

## My Guy Kai

**I**t is last summer and I am sitting at my desk. The phone rings and I find out that it is a representative of the New Zealand Trade Commission in New York City. She tells me that she has Kai Schubert in her office and that he would like to meet with me in Bermuda. We get together, he tells his story, and as a sip is worth a thousand words, he leaves me samples of his wine. Fully aware that the female senses of smell and taste (and of course hearing) are more acute than those of the male of our species, I take the samples home to accompany appropriate dishes and share our thoughts. I get a gentle suggestion, something like "I am sure you plan to bring this man's wines in as they are all superb". Fully agreeing and not wishing to cause any ripples in the fabric of domestic peace and harmony, I acted and can now say that Kai's first shipment of wines has just been placed in the cool cellars of Burrows Lightbourn.

Our story really begins a few years ago at the German University of Viticulture and Oenology at the town of Geisenheim. Kai Schubert and his partner Marion Deimling graduate and dream of creating the perfect Pinot Noir. Knowledgeable of the finicky nature of this grape and its reluctance to thrive anywhere except the Burgundy region of France, they set off to pursue their goal. Oregon is fine and some great Pinot Noirs now emanate from this location, but it is expensive to buy and develop land there. Off they go to California, but that does not seem just right for them. They explore the fine wine regions of Australia and even check out France. Finally they find a small vineyard in New Zealand, by the town of Martinborough, named after John Martin, an Irish immigrant who purchased a large sheep station in the Wairarapa Valley in 1879.

As we chatted in my office I just had to ask him why this area in North Island and not the much hyped Central Otago region in South Island. I told him that we had marvelous Pinot Noirs from Mt. Difficulty, Chard Farm and Gibbston, all in Central Otago and that all the wine press (like in magazine, not grape press) was a buzz with stunning accolades to Central Otago. He explained that the Otago crowd were far more numerous and had really gotten their act together on the publicity side, whereas Wairarapa was very small and had not yet formed a group to go out and do battle for them on the world stage. He feels that his vineyard can produce wines second to none and that he has the advantage of a somewhat friendly Mother Nature compared with those well to the south of him. After experiencing the vulgarities of German and French climes he was looking for a little more stability.

Over the last month or so I have received a few e-mails from Kai, asking if his consignment had arrived. Last week he informed me that some Bermudians stopped by and really liked his wines, in fact he mentioned my name and they said "oh we know him". If you are reading this please give me a call as Kai did not get your

names and I could use an on the spot report and maybe share a bottle of his wine with you.

We have his 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend of which he made exactly 1,034 bottles. That's about eighty six cases, or three barrels. Talk about small production! Anyway our little island, our little showcase window to the world, has some to share with you out there. The grapes were hand picked and all the stems were removed to rid the wine of any chance of bitterness. The juice was fermented in stainless steel and then transferred to French oak barriques, 75% new, where it lay for twenty five months. The dark ruby colour is accompanied by luscious, black cherry and currant fruit intermixed with notes of white flowers and creamy mocha. The wine is rich, expansive and medium to full bodied. The finish is supple and supported by round tannins. The cost is \$32.50

His 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon went through the same process and it is a deeply coloured wine with an intense nose of blackberries, plums and dark chocolate followed by notes of walnut and spices. It is extremely well structured with layers of super-ripe tannins and a long, sweet and dark fruit-filled finish. Again, production is miniscule at two hundred and three cases. The cost is \$41.25.

"Marion's Vineyard" 2003 Pinot Noir goes through the same careful hand picking, destemming and cold fermentation. It is aged for thirteen months in 50% new French oak barrels. This ruby coloured wine reveals beautifully ripe aromas of raspberries and boysenberries along with a medium bodied cherry, Asian spice filled pallet. You then get a hint of the grape's Burgundian heritage with a hint of game and earthy characteristics. In fact I would say that all of Kai's wines show some taste association with those of Europe.

Schubert's top of the line Pinot Noir is dark ruby coloured and possesses aromas of intensely spicy blackberries and cherries and a highly structured and sweet flavour profile underlined with tangy, lively dark cherries, cassis, vanilla and notes of mocha. The 2003 vintage is \$38.75

Our one white wine from this new winery is a 2002 Chardonnay from Hawke's Bay. It is elegantly structured with ripe pear and melon flavours, supported by subtle, toasty French oak. The cost is \$22.50

Our last question of the week asked if it was true or false that Pharaoh Tutankhamun was buried with wine giving the vintage, wine-maker and tasting notes. It is true and we drew for a winner.

