

# *The Cellar Club Inc*



*Established in 1980*

## *MONTH YEAR Newsletter*

### *Penfolds Evening*

*presented by Wayne and Panel*

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March, 8pm Start**

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

This is indeed a one-off evening and something not to miss. The format for the evening will involve a tasting panel of John Saker, Keith Tibble and Wayne as co-ordinator. Information about the wines will be provided and following comments from our tasting panel, we will be encouraging your feedback on what you are tasting in your glass.

The older wines to be tasted are from our club cellar. The more recent wines were acquired for two things in mind. The first was to find two recent vintages of the wines we were holding so that you can see what aging has done to the wines.

The other reason was to taste a Penfolds wine that wasn't red. They have many in this category, but sadly they aren't available here in NZ.

- 🍷 2024 Penfolds 311 Chardonnay – *Welcome Wine*
- 🍷 2023 Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna Shiraz
- 🍷 2006 Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna Shiraz
- 🍷 2012 Penfolds Bin 9 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 🍷 **[small supper break]**
- 🍷 2022 Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz
- 🍷 2007 Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz
- 🍷 2012 Penfolds Bin 138 Shiraz Grenache Mataro

In addition to tasting these wines, there will be opportunities for you to win a 2006 Bin 28 or 2007 Bin 128, so you really need to make sure this date is in your calendar Now!

## Let's Look Out for Each Other

As always, please if you are feeling unwell, do not attend the evening's presentation. Thanks

### Sad Passing

Of our former club member Mark Haythornthwaite last week, with his funeral being held last Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February in Martinborough. Mark's knowledge of wines and his work within the wine industry was well known and noted during his funeral.

His wife and partner Susan has graciously provided some of their 2024 Pinot Noir to raise a glass at our March tasting in celebration of Mark's life and his participation in our club.

*Photo supplied by Anne Megget  
Note the bottles and wine glasses on his casket*



### Looking Back - Askerne from Hawkes Bay



We had 35 members turn up to this first evening event of 2026, it was lovely to see so many people enthusiastic for the start of our tasting programme.

John Loughlin, Co-Founder and Director presented to us, and was full of information about the wine industry, Hawkes Bay conditions and also Askerne's wines, tastes and the conditions they are grown in. Askerne has 32ha, 18 varieties of grape and six soil types!

John explained to us that they mostly hand-picked their grapes, as to get the machine in was not always a timely happening, depending on if that machine was available due to other vineyards competing for it. One of the other factors in the taste of wine, is the condition when the berries are picked, and as they monitor their varieties closely for the prime picking time, it fits that hand picking when grapes are at their peak works best for their wines.

It was interesting to hear that globally wine consumption had fallen in 2025 to the same levels as in 1961! Everyone it seems is consuming less alcohol, and vines are being removed even in Bordeaux with government support. The good news for NZ on that score is that our wine exports were up 1%.

A reminder of the wines we tasted during the evening:

- 🍷 Sérieux Rosé 2025 (as welcoming wine)
- 🍷 Reserve Chardonnay 2024
- 🍷 Viognier 2023
- 🍷 Pinot Gris 2024
- 🍷 CSM 2023
- 🍷 Reserve Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon Malbec 2021
- 🍷 Dessert Cabernet 2022

An added bonus at the tasting was Askerne having their full wine list for us to purchase from, with the wines above highlighted if we wanted to concentrate on those we had just tasted.

## Committee Musings

1. Membership is still at the top of mind for your committee members. Can all members please endeavour to seek out new members. Bring along fellow wine enthusiasts, neighbours or friends that want to join in our monthly evenings, emphasizing that this is a very good value proposition and a great exposure to wines you may never have known about, or tasted!

Please remember to promote that as a bonus for potential members, our meetings are held in close proximity to both the Johnsonville Train Line and the bus station.

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 tables contents: spittoons/water jugs/cracker plates back to the kitchen.

## Looking Ahead:

🍷 **April** – Some Gold Medal/Trophy Wines from 2025 NZIWS Awards

🍷 **May** - AGM

🍷 **June** – TBC

## Wine News – [SALT OF THE EARTH](#) from [Wairarapa Lifestyle](#) magazine, Summer 25/26 issue

*Named for rock salt, Halite embodies winemaker Haidee Johnson's philosophy of producing honest, grounded wines full of character. She talks about this and her path into winemaking with fellow winemaker, Ben Dugdale.*

### What first drew you to winemaking?

As a kid, I was obsessed with travelling. For a while, I thought I'd be able to do that as a 'Lara Croft' type, travelling the world as a gemologist but I quickly realised that wasn't quite the reality of that career. I did a six-week stint at Vidals in Hawkes Bay as a berry analyst and greatly enjoyed the being part of the vintage. A Californian vintage in the same year made me realise I could 'travel the world'.

