

Wine notes

Master of Wine **Emma Jenkins** welcomes the fresh new vintages now being released – they're the perfect partners for the season's lighter fare.

Suddenly, it seems, the garden is groaning under the weight of blossom and my morning dog walks are once again conducted entirely in daylight – spring has sprung! This time of year also heralds the arrival of the first of the 2017 wine releases, which are in turn the most spring-like of wines: fresh and zesty, bursting with fruit that was still on vines only a few short months ago. Redolent of the warmer days to come and meals once again enjoyed in the sun, they are also perfect for enjoying alongside new-season produce.

The new vintage wines making their appearance are those requiring only the briefest attention in the winery, essentially just squeezed, fermented, settled down in a stainless steel tank for a few months, then bottled and out the door. Typically, the first to emerge from the cellars are white wines such as sauvignon blanc, riesling, pinot gris and gewürztraminer (the so-called “aromatic” varieties), as well as unoaked chardonnay and rosé. This lightest of winemaking touches helps preserve the pure, vibrant fruit for which New Zealand wine is renowned, faithfully capturing the intense varietal characteristics.

The typically lighter-bodied style of these wines suits the fresh greens and lighter fare we tend to seek as the days grow longer. Keeping the wine/



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food flavour bases in line works best.

Sauvignon blanc has a natural affinity with asparagus as the flavours echo one another – add a little goat's cheese, perhaps in a tart or pasta, to create a divinely delicious combination. Riesling gives a zesty lift to seafood or Middle Eastern foods, as well as citrus-based puds – just take care to marry its sweetness level to your dish. Gewürztraminer is a bit of a mouthful to pronounce but is also satisfyingly mouth-filling in style – try it with a rustic terrine and good bread.

October is also a great time to spring-clean your usual wine choices and try something different. The varieties albarino and gruner veltliner (of Spanish and Austrian origins) are now quite common on wine lists and even supermarket shelves, offering zippy, slightly herbal whites with strong, fruity bases – think sauvignon blanc with an exotic twist. French variety viognier has been established in New Zealand a while longer, offering a fuller-bodied, rich stonefruit character that is wonderful with roast chicken or pork. And let's not forget to add a glass or two of sparkling wine on a warm weekend evening... Italian prosecco is spring's perfect light, fruity fizz.

The bright, lively wines below will have you embracing new vinous adventures in no time.

1. *Bella Italia*

NV JK.14 | TRE FRATELLI DOC PROSECCO \$23

Prosecco is Italy's popular sparkling wine and Jk14 are importing some crackers. This is light, dry and cheerful, with layers of frothy peaches, lemon and stonefruit.

PICK OF THE BUNCH



2. *Spicy delight*

2016 ALLAN SCOTT 'GENERATIONS' MARLBOROUGH GEWURZTRAMINER \$26

Richly aromatic with exotic spices, lychee, rose petal and quince, the medium-sweet palate is perfectly poised and elegant with a fresh finish.

3. *Super sav*

2017 GRAHAM NORTON'S OWN MARLBOROUGH SAUVIGNON BLANC \$18

Just as fruity as its namesake (who also happens to be an enthusiastic partner in Kiwi winery Invivo), this vivacious sauvignon captures all the joys

of spring with passionfruit, fresh cut grass and zesty grapefruit aromas and an intense, tangy palate.

4. *Pretty in pink*

2017 MATAWHERO GISBORNE PINOT ROSÉ \$22

A lively fruit-driven wine with

ripe strawberry, watermelon and pretty floral notes plus a well-balanced off-dry palate with a delicate texture. Add some rockmelon wrapped in prosciutto for a job well done.

5. *Vee-on-yeah!*

2014 ALPHA DOMUS 'THE WINGWALKER