

# Blackenbrook

VINEYARD

---

Nelson Wines that WOW!

## Blackenbrook wines full of flavour

By WARREN BARTON - The Southland Times

Nelson winemaker Daniel Schwarzenbach is away this week in Canada sipping, slurping and spitting his way through another of the international wine shows at which he is a judge each year.

Which makes a change to waiting for others to do the same and to pass judgment on the wines that he produces off the 14 gently sloping hectares he and his wife Ursula bought not far from the sea at Tasman, near Motueka, in 2000.

I can only hope that he is as impressed with some of the wines he gets to taste as other judges are with his, particularly with the aromatic varieties proudly branded with the English translation of his family name Blackenbrook.

It is a name that anyone interested in pinot gris, riesling and gewurztraminer will already have heard and one that those who have not should remember.

Daniel is Swiss. He emigrated to New Zealand with his family at the age nine and grew up to become a medical laboratory technologist, changing tack in the early 1990s after working for three years in the UK where his love affair with wine developed. Back home, he decided in 1993 to study viticulture and winemaking at Lincoln University.

Blackenbrook Vineyard 50 Baldwin Road RD1 Nelson 7173 - New Zealand  
Phone 0064 3 526 6888 wine@blackenbrook.co.nz www.blackenbrook.co.nz

Given his roots it is hardly surprising that he showed a special interest in the wines for which that part of the winemaking world is famous. And even less surprising that he returned to Europe to refine his understanding of and learn the skills required for growing and producing aromatic whites as well as pinot noir.

To do so he worked with noted riesling producer Weingut Hirsch in Austria, Weingut Engelhof in Germany and Fromm, the Swiss winemaker with a big reputation for gewurztraminer and pinot noir, wines it also produces from its Marlborough vineyards in New Zealand.

But one of the biggest influences on the path he would finally take came from Olivier Humbrecht, the perfectionist winemaker at Domaine Zind-Humbrecht, in Alsace, where he worked as a cellar hand in 1997.

Finishing school was Seifrieds in Nelson where in 1998 he became the chief winemaker, learning much of what else he needed to know from Hermann Seifried, the Austrian who established what is now the region's biggest winery.

Meanwhile, Daniel and his Swiss-born wife Ursula searched and found land on which they first established a vine nursery and, after Daniel resigned from Seifried in 2001, began planting vines they had grafted themselves.

Nurtured by organic (including seaweed) fertilisers and encouraged by worm-producing moisture-retentive mussel-shell mulch the vines have in the five years since the first crop produced a string of medal and trophy-winning wines, including sauvignon blanc.

If this means that wines are made in the vineyard, then yes, perhaps they are. But there can be no overlooking the importance of Nelson's ability to produce these varieties or Daniel Schwarzenbach's belief that it's the grapes that should do the talking, as he allows them to do in an eco-friendly winery designed to do just that.

**Blackenbrook Vineyard 50 Baldwin Road RD1 Nelson 7173 - New Zealand**  
**Phone 0064 3 526 6888 wine@blackenbrook.co.nz www.blackenbrook.co.nz**

The rest is down to passion and plain hard work.

The result is wines such as these:

Blackenbrook 2008 Riesling (\$23): A classy, intense and substantial wine with pure citrus, mineral flavours and a shake of spice. Already a stunner and its still unfolding. Medium dry.

Blackenbrook 2008 Pinot Gris (\$26.50): A gutsy, floral wine with plenty of pears, stonefruit and spice that is now beginning to reveal its luscious, lightly honeyed charms.

Blackenbrook 2008 Reserve Pinot Gris (\$31): More fragrance, richness and viscosity than the estate model but harder to get after earning trophy at the NZ International Wine Show. Medium dry.

Blackenbrook 2008 Gewurztraminer (\$26.50): An aromatic wine that's good enough to dab behind the ears, but even better to consume. Spicy and seductively smooth. Off-dry.

Keep an eye out also for Blackenbrook's sauvignon blanc, pinot noir and montepulciano.

