



Freshly does it



Eating locally grown food is good for the country's economy – and the plethora of artisan producers.

If we want to attract world attention for our fresh food, we need to shout about it. Some of our culinary-scene giants – Fonterra, Silver Fern Farms, the wine industry and Sealord, to name a few – are already

doing a good job of telling the country's food story through their work, brands and social-media campaigns.

To do our bit, we should proudly support local producers and artisans and try to shop for, talk about and eat local food whenever possible. This helps the vitality of the national economy and boosts regional success and sustainability.

Our best chefs know this and tend to buy food from their regions, acknowledging suppliers on their menus and employing service staff who can tell their stories. So when I was invited to join Liz Buttimore of Arbour restaurant in Renwick and her chef partner Bradley Hornby for a day visiting local suppliers with a busload of their customers, I jumped at it. "Bring your gumboots," the invitation read. Where was I, a city dweller, going to find those for my day out listening to stories from passionate producers, feasting on Marlborough

produce and marvelling at its freshness and flavour?

First up was a dairy farmer struggling to keep his fifth-generation family farm going while neighbouring paddocks were being bought up for grape growing. His dream was to sell raw milk at the gate, but regulatory requirements were making the costs prohibitive. His superb milk would make him a hero in many other countries. Nevertheless, we feasted on custard squares and scones made with whole-milk cream, all of us happy to eat unpasteurised dairy products.

Next stop was a small public reserve at Rarangi Beach, on the shores of Cloudy Bay, for a clam boil-up. The



Herbed diamond clams with corn. Left, spiced steamed tuatua.

tuatua and diamond shell clams had been harvested locally, and we gathered around long tables to scoop the sweet clams from their spice-laden shells. Even though it was not yet noon, we washed them down with Greywacke wine.

Our third stop was at Folium Vineyard, where Hornby worked with winemaker Takaki Okada to serve delicious Japanese-flavoured hangi food with his wine. Okada's goat, Miss Ponsonby ("My dream is to take Miss Ponsonby to Ponsonby Rd," he explained), looked on and tried to nibble our food.

The last two stops were at Seresin and Te Whare Ra vineyards, where the Arbour chefs were assisted by local caterer Feast to serve regional specialties. Many fine herb, vegetable and fruit growers' plots can be found among the vines of this region and their products – including greens, citrus, nuts, olive oils, the first of the season's strawberries, lamb, wild game and wines – were offered as part of an array of

tastings and dishes.

Marlborough claims Kaikoura Cheese as its own, so cheese tastings were also part of the day. Since November's devastating earthquake, the food community has got behind this exemplary artisan company to help keep it going. When communities are connected and supportive, everybody wins.

Hornby was orchestrating the day's food, rushing from site to site to beat the bus. Here he shares his versatile spice mix for tuatua.

SPICED STEAMED TUATUA

- 2 tbsp coriander seeds
- 1 tbsp fennel seeds
- ½ tbsp dried chilli

- 4 sheets dried kombu (Arbour dries local seaweed)
- 3 tbsp sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp Szechuan peppercorns
- 1 tbsp black peppercorns
- 3 tbsp Marlborough sea salt
- 1 tbsp curry powder
- 1 piece star anise
- ½ orange, zest only
- 2 lemons, zest only
- 2 limes, zest only
- small amount of sauvignon blanc
- 1.5kg of tuatua
- lemon wedges and bread to serve

Roast all the spices in a large oven dish in a 180°C oven until fragrant. (Hornby suggests toasting each spice individually.) Allow to cool.

Using a fine zester, grate the skin off the orange, lemons and limes onto a small plate, then leave for an hour or two to dry out.

Place the spices and zest in a spice grinder and process to make a fine powder.

Add a splash or two of sauvignon blanc and a generous scoop of spice mix to a large saucepan or preserving pan. Bring it to a simmer over a high heat, then add the tuatua, cover and give the pan a good shake. Each time you check on the tuatua, give them a good stir. Once most have opened, spoon them into serving bowls with lots of spicy juice. Discard any that don't open.

Serve with lemon wedges and crusty bread.

Serves 4-6.

Wine match: sauvignon blanc.

