

Station Imports

Central Otago Schist-Kissed Pinot Noir

Many people have an image in their mind of snow when they think of New Zealand's South Island and it would seem that the climate is not conducive to growing Pinot Noir. The truth is that Central Otago, which sits in the most southerly part of New Zealand's South Island, lies at the same latitude as Burgundy (45 degrees) but in the Southern Hemisphere. In an otherwise maritime country, Central Otago surprisingly has a continental climate because of its location surrounded by mountains which shield the region from ocean influences. Central Otago is the driest part of the country. The landscape has been created by volcanos and shaped and carved by glaciers creating deep beds of loess, schist (a metamorphic rock type that has a schistose fabric - coarse mineral grains which split into thin layers), quartz and greywacke (a hard, darkly colored sandstone) that provide the vineyards of Central Otago with good minerality and low organic matter that compare to the bare bone soils of Burgundy.

Station Imports is owned by Penny and Andy Loving (pictured below) who import wines to the United States from the Central Otago Wine Company and Rippon Vineyard as well as select producers in Marlborough. You have probably seen them in recent years pouring their wines at events like the World of Pinot Noir. The winemaker at Central Otago Wine Company, Dean Shaw, is often in toe as well and he is quite a character with a droll sense of humor and a serious passion for Pinot Noir. Shaw has a postgraduate degree in Viticulture and Wine Science from Lincoln University in Canterbury, New Zealand. He first came to Central Otago to work at Rippon Vineyard in 1994-1995. Later he settled in Cromwell as a partner in the Central Otago Wine Company that provides contract winemaking facilities for many local producers. It might be the impressive stereo system that he serenades his wines with or the minimal intervention or the use of wild yeasts, that gives his wines the many accolades from the wine press.



The Pinot Noirs from Station Imports are reasonably priced and offer a sensible opportunity to satisfy your curiosity about the Pinot Noir from down under. The 2007 vintage in Central Otago was quite successful as Joshua Greene proclaimed in the February, 2009 issue of *Wine & Spirits* magazine. "The 2007s will likely mark a turning point for the Central Otago region, with a critical mass of great Pinot Noir grown in schist."

2007 Freefall Central Otago Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$23.25. Cool package. Imported by Station Imports LLC, Colorado Springs, Colorado. *Deep reddish-violet color. Funky reduction initially blows off. An earthy nose that smells of the soil and is heavily perfumed with blackberry and black plum fruit. Substantial dark fruits with a dusting of dark chocolate and oak spice framed by plentiful acidity. A very smooth mouthfeel makes for easy drinking.*



2007 Sleeping Dogs Blair Gum Block Central Otago Pinot Noir

13.0% alc., \$26.75, screw cap. From a vineyard on Old Gibbston Rd. farmed by owner Roger Donaldson and managed by viticulturist Richard Williams. Imported by Station Imports LLC, Colorado Springs, Colorado. *Very showy and persistent aromas of dark berries and black cherries with a hint of Moroccan spice. Terrific nose. Drinks like a berry smoothie with some herbs added in for health. Gossamer*

tannins, pillowy texture and racy acidity. A delightful drink with plenty of zip and zing.



2007 Kawarau Estate Central Otago Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$19.80, screw cap. Made from an organically-farmed vineyard located on the Pisa Flats of Cromwell. Certified organic by Biogrow NZ. Imported by Station Imports LLC, Colorado Springs, Colorado. *Restrained fruit with prominent oak char on the nose. Red plum and berry flavors with a vein of oak and citrus running through. A simple, fruit-driven wine that will appeal to oak lovers.*



2006 Nevis Bluff Central Otago Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$26.50, screw cap. Sourced from vines planted in 1993 in Gibbston and vineyards nearby. Imported by Station Imports LLC, Colorado Springs, Colorado. *Dried herbs and daisies on the nose followed in the mouth by rich, mouth filling strawberries, raspberries and cherries. The finish has good cut. A well-crafted, decent wine that is a bit bland but represents reasonably good value.*



2006 Rippon Lake Wanaka Central Otago Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$50, Diam closure. From a biodynamically-farmed vineyard. The proprietor and winemaker is Nick Mills. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. *I have nothing but superlatives for this wine which is filled with grace and vibrancy. Lovely strawberry and cherry fruit with a hint of spice supported by fine-grain tannins and crisp acidity. Elegant and refined with a smooth and velvety texture.*

Very Chambollesque. At 13% alcohol you can drink this comfortably with a good meal. The best Pinot Noir yet from Rippon.



All the wines above are available through Station Imports on the website at www.stationimports.com. Discounts are offered for multiple-bottle buys. If you are traveling to Central Otago, ask the Lovings to set up appointments for you to visit the Central Otago Wine Company and Rippon Vineyard.