

The Cellar Club Inc



Established in 1980

October 2025 Newsletter

Rockburn, Central Otago

Presented by Alex Crone, Cellar Door Manager, Sales & Marketing



www.rockburn.co.nz

Wednesday 8^h October, 8pm Start

Door Price: Members \$18 / Guests \$22

A pure expression of Central Otago

Alex comes from a background in hospitality and tourism back in Canada. Moving to Aotearoa last year to pursue opportunities in the heart of Pinot Noir territory, Central Otago, she found her place at Rockburn. Alex has held positions from the cellar door to marketing but loves getting to chat about wines and finding the best fit for every individual palette- there's a wine out there for everyone! When not at the winery, she spends her time in the mountains skiing and hiking or diving deep into vintage jazz tracks and dances.

Rockburn is a wine producer in the Central Otago region on the South Island of New Zealand. The estate makes a range of wines but is perhaps best-known for its award-winning Pinot Noirs – the flagship variety of region.

The winery was founded in 1991 by pioneering heart surgeon Dr. Richard (Dick) Bunton, who planted some of the first vines near Lake Hayes. Over the years, Rockburn expanded its vineyard holdings, with significant sites in Gibbston and Parkburn/Pisa on the shores of Lake Dunstan. In 2002, the brand name changed from Hayes Lake to Rockburn, reflecting the rugged, schist-laden terrain and the region's distinctive character.

Today, Rockburn remains proudly independent, with the James and Halford families as key stakeholders. Longstanding winemaker Malcolm Rees-Francis, who joined the team in 2005, continues to lead the winemaking, focusing on minimal intervention and precision to express site and season. A new winery opened in 2016, designed around Rees-Francis' winemaking approach. This year marks his 20th vintage at Rockburn.

Rockburn produces a diverse portfolio of wines, including Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, and the Stolen Kiss Rosé, alongside other labels such as Crimson Peak and

Devil's Staircase. All wines are made at the Cromwell winery, with fruit sourced from premium vineyards across Gibbston and Parkburn/Pisa.

Wines for the night are:

- 🍷 Welcome Wine – 2025 Stolen Kiss Rose'
- 🍷 2024 Pinot Gris
- 🍷 2024 Fume' Blanc
- 🍷 2023 Chardonnay
- 🍷 2023 Crimson Peak
- 🍷 2023 Pinot Noir
- 🍷 2022 The Art Pinot Noir



To help members to have an easy payment method on the evening, there will be an EFTPOS machine to process orders.

Let's Look Out for Each Other

As always, please if you are feeling unwell, do not attend this. Thanks

Looking Back – Ohau Gravels

Wow! What an enjoyable evening. Most people would have known or visited this local vineyard, although it's now, thanks to Transmission Gully, simply a short drive north of Wellington.

We had 30 people turn up for the evening and we were entertained and informed by the vineyards CE, Donna and Jo Scully. They opened with a Karakia which was a change from the norm for our evenings, then went on to explain that their winemaker was Jayne Cooper, a well known winemaker and wine judge.

They had got up to 4ha of grapes at one stage but were now down to 25ha as a business decision and better knowledge of their grape varieties and the land they grow on. One side of their land used to be used to farm horses, the other as a produce farm, so they are blessed with highly fertile growing soils with a high amount of organic content.

Their wines have been vegan since 2020, but this doesn't hold them back at all!

As all their wines are 'made' in the Wairarapa, they truck their grapes over the hill for production. This leaves extra barrel time for the grapes to be in contact with their skins, so the wine can have different expression at the end of its journey, when compared to similar varietals grown by other wineries.

As a reminder the wines we tasted on the evening:

- 🍷 Not the Norm Rose 2020 – opening wine – *a lovely drop, liked by all that is substantially Pinot Gris with a small amount of Pinot Noir for colour. This is their second vintage.*
- 🍷 Ohau Gravels Pinot Gris 2023 – *fruit forward and aromatic; they leave the grapes on the vines longer before harvesting this batch to bring out fuller flavours.*
- 🍷 Ohau Gravels Chardonnay 2024 – *they plant their Chardonnay on either side of SH2, as the tarmac provides a natural heat source for these vines and the traffic keeps the flow circulating!*
- 🍷 Selected Vines Sauvignon Blanc 2012 – *made using more than one clone of Sauvignon, this is fully oaked with wild ferment but no added yeast – the French have been 'oaking' Sauvignon for yonks! A nice change to the usual taste of Sauvignon for non-white drinkers.*

- 🍷 Not the Norm Sauvignon Black 2021 – *this is made with a mix of skins cold-pressed; stainless steel barrel and oak barrel with wild ferment. Sauvignon drinkers will like this!*
- 🍷 Ohau Gravels Pinot Noir 2024 – *80% stainless steel / 20% oak cask, this was a light but flavoursome drop.*
- 🍷 Not the Norm Te Tihi – *this is in effect a fortified Pinot Noir. A drop that came about because of COVID lockdown and a cancelled export order of their WovenStone Pinot Noir. The staff thought laterally and took this batch of red to the Brewtown people, asked them to add a white spirit and whala! They have their version of a lighter sweet red – well worth the taste experience, and one of our members of taking it around the country to family this Christmas!.*

Well worth a visit, their cellar door is open from Tuesday-Saturday.

