

Excerpts from Robert Parker's Wine Advocate
April 30, 2008, Issue 176

Reviewed by Neal Martin

Rippon Vineyard, Central Otago, New Zealand

If ever there was a producer that gave a tantalizing glimpse of what New Zealand Pinot Noir can achieve with mature vines, i.e. over 20-years in age, then it is Rippon Vineyard, whose first, pioneering block was planted on schist soils by Rolfe Mills back in 1981 in Wanaka, Central Otago. The winemaking is now directed by Rolfe's ambitious son Nick Mills. His tenures in Burgundy with the likes of Jean-Jacques Confuron and Domaine de la Romanee-Conti are evidenced in Nick's occasionally superlative wines. Their 15-hectares of vineyard are now run under biodynamic principles although they are not as yet officially certified.

2004 Rippon Pinot Noir - 95 Points

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table Wine

Cost \$41

The real excitement starts with the 2004 Pinot Noir, one of the stars of the vintage, fermented with 12% whole bunches and matured for 16 months in 25% new French barrels. It is graced with a beautiful, sophisticated nose with light red cherries, rose petals and even a touch of musk. A caressing mouthfeel and with an effortless quality to it, this is a serious Pinot Noir that rekindled memories of those glorious Burgundy 2005's!

2005 Rippon Pinot Noir - 91 Points

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table Wine

Cost \$44

The 2005 Pinot Noir has a distinctive charcoal-tinged nose, the palate showing more concentration and weight than the 2004, the finish muted and more introverted.

2006 Rippon Pinot Noir - 95 Points

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table Wine

Cost \$50

The stunning 2006 Pinot Noir is a realization of everything I suspect Rolfe dreamt of when planting the first vines in the early 1980's. Using 20% whole clusters and matured for 18 months in 30% new French oak, this wine is distinguished by its spine-tingling tension and tautness on the palate. Its ethereal balance and intensity of fruit suggest this could easily age over 10+ years.