

WINE REGIONS NEWS REVIEW

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▶ **Martinborough:** *Picture perfect pinot*

Martinborough Vineyard

Vineyards punching above their weight

By AMANDA HURLEY

on 'Martinborough Terrace'



Dr Neil McCallum,
chief winemaker at Dry River Wines

It may have gained a reputation as a 'minx of a wine to grow', but there is one region that is proving pinot noir is no challenge to New Zealand wine-makers.

In only its third decade of wine production, Martinborough, situated in a sheltered dry river valley of the North Island's picturesque Wairarapa, has fast become renowned for its rich red pinot noir and crisp white sauvignon blanc wines.

It generates just two per cent of the country's total tonnage, but the region is over-represented in any wine list of the nation's best. For instance, some 30 of the Air New Zealand Wine Award medals were given to Martinborough producers in 2005.

Martinborough's superior wines also draw high praise internationally, and grace some of the finest tables around the globe, including those at Peter Gordon's 'The Providores and Tapa Room' restaurant in London'.

Ata Rangi marketing manager, Phyll Pattie, says the region is fortunate to have a well-established market niche for its flagship varieties.

"Australia is dumping a lot of very good wine at the moment, but we're not competing against the Australian chardonnays and cabernet sauvignons like some of the other regions in New Zealand are," she says.

"Pinot noir and sauvignon blanc are hard wines to do well, so it's good we have that advantage. But it's still a difficult business in Martinborough. You need to be doing it for passion and quality, not to make a bundle of money."

New Zealand Winegrowers statistics indicate that in 2005, Martinborough wine-makers produced 1,649 tonnes of wine, compared to 22,493 in Gisborne; 28,098 from Hawke's Bay; and 81,034 from the Marlborough region.