

# Weekend Magazine

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## Scaling the Schubert range

**A** FEW weeks ago, I mentioned in a column which focused on the Dakins Road area in Wairarapa that Kai Schubert, a German winemaker, was establishing vineyards in the area. I have since discovered that not only have he and his partner, Marion Delmling, planted 14 of the 42 hectares he has bought, but they have been producing wines for the past three years, most of them from grapes grown under contract in the Gimblett Road area in Hawke's Bay.

Such is the quality of some (two from his first vintage have already won gold medals in Germany) that I'd suggest this is an operation worth watching as it unfolds over the next few years, particularly when the pinot noirs they came here to produce start coming on stream.

Why New Zealand, and East Taratahi in particular? Because it offered the most promise, says Mr Schubert,



Warren Barton

Wine

who also looked at sites in France, Oregon in the United States and Australia before acquiring, in 1998, a small established vineyard in Martinborough and the 40-odd hectares of bare land closer to Masterton.

Eventually, 75 per cent of the main vineyard will be planted in pinot noir (the first small parcel has already been harvested), the balance in such varieties as merlot, cabernet sauvignon, syrah, pinot gris, chardonnay and some muller-thurgau, pinot blanc and riesling.

Mr Schubert says that he, his partner and Hiroyuki Kusada, from Japan, are all graduates of the University of Applied Science in Viticulture and Oenology in Geisenheim, Germany, and will continue to produce the wines they are already making from Hawke's Bay fruit and have just released.

The muscular (14.5 per cent) reds are stunners — the 1999 Schubert Hawke's

Bay Cabernet Franc is a mouthful of plums and currants that is as rich and succulent as it looks; the 1999 Hawke's Bay Cabernet Sauvignon is an equally robust, but sweet-fruited, wine with a lovely hint of mocha and there is plenty of pepper to season the blackcurranted 1999 syrah.

None is exactly cheap, which reflects the small volume produced at a temporary winery in Greytown. However, it is possible to get them in 375ml bottles at roughly half the price. The standard size cabernet franc (750ml) sells at \$65, the cabernet sauvignon and the syrah at \$45, but they are available, at this stage, only in Martinborough, where they

can be tasted at Aylstone's Terraces winebar.

The Schubert range also features and 2000 Gimblett Road Sauvignon Blanc with a mineral European touch (\$20), a subtly oaked 2000 chardonnay (\$25) and two other very interesting whites — a really appealing, crisp, pear-flavoured mix of muller-thurgau, chardonnay and pinot gris called Tribianco (\$20) and a beautifully honeyed, botrytised-style mix, mostly of muller-thurgau and sauvignon blanc named Dolce (\$50 for 750mls, \$25 for 375mls).

Both are wines that are well worth seeking out, as are the others made by this talented team of newcomers.

Good buying: Montana Reserve Sauvignon Blanc and Reisling, \$14.95, at The Mill Liquor-save.



Schubert 1999 Cabernet Franc ... as rich and succulent as it looks