Committee Musings

1. Your committee is trying something new with a survey coming soon to members, your opinions matter on the running of this club and how things are done. This will be coming to your Inboxes from Wayne Kennedy, our Treasurer, for you to complete.

If two members of your household have the same email address, we will send you two copies of the same survey so that you can each provide us with your views.

Please check your Junk Mail or Spam folders for this survey in early October, to ensure you don't miss out on your chance to comment.

2. Thanks again to everyone who helps with the tables and chairs at the start of our evenings and taking the same down after the meeting. Also taking the spittoons, water jugs and cracker plates back to the kitchen.

Looking Ahead:

- 🍷 **November** – Tbc
- 🍷 **December** – Christmas Dinner Wednesday 10th – La Cloche, Kaiwharawhara
- 🍷 **January** – nothing for 2026 as we are taking this chance to alter our license so we can hold something for 2027 - watch this space for 2027!

Wine News – **Cambridge Road Vineyard, Martinborough** please note some of this information is from Cambridge Road's website: www.cambridgeroad.co.nz



At the Luna evening in August, the presenter Joel Watson mentioned that a fellow local vineyard, Cambridge Road Vineyard, had been experimenting using 90-year-old Totara barrels with two of its wines. So, I contacted the Vignerone, Lance Redgwell to find out more as I was immediately alerted to a potential story, as my husband who writes about whisky, has discovered that a NZ distillery, Pokeno, uses newly made totara barrels for some of its production. These have won gold medals overseas in blind-taste competitions!



The casks in question, crafted in the 1930s, are a far cry from the standard oak barrels of today. Hewn from the forest that carpeted this country, they hark back to a time before Stainless steel and imported European woods. The coopers tradition travelled with the early winegrowers to New Zealand and with them the first wines from this country began to emerge

in the late 1800's. Ranging from 2,100 to 2,900 litres, these large-format casks, foudre or botte are commonly found in northern Italy, Germany, Austria, and Alsace and often used for high-acid varietals like Nebbiolo, Riesling, and Grüner Veltliner. "They provide lower oxidation levels and a more neutral wood profile," explains Lance. "But beyond that, they carry mana, history, and a spirit that transcends a mere flavour profile. This is about rekindling a connection to the past and the early history of winemaking in New Zealand."

Discovered in a mothballed winery in the far-north town of Kaikohe, these barrels were traced back to the Brajkovich family, best known for their work with Kumeu River Wines in West Auckland. To bring the wood back to life, their restoration comes with immense challenges. "Like restoring a vintage timber boat, it requires traditional techniques. We've had to use draw saws, working with the grain as they would have in the 1920s. The wood is brittle, and every step requires immense care. It's an ongoing journey, and we're not there yet, it will take time." says Lance Redgwell.



While this is a long-term project, the scale will always be limited by the number of barrels available. "My hope is that this effort will keep these barrels in use for another 95 years, inspiring future generations to take pride in New Zealand's winemaking heritage," says Lance. "And ultimately, my goal is to craft the most distinctly Kiwi wines on the planet— wine that speaks not just of place, but of history, tradition, and the land that nurtures it."

Cambridge Road has two current wines released which employ Totara cask ageing:

- 2023 Crystal Veil – rediscovering NZ's winemaking heritage – a Sauvignon Blanc born in Totara - Sauvignon Blanc **Crystal Veil 2023** is both clean and complex. The Totara cask imparts subtle structure and texture, what Lance describes as "a phenolic gift," giving the wine tension and finesse, along with a faint, lingering memory of fennel seed on the finish. Whole bunch pressed, wild fermented, and left on lees for nearly two years. With zero skin contact, low sulphites (23ppm), and an alcohol level of 12%.
- 2023 Cloudwalker – this is an orange wine, with varietals of Pinot Gris, Riesling, Pinot Noir. This year's Cloudwalker sees a more delicate extraction than typical, making it more flexible in terms of end use and food matching. Again, it's a single vineyard expression looking into the stony, sandy, windswept fringes of the Dry River southwest of town. The Pinot Gris brings colour, spice and stone fruit dimensions, modest levels of Riesling engage further spice and citrus lift. Beyond this a subtle gift of Pinot Rose' smooths the complexion ever so slightly. This is a wine to enjoy immediately or sometime in the next 5-6 years. Lean toward aromatic curries, brown butter, nuts and mandarin, green peppercorn, white fish & capers, that kind of direction for food matches.



