

## Question 4:

Discuss the production of Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewurztraminer in New Zealand. (60% weighting)

What are the commercial prospects for these wines? (40% weighting)

## Answer:

New Zealand is one of the smallest world producers of wine (less than 1% globally), however, it is one of the most easily recognisable thanks to its famous style of Sauvignon Blanc. It's not a surprise that this one grape variety dominates the plantings and production. In recent years, we have had a chance to observe gradual changes in this. Other varieties, both reds and whites, started to gain more and more popularity. And Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewurztraminer, often grouped as „aromatics” in New Zealand, were some of them. 1.1

Most of New Zealand regions are perfect for growing these aromatic varieties, cool and temperate climates of Marlborough, Nelson, Central Otago, Martinborough and North Canterbury seem to be perfect for these grapes. 1.2

Pinot Gris is the 3rd after Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay planted white variety in New Zealand. It's made in an unoaked and fresh style, with medium body, medium acidity and often off-dry sweetness. This style can be seen as in the middle between light bodied Pinot Grigio from Italy and fuller, almost oily and spicy Pinot Gris from Alsace. 1.3 Pinot Gris does not have high acidity, therefore cool climates of New Zealand regions, with cool ocean breezes (e.g. in Marlborough) and cool nights bring a lot of freshness to the grapes and allow them to retain the acidity, on the other hand, long Indian summers and high sunshine hours allow the grapes to slowly and fully ripen achieving full varietal character. Some producers with good examples of NZ Pinot Gris are: Neudorf, Mt Difficulty, Pegasus Bay, Fromm, Huia. 1.4

Riesling is another grape that is gaining popularity across the cooler regions of New Zealand, like Marlborough, North Canterbury, Martinborough or Central Otago. 1.5 These wines are made in a range of sweetness level, from dry, through off-dry to late harvest and even botrytised sweet. Here again, cool climate allows these wines retain freshness and acidity and long summer and autumns give a chance for the grapes to get ripe and sometimes be harvested later (e.g. famous spätlese style wines from the Framingham winery) or even when the grapes got affected by the noble rot (e.g. Forrest' wines). Exceptional examples of dry styles come from Felton Road in Central Otago and Pegasus Bay in North Canterbury but also many others. These wines can be aged for many years, gain complexity, including the typical kerosene notes.

Another grape that is gaining popularity is Gewurztraminer and often New Zealand is mentioned along Alsace as one of the best places to grow this grape. Places like Marlborough seem to be perfect, however, also warmer regions like Gisborne, make really good wine based on Gewurztraminer. This variety likes to get a lot of sunshine to fully ripen, hence 2400 of sunshine hours in Marlborough seems to be ideal for growing Gewurztraminer. These wines are made in an unaged style, are often medium to full body, with medium- to medium acidity and pronounced aromas, typical for the variety: spices, lychee, florals but often also mineral undertones.

In all of these cases, the soils typical for NZ regions are good for growing aromatic varieties. Alluvial sandy soils allow the grapes to get perfumed lift. On the other hand the free-draining nature of the soils forces the grapes to invest energy in ripening the grapes and not in growing the canopy. This gives these wines concentration, depth and complexity. 1.6

All of these wines are usually made in stainless steel tanks, with temperature controlled fermentation (Gewurztraminer is usually kept in a bit higher temperature). They are usually not kept on skins (however, there are more and more examples of „orange” wines, e.g. Pinot Gris from Valli from Central Otago), not aged in oak, bottled within a year from vintage and released. 1.7

From a commercial point of view, there are multiple perspectives we need to take into account. Building business solely on Sauvignon Blanc is a risky move. Right now Sauvignon Blanc is in

fashion and allows producers to easily sell their wines. However, it's not hard to imagine that at some point global tastes may change. Therefore, investing in and growing other varieties, like Gewurztraminer, Pinot Gris and Riesling gives winemakers a way to diversify their efforts.

On the other hand, consumers know New Zealand from their „Savs”, therefore, it can be hard to convince consumers to try different styles and varieties. Why would they buy a Riesling if they can buy famous Sauvignon Blanc. A lot of education and promotion is needed here.

Another point is that, Sauvignon Blanc seems to be associated with New Zealand by everyone. And the other varieties, already have their homes, Pinot Gris - Alsace and Italy, Gewurztraminer - Alsace and Riesling - Germany and Alsace. Consumers may ask why would they buy these wines from New Zealand if they can get the „originals” from the other countries? There needs to be a recognisable style of these wines to make them distinguishable from all the others - just like it was with Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough, no other countries can make wines in the same style. Can it be done with these varieties? Looking at the Pinot Gris, which is halfway between Italy and Alsace, I believe there is a chance for that.

Last point to consider is that some consumers, especially local ones, may be tired and bored with the amount of Sauvignon Blancs. Something that used to be new and exciting can become dull and repetitive, therefore, investing in new varieties, can give a chance to wineries to find new consumers and to keep consumers trying New Zealand wines instead of looking somewhere else.

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- 1.1 Provide some context by giving approx Ha under vine for each variety.
- 1.2 Yes - some regions are perfect for these varieties. Note that they do less well in North Island as it's warmer and acidity can be too soft for PG and GW.
- 1.3 In fact PG in NZ often produces expressions that are quite like those of Alsace. They can be quite full and oily and do see 2nd fill oak and lees contact. Not so much as Alsace you are right but similar
- 1.4 Good examples
- 1.5 Good - these are cooler regions, but try not to conflate them all. Central Otago has a distinct Continental climate and quite different to more maritime regions. PG and GW are best where there is good diurnal temp swings to retain their soft acids.
- 1.6 Good. At this point it's useful to review the question. "discuss the production...." What elements should you have covered? Ha under vine, production methods, where the grapes are grown, different styles etc etc
- 1.7 Remember that the PG wines are quiet often finished in 2nd fill oak - though not GW or Riesling.
  
- 2.1 This is true, but many knowledgeable consumers associate Sancerre and the Loire with SB and consider those the SB "originals". A stronger argument for commercial potential might be the NZ brand itself. Green, sustainable, consumer friendly, great packaging, screw caps v cork etc.
- 2.2 Always keep the question in mind. "What are the prospects....". You could gain more marks by answering the question more directly. Are the prospects good, poor, medium and are these proximate or long term prospects etc. See what I mean?
- 2.3 A good point, you can contrast the domestic and international market. Also, think about using at least the last sentence to summarize and draw some type of conclusion.
- 2.4 I notice a few spelling errors "unasked" for "unoaked" for example. These are probably typos so always take a minute to look back on your work before you submit it. It's worth it....