I came back to New Zealand and spent the next three years completing my BA in Wine Science at EIT in Hawkes Bay. I carried on travelling, mostly working with Bordeaux varieties. It wasn't until I landed an assistant winemaker position at Palliser Estate that things really shifted for me. I had a deep dive into Pinot Noir and organics, and something just clicked. I felt like I'd found my place. Interestingly, I'm originally a Wairarapa girl who'd always been drawn to Martinborough Pinot, so in a sense, I've come home again.

### Was there a particular moment or bottle of wine that sparked your interest in winemaking?

Early on, I remember trying a Millton Chenin Blanc. Years later, a group of us visited Millton, and James took us through what was meant to be a tasting that turned into nearly a full day of philosophy, storytelling and sharing many bottles. From there, my curiosity just kept growing. Wines from the Jura, especially Domaine Labet, opened my eyes even more. They were wild, alive and completely different from the commercial wines I'd known. Those experiences really changed the way I thought about winemaking and planted the seed for the kind of wines I want to create: expressive, textural and full of energy.

### How did Halite wines come to life?

After starting a family and realising that being a career winemaker, for me, was not going to be achievable just through the nature of vintage demand; I soon felt a strong pull back to wine.

It was hard work, but it solidified that winemaking is my creative outlet. Pouring a glass of your own wine for someone is incredibly nerve-wracking, but it's also deeply rewarding. That first vintage confirmed that Halite was more than a label; it was a way to express myself, connect with others and create something meaningful.

### **How would you describe the philosophy behind Halite wines?**

Halite is about authenticity, connection and respect for the land, the growers I work with, and the people who drink the wine. I want the wines to feel honest and expressive; a reflection of place and season rather than a style imposed in the cellar.

It is also about balance and joy. Halite wine should be approachable, fun and part of life, not something intimidating or overly serious. I focus on minimal intervention, working with organic growers and letting the fruit speak for itself. Every decision I make is guided by a simple question: does this preserve energy, texture and character? If the answer is yes, then it feels true to Halite.

### **You don't currently own a vineyard, so how does this work?**

Not having my own vineyard brings challenges, but it's also exciting because it allows me to work with different varieties, vineyards and regions. My base is in Martinborough, but I also source fruit from Hawkes Bay.

At Halite, the principles of organics guide everything I do. Respecting the local environment is foundational; it strengthens the quality of the grapes, supports sustainable systems, preserves the land and nurtures the wider community, including small growers and producers. Everything I make reflects place, season and the people caring for it.

### **What varietals are you most passionate about?**

I love working with Pinot Noir. It's a challenging grape to grow here, but I think the climate contributes to the savoury, complex tones and that complexity is part of the magic. Pinot Noir demands attention, patience and a sensory approach, and that's exactly what draws me to it.

I am trying to champion the versatility of Pinot Noir. I make a white, rose, chilled and classic Pinot Noir and they all have their unique personality.

### **Is there a wine in your current lineup that feels especially personal or symbolic to you?**

Hands down, it's the Light Dry White. Beyond the name, which simply gives a holistic view of the wine, light, dry and white. It allows the drinker to make their own connection without any pretence. Despite its broad name, the LDW is incredibly focused: it's a Pinot made in a Chardonnay style from single-clonal, single-vineyard grapes, specifically the Abel clone from the Grava Vineyard. It's full of character, energy and life, capturing the essence of who I am, and it's my signature wine.

For further info: [www.halitewines.co.nz](http://www.halitewines.co.nz)

## **Sad Days in the Wine Business:**

### **Millton Winery, Gisborne to close**

**A note from the winery:** "After more than 41 vintages, we have chosen to retire both the Vineyard and ourselves, and now look forward to spending more time with our family. After more than four decades of caring for the land, pioneering organics and biodynamics, and crafting wines with integrity, The Millton Vineyard will no longer be producing the quality wines we are renowned for."

As the winery winds down, there will be unique opportunities to purchase the final vintages of some of Millton's iconic wines at exceptional prices. One such example can be found at Advintage where they are offering a case [6] of the 2025 Te Arai White at 15.99 per bottle. This white is a vibrant blend of chenin blanc, chardonnay and viognier. Chenin brings fresh acidity and zestiness to the

party while the chardonnay component adds palate weight, drive and a layer of lush stonefruit flavours. Viognier kicks in its signature tropical notes and a wonderful 'fluidity'

So be sure to keep a watchful eye for other bargains from this award winning vineyard.

