

NZ WINE REGIONS

Despite producing less than 1% of the world's wine, New Zealand punches well above its weight offering an impressive array of varieties and styles. This is thanks to an exceptionally temperate climate and many expert producers found throughout the country. Here are the regions to remember:

BAY OF PLENTY & WAIKATO Dairy cows rule the land in this area. A wine-growing upside to the area is the benefit of free draining deep clay loam soils. Known as Hamilton Ash, the light clay is great for plant growth and allows wines to show soft tropical fruit flavours with good weight, texture and moderate acidity.

HAWKE'S BAY The oldest wine region and the second largest region. Complex soil compositions and exciting new varieties contribute to their success. In 2001, the Gimblett Gravels Association introduced classification rules that are governed by soil type. Gimblett Gravels was the first district in the New World to give their wine and region this designation.

NELSON Nelson has a unique topography, which sees it enveloped by mountain ranges to the west, south and east. These ranges protect the sites from the prevailing westerly winds, moderating the temperature and providing a calm environment.

OTAGO Otago is the country's fastest-expanding wine region and at 45° south it is home to the most southerly vineyards in the world, with the most extreme climatic conditions and dramatic landscapes you could imagine. Renowned for its exquisitely balanced and nuanced styles, Otago became the first region in the world to rival Burgundy in Pinot Noir production.

NORTHLAND With a sub-tropical climate not found anywhere else in New Zealand, the long hot days contribute to wines of depth and complexity. Here you'll find Bordeaux blends flourish along with more subtle interpretations of aromatic varieties. Northland typically experiences the country's warmest ripening conditions, explaining the popularity of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Chardonnay.

AUCKLAND In many ways the New Zealand wine industry began in Auckland. Croatian immigrants, escaping the depression in Europe, settled in West Auckland in the 1930s and 40s. Plentiful hours of sunshine means Bordeaux style wines and Chardonnay flourish here.

GISBORNE Gisborne is where Captain James Cook first stepped ashore in New Zealand in 1769, but it was the 1850s before the first vines were first planted, and now it's New Zealand's third largest wine region. The soil is comprised predominantly of loam, silt and clay, which favour aromatic varieties such as Gewürztraminer and Chardonnay.

WAIRARAPA A small wine region with a large following, thanks to the arrival of some of New Zealand's most acclaimed Pinot Noirs from the Martinborough sub-region. Famous for the Martinborough Terrace upon which the founding wineries of the Wairarapa are planted. This free draining soil system of the terrace ensures grapes thrive.

MARLBOROUGH Sauvignon Blanc firmly landed New Zealand on the international wine stage. Attracted by pungent, fruit-driven wines, an award-winning reputation quickly followed. There's plenty more on offer here than just Sauvignon Blanc, however. Marlborough's interest in other varieties and in terroir has led to experimentation and further global recognition.

CANTERBURY New Zealand's youngest wine region. This cool climate area enjoys a long steady ripening period. The infamous northwest wind dries out the vine canopy, helping minimise the risk of disease and the cooler nights contribute to good flavour intensity and natural acidity.

