



from hands on *to bottoms up*

Summer at Blackenbrook Vineyard is a busy time for everyone.

Let us introduce you to the wines of the Blackenbrook family vineyard. The seven grape varieties prosper in the balanced maritime climate and the Moutere clay soil on the 20-hectare block halfway between Nelson and the Abel Tasman.

Daniel and Ursula Schwarzenbach are proudly hands-on, nurturing the grapes from the soil to the bottle in their sustainable vineyard and gravity-fed winery.

We are a small winemaker with a big vision and a genuine determination to improve the style in each vintage.

The hot Nelson sun is smiling above the vines and the already pea-sized grape berries will soon start to soften and change colour. It is a busy time in the vineyard with our team frantically tucking luscious green shoots between the wires and removing leaves around the fruit. Together with the constant air movement,

this allows the grapes to quickly dry off after any rain and thus reduce the need for sprays.

The next job is to trim the top and sides of each row and mow the grass one last time before the nets will be neatly draped over the entire vineyard. This is to keep the ever-so-hungry birds away from our precious crop. We'll have to wait another six weeks before harvest 2011 kicks off around 20 March – six long weeks of worrying about weather, birds and potential disease.

We no longer have to use any weed spray after designing a special under-vine mowing implement for our tractor. So many different species of grass and flowers can now be seen in the vineyard creating an exciting and varied habitat for beneficial insects and increasing soil balance.

And balance is what we strive for with everything we do in the vineyard. We

encourage deep rooting by removing irrigation after the establishment phase and natural trace elements are introduced through organic seaweed fertilisers. By carefully adjusting the crop load and leaf cover according to soil and vigour of each individual block, we reduce disease pressure and need for spraying.

In the winery, we feel less is often more. Our winemaking philosophy is to simplify and soften the processes so that the natural flavours of the grapes are interfered with as little as possible. That means fining, filtration, pumping and additives are kept to the bare minimum.

Consistency is not paramount. Each year produces grapes and wines with a slightly different character and that's fine by us. We try to get it 100 percent right in the vineyard and get balanced fruit, which equates to balanced juice and straightforward winemaking. In our



gravity-fed winery, we disturb the wines as little as possible and we rely on our palate more than lab analysis to get it right.

We have a great passion for Pinot Gris and are thrilled to see this variety consistently earning five-star ratings and gold medals including a trophy for Best Pinot Gris at the New Zealand International Wine Show (2008 Reserve Pinot Gris), a Bragato Gold (2008), and five stars from leading wine commentators Michael Cooper (2009 and 2010) and Bob Campbell MW (2007). In his latest Wine Buyers Guide, leading wine commentator Michael Cooper describes the Blackenbrook Pinot Gris as an 'emerging classic'.

So let's keep our fingers crossed for another two months of sunny and dry Nelson weather, so we can bring in a fabulous 2011 vintage!

Ursula Schwarzenbach
www.blackenbrook.co.nz

Toast of the season

Hans Herzog Marlborough Viognier 2009

Rich aromas and flavours of apricot, peach and tropical flowers. Full-bodied with significant weight and texture, balanced by a good acidity that provides a remarkable backbone to the wine.

Greenhough Hope Vineyard Pinot Noir 2008

"The 2008 vintage is a lovely, youthful wine, deeply coloured, powerful and concentrated. It has deep, ripe flavours of plums and spices, unusually savoury and complex, and the structure to age well." Five Stars, Michael Cooper, *Winestate Magazine*

Blackenbrook Pinot Gris 2010

"Harbouring 15 percent alcohol, it is beautifully floral, with fresh, very vibrant peach, pear and spice aromas and flavours, a hint of ginger, slight sweetness and lovely purity, delicacy and richness." Five Stars, Michael Cooper