Raising the Bar in Wine Tourism: Casita Miro Leads the Way

Stuff article Sept 8th, 2025 SPONSORED CONTENT BY SERVICEIQ

Casita Miro has become a benchmark for hospitality excellence

On Waiheke Island, Casita Miro isn't just known for award-winning food and wine. The vineyard and restaurant has become a benchmark for hospitality excellence, thanks to owner Catherine Vosper's commitment to training her people – supported by a long-standing partnership with ServiceIQ. Together, they are showing how structured on-the-job learning can elevate

guest experiences, build staff capability, and raise the bar across New Zealand as per our wine tourism.

For Vosper, investing in people has never been optional. “A healthy business will always seek to make their business better, unrelentingly! You must never stop working to raise the bar,” she says. “As people are the core of hospitality, investing in their education and other pastoral growth experiences means that your business will provide increasingly better customer service.”

Vosper believes the impact goes well beyond customer satisfaction. “Your staff will feel better in knowing that they are worthy of such educational investment,” she says. “It’s a win-win situation! It’s extremely important that we, as hospitality businesses, look at our industry sector as a whole and work together to help lift professional standards.”

Service that makes a difference

This commitment shows up in the way visitors experience Casita Miro. “The result of better service is greater job satisfaction and confidence for the team who have made the customers happy,” Vosper says. “It is such a wonderful feeling to make someone happy... and of course, it is great for business for happy customers to spread the word of their satisfaction. They will do your marketing for you!”

Her philosophy has helped establish Casita Miro as a standout in New Zealand wine tourism. But Vosper is also clear that excellence is not achieved in isolation. ServiceIQ, the nationwide work-based training specialist for New Zealand’s service sectors, has been a key partner in supporting her team to continually lift their skills and confidence.

Pippa Saxon, National Account Manager at ServiceIQ, says New Zealand makes outstanding wine, but what truly elevates a wine tasting is the story and service.

“Structured, on-the-job training means every host can deliver that story with confidence and consistency, so visitors have a memorable experience, and venues see stronger sales,” she says. “Our approach is industry-backed, developed in partnership with New Zealand Wine, and the unit standards are chosen to lift service quality across cellar doors around New Zealand.”



Cellar Door Excellence

That collaboration is now extending to ServiceIQ’s new Cellar Door Excellence programme, designed specifically for wineries.

Vosper says the fit was obvious. “On Waiheke, our busy season is over summer, and we will double our staff numbers for six months. They need to be trained quickly and thoroughly, so the ServiceIQ Cellar Door programme is a no brainer.”

The programme equips seasonal and permanent staff alike with practical skills to engage visitors, communicate product knowledge, and deliver consistent service. For busy wineries like Casita Miro, it means newcomers can get up to speed quickly without compromising the guest experience.

The initiative also creates clear pathways, says Saxon. “In partnership with New Zealand Wine, Cellar Door Excellence pathways into the New Zealand Certificate in Tourism (Level 3), so teams can gain NZQA-recognised skills while they work. For venues like Casita Miro, it sets a clear benchmark for hosting tastings, improves guest experiences, and builds a pipeline of talent who can progress,” she says.

Building confidence and careers

Vosper has seen first-hand how structured training benefits everyone in the workplace. “This style of training benefits the entire team! People stay in a position for longer when they can see their professional growth, obtain career advancement and receive better pay when they reach their educational goals,” she says.

Learning lifts confidence, connection, and loyalty, says Vosper. “The trainer is always learning, too. If the business is successful, it can pay better wages and provide bonuses and perks so staff will stay longer.”

Raising industry standards

Looking ahead, Vosper wants to see consistent excellence across New Zealand wine tourism. “New Zealand already has a reputation for great wine. But you need to be able to sell it! This is particularly important in our current economic climate,” she says.

Vosper believes the Cellar Door Excellence programme has the potential to transform the sector. “Imagine if every single Cellar Door in the country had staff armed with multi-cultural empathy, warmth, sales techniques, wine intelligence and local knowledge, the world will be knocking at our doors!”

To explore tourism training opportunities,
visit www.serviceiq.org.nz/training/tourism/tourism-programmes

Screwcaps

Screwcaps are still very welcome, please bring these along to any Club meeting and leave them with Anne, remembering that the cause that benefits from this collection is Kidney Kids NZ and their families.

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