



WEDNESDAY WINES
 EPISODE 218 – NEWSFLASH
**2022 ESCARPMENT
 SINGLE VINEYARD
 PINOT NOIRS**
 – MATTHEW JUKES

Last Saturday, Escarpment Vineyard winemaker Tim Bourne unveiled the four 2022 single vineyard Pinot Noir releases at Escarpment Vineyard in Te Muna Valley in the Martinborough region of New Zealand's North Island.

I was lucky enough to taste these wines at almost exactly the same time in London, and here are my thoughts. The very first release of these wines dates back to the 2006 vintage, and 2022 is the third release with Tim at the helm of the new winery on the estate. Interestingly, 2022 is the first vintage in which three of the four single-vineyard wines have been made from vineyard sites in the Te Muna Valley.

In addition, I tasted the estate Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, which you will also find below.

ESCARPMENT KUPE PINOT NOIR 2022

19.5/20

.....

This is the most expansive Kupe I have tasted (and I am lucky to have tasted every release). Last year's 2021 was a revelation; this year's 2022 release is a more refined and distinguished creature.

Before you read on, particularly if you are new to these wines, it is essential to understand that these are not heavy wines. As you climb the ladder in other portfolios, you often find yourself wading in a gloopier pool. At Escarpment, you don't taste heavier wines, just those with Ultra HD, as opposed to regular HD! Like all the Pinots in this collection, the energy and impact of these wines are collectively interwoven to create complexity and resonance. 2022 Kupe sings, not like Brian Blessed, José Carreras, Chris Cornell, or any belter. It is Lennon, Elliott Smith, John Grant and other artisans (the female analogy is better, but I wanted to start with Mr Blessed because I felt a Pinot version of him would be hilarious), and the musicality, penetration, and not volume, coupled with flavour memory (not earworm, but smile-inducing toe-tapping remembrance) is what makes this wine so unique.

With 42% new oak for 20 months, which I cannot see for the life of me, and sensational length and complexity, this is another super-star release. (Drink 2026 – 2038)



ESCARPMENT

MARTINBOROUGH

ESCARPMENT KIWA PINOT NOIR 2022 18.5/20

Kiwa is a particularly aromatic wine, and its efforts are concentrated on lengthening as opposed to broadening the experience. This means it is more of a javelin-shaped wine than the others, and it adds precision and steeliness, as well as a remarkable degree of streamlined intensity by virtue of its inclusion of 43% whole bunches. The vineyard sits on deep alluvial gravels, and it seems these soils add even more tension and fitness to the whole. As always, with Escarpment wines, no expense is spared with the French oak budget, and while the technical notes report 40% new oak is employed, this woodwork lines up in a linear fashion along the entire length of flavour, so at no point do you sense any oakiness whatsoever. This is a pinpoint, accurate balancing act, and I take my hat off to Tim for ensuring that this wine flies straight and true on the palate. (Drink 2025 – 2030)

ESCARPMENT PAHI PINOT NOIR 2022 18.5/20

If Kiwa is the stiletto knife, then Pahi is a cutlass. Curved, broader, weightier and every bit as impactful, but a very different creature indeed. There is none of Kiwa's directness. Instead, you are rewarded with a richer, more impactful arc of flavour that seems stem-less and with fewer oak notes. I suspect this is because Pahi fruit results in a more lush and expansive style of wine, and it is drinking, too! Of course, the calibre of fruit in each of these wines means you can drink them all now, but Pahi is the first out of the blocks, and it is a beauty! (Drink now – 2032)

ESCARPMENT PINOT NOIR 2022 18/20

It is remarkable to think that this is Escarpment's 'estate wine' rather than one of the loftier cuvées. I say this because the perfume is dreamy, and the oak integration (there is a hint of new here), spice and cool, dark mineral tones bring a rigour and definition that belies this wine's standing. Medium-weight, garnet in hue and with a thoroughly refreshing finish, this is a carefully assembled wine with an air of grandeur that immediately flatters and soothes the palate. Delicious! (Drink now – 2028)

ESCARPMENT CHARDONNAY 2023 18/20

The mineral tones of Escarpment Chardonnay are never far from view, and in this vintage, they charge right to the front of the queue and join forces with the plush French oak tones and pithy, citrus-soaked Chardonnay to form a triumvirate attack on your senses. This is not a languid jellyfish of a Chardonnay that drapes itself over your palate and fills every one of your taste buds to the brim with fruit salad and clotted cream, but an urgent, tense and dynamic wine, bristling with crystalline fruit and freshly sawn, elite carpentry. With a slender 13% alcohol, this is a wine where less is most definitely more and given the NZ\$ price, I suggest you add it to your wish list ahead of its arrival in the UK. (Drink now – 2028)



ESCARPMENT TE REHUA PINOT NOIR 2022

19/20

If you leave Kupe to one side for a second (you will note it is priced on a different tier to the others), you might think that a Burgundy framework might work quite well for this stunning portfolio, where the pair of estate wines equate to village classification. Kiwa, Pahi and Te Ruhua are the Premiers Crus, and the pricey one, Kupe (below), might aspire to Grand Cru status. Now, I know this might sound somewhat irrational, but I am so taken by 2022 Te Rehua that any Burgundy comparisons seem facile. Te Rehua is no one's Premier Cru. None of the ancient Burgundian class systems make sense in New Zealand and I have been saying this for aeons. But, if the world were turned on its head, this wine and the next one would long have been grated GC status, so there, I have said it. This is an utterly incredible wine, with profound silkiness, magical depth and spectacular herb and stem details. With 21% whole bunches (I wish it had been 22 in 22!) and 43% new French oak, this is the best ever Te Rehua, and it stands a chance of being the finest wine ever made under this label. I have always liked this cuvée, but this is a revelation. Bang! (Drink 2025 – 2035)