were born in Switzerland, yet Daniel left for New Zealand as a boy and trained as a clinical chemist / microbiologist before chasing his winemaking dream in the early 1990s. After graduating in viticulture and oenology at Lincoln University, he returned to Europe to work with some of the top producers in Germany, Switzerland and the Alsace and it was there that he met Ursula, a hotel management and hospitality professional.

They moved back to New Zealand and purchased a 20ha block of rolling pasture overlooking the coastal highway halfway



between Nelson and the Abel Tasman. Having built his own small, but perfectly formed, 100 per cent gravity-fed winery, Daniel set about creating fine, vibrant, interesting wines in a fully sustainable, low-impact manner.

Ursula is the marketing and export guru behind the brand and makes quite possibly the best cheese platter I've ever come across (when you're in the wine business these things really matter).

They have a delicious muscat, sauvignon blanc and pinot gris. If you're a fan of spicy, Turkish Delight and pure lychee flavours you must try their Reserve Gewurztraminer 2010, and their 2009 Reserve Pinot Noir is incredibly dense and oozes spicy, concentrated fruit.

For a real kick of dried herbs, black fruits and muscular tannins, try their 2010 Montepulciano, and if you visit anytime soon (and if you're very lucky) you just may get to sample the Botrytis

Riesling that their young son Thomas has been looking after while it matured in a tiny barrel for the past three-and-a-half years (he's only 10). Expect Manuka Honey, toasty treacle and a hint of amontillado sherry on the finish.

## Thieves steal entire harvest

You hear some wacky things in the wine trade, but this is a total head-scratcher. According to German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, thieves in Germany stole a whopping 2500kg of pricy pinot noir grapes from a winery in the country's southwestern region of Deidesheim earlier this month.

Stephen Attmann, of the Von Winning winery, told German press agency DPA that the thieves decimated the vineyard, plucking the award-winning Spatburgunder variety, or pinot noir

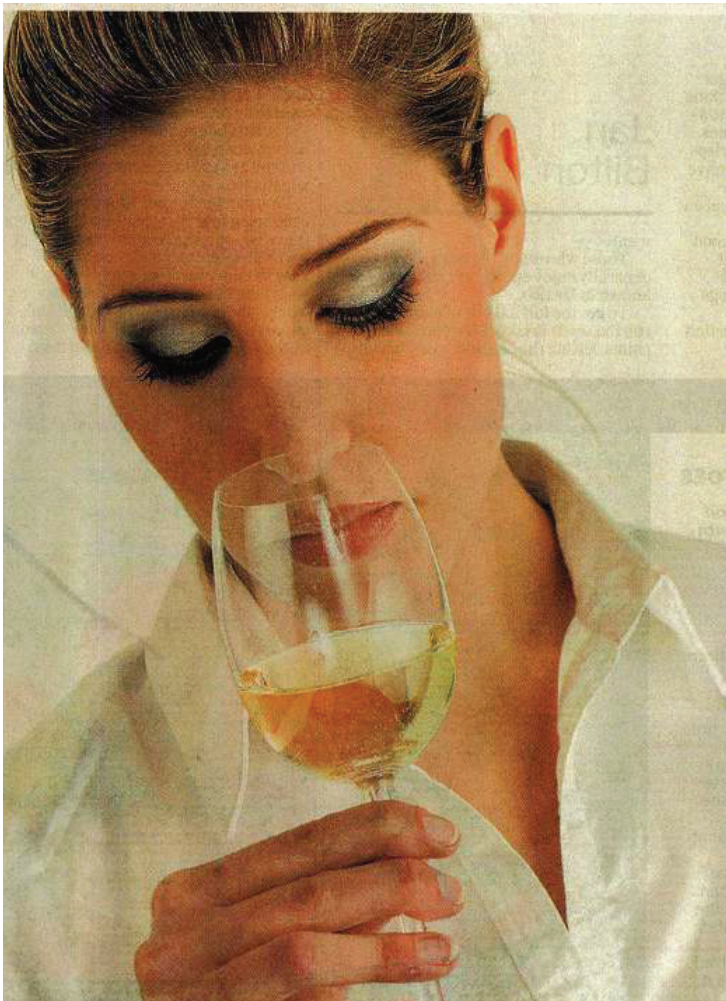
grapes, just before scheduled harvest.

"We are suffering spiritually, not just financially, over this loss," Attmann said. These thieves didn't just chance across the crop, they came prepared, bringing in harvest machines to strip the vines of grapes worth approximately \$US137,000 (\$176,000). The heist must have happened in the middle of the night, or simply under the noses of an unsuspecting vineyard crew. I could be wrong, but I'm pretty certain nothing this brazen has ever occurred in New Zealand.

I mean it's fair enough that birds, sheep and the odd stray labrador have been known to snaffle grapes from the vines, but actual human thieves are in a different spittoon altogether.

Most locals suspect the German thieves were acting on behalf of a rival winery as it'd be a tad tricky for just one person to get rid of such a large amount of fruit.

Police are still investigating.



**AROMATIC:** the Blackenbrook Nelson Riesling 2009 collected the prize for Best Riesling at the First Fifteen Wine Challenge.