## **Te Awanga Estate Winery group liquidation: \$12m owed to 100+ creditors**

*Tom Ryan, Multimedia Business Reporter - NZ Herald*

**2 Feb, 2026**

The Hawke's Bay Wine Company and three related businesses including Te Awanga Estate owe a combined \$12 million to more than 100 creditors, the first report from liquidators shows.

That amount includes nearly \$2m owed to the Inland Revenue Department, as challenging conditions impact the wine industry.

The Hawke's Bay Wine Company, Hawke's Bay Wine Investments, Te Awanga Estate and Portside Wines were placed into liquidation on January 23, 2026, on special resolution by the companies' shareholders, with Richard Nacey and John Fisk of PwC appointed joint and several liquidators.

Directors of the four related entities include Daniel Bearsley, Amal Karl, Ernest Williams, and international award-winning winemaker Colin (Rod) McDonald, who declined to comment on the liquidation.

Last week [subscribers of Te Awanga Estate's](#) wine subscriber service Drinkers and Keepers Wine Club received an email telling them wine shipments would no longer be sent out, and they would not be charged any further payments by the service due to the voluntary liquidation.

According to Nacey and Fisk's first report, released on Friday, the companies' shareholders made the decision to appoint liquidators following ongoing cash flow pressure experienced by the companies.

The cash flow pressure is described as a result of a substantial customer contract not completing, together with challenging industry-wide trading conditions. . . .

## **Wine Grenade in liquidation: Callaghan Innovation loan unpaid, \$475k owed**

*Anne Gibson has been the NZ Herald's property editor for 25 years, written books and covered property extensively here and overseas.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 2026**

Wine Grenade, a much-hailed Auckland-founded wine technology innovation business, is being liquidated after its director told the accountants of "irrecoverable failure of the IT infrastructure".

The company failed to meet its obligations to Callaghan Innovation, an initial report said.

A \$475,000 amount is owed to unsecured creditors.

Companies Office records show the sole director as Michael John Moore of Coatesville. The business has a substantial shareholder list of 39 people and entities.

KPMG accountants and liquidators Kristal Pihama and Leon Bowker said Wine Grenade had been incorporated in 2014 but stopped trading in 2022.

"On application of the Attorney-General, the company was placed into liquidation on December 11, 2025, for failing to meet its obligations to [Callaghan Innovation](#), consisting of overdue loan repayments together with associated interest," their initial report said.

Online information said the business had used a smart micro-oxygenation device to accelerate wine maturation. That simulated the effects of oak barrel ageing in tanks for a fraction of the cost.

It used sensor technology to monitor and control oxygen levels in wine, improving texture and flavour while cutting labour and water usage.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment outlined more about the business, saying it was a Kiwi wine tech company which had shaken up the industry. "It all began with a master's university assignment to commercialise technology designed to age bananas. Pretty soon, the Wine

Grenade team was oversubscribed for its innovative wine-ageing product, which is now influencing wine production around the world,” MBIE said in a piece under news and success stories on its website.

Wine Grenade had been manufactured in the company’s Avondale facility.

At first glance, it looked like a humble tube but its ability to speed up the process of ageing wine by up to 60% was said to be a game-changer.

“Wine makers from small boutique vineyards and large commercial players are deploying the device to de-risk the wine-ageing process and provide greater control to vintners, ultimately creating a better-quality product,” MBIE said.

Customers included Sacred Hills Wines in Hawke’s Bay and Auburn James in the Napa Valley, California.

Key to the success was linking up with the NZ Product Accelerator, funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the ministry said.

### SWIFT WINES Hawkes Bay

121 Mere Road, Hastings



#### *Exceptional Hawke’s Bay Wines for Everyday Celebrations*

Your Editor was away in Hawkes Bay for an extended Waitangi Weekend, with excellent weather up to 30C! We, along with our family we were staying with, indulged in a lunchtime session at Swift Wines, and it turned out to be an excellent choice. Settled on their lawn area underneath one of their very large umbrellas John and I started with Rose’ Slushies – an excellent choice by the way, while the rest of



the family started straight in with one of the vineyard’s bubbles.



If you decide to go with one of their tastings instead of a bottle of wine as we did, their Tastings List can change daily. They have two bubbles on their wine menu, the one we tried was delicious; and to compare I brought the other one home to try at a later date.

The difference with this vineyard is that when you arrive, you pick up a small wicker basket and go to their fridge to select your platter items, adding carb items at the end. Then they simply take a photo of your food [to place items on your tab], and you go outside and sit at one of their outdoor tables under an ample umbrella, having told the staff about your wine selection. Your wine selection arrives soon after. If you are indulging in their wine tasting, this rolls out throughout your meal.



Their emblem is a dachshund, which is the pet of one of the owners, who you can see on all their labels, and who greets visitors gently at their cellar door.

## 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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