HERBED DIAMOND CLAMS WITH CORN DRESSING

- 1 cup of parsley and dill
- 6 tbsp citrus olive oil (Lot 8)
- salt and pepper
- CHILLI SAUCE**
- 1 red capsicum
- 2 red chillies
- 3 very ripe tomatoes, seeded and skinned
- salt to taste
- CLAMS**
- 1kg diamond shell clams
- 1 cup sauvignon blanc wine
- 2 corn cobs, cut into chunks

For the dressing, chop the parsley and dill, then blend with the oil in a



liquidiser until it forms a paste. Season with salt and pepper.

For the sauce, roast the capsicum and chillies until blistered and soft. Discard the skins and seeds, then blend with the tomatoes in a liquidiser until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.

Steam the clams open in a large pan with the wine.

Cook the corn by steaming or grilling. Season to taste.

Remove half a shell from each clam, then arrange the halves on a platter with the corn pieces. Spoon a little dressing or sauce over the clams. Serve warm or at room temperature.

G Serves 6 or 8 as a pre-dinner snack.

I Wine match: sauvignon blanc. ■

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WINE

by Michael Cooper

Flying solo

Thousands of European growers are focused on a single variety, but that's not the case here.

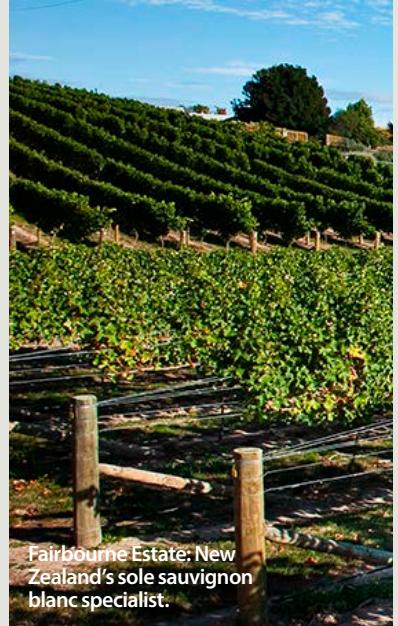
More than two-thirds of New Zealand wine is sauvignon blanc, so you'd expect to find at least a sprinkling of specialists among this country's 675 wine producers. But you'd be mistaken.

In Europe, thousands of growers devote their lives to perfecting the wine of a single variety. Burgundy, based on pinot noir for reds, is the obvious example. In Bordeaux, some of the most prestigious red wines of Saint-Emilion are made solely from merlot.

New Zealand, however, has *one* sauvignon blanc specialist. Most producers are too nervous to put all their eggs in a single varietal basket, and in our far younger winegrowing country, there is often lingering uncertainty about the perfect combinations of grape variety, soil and climate.

In 2010, six producers – focused individually on gewürztraminer, sauvignon blanc, bottle-fermented sparklings, pinot noir, syrah and cabernet-based blends – banded together to launch the Specialist Winegrowers of New Zealand.

Gewürztraminer champion Nick Nobilo, of Gisborne's Vinoptima vineyard and winery, noted: "True specialists, intent on making the very best wine in one chosen variety or style – a choice that often leads to a level of dedication that borders on the obsessive – have been rare."



The sole sauvignon blanc specialist is Fairbourne Estate, on a gentle, north-facing slope on the Wairau Valley's south side. Its wine is sold overseas as "a style apart from conventional New Zealand sauvignon blanc", and the company is committed to producing age-worthy, finely textured wines expressive of its site.

"Unfortunately, in this industry, people want to drag you in all sorts of directions," says Phil Handford, of Central Otago's Grasshopper Rock. Acclaimed for its high-quality, top-value pinot noir, Grasshopper Rock doesn't produce a white wine, or pinot noirs at different price levels or buy grapes from other growers. "We produce just one wine," says Handford, "the wine of our vineyard."

Unfortunately, Specialist Winegrowers has been wound up. One member told me the international trade doesn't expect specialisation from our producers, "because it has never been that way ... They want a 'package' to promote." ■

WINE OF THE WEEK

Two Tails Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2015 ★★★★

From Fairbourne, this distinctive wine has good intensity of ripe herbaceous flavours that are crisp, bone-dry and lingering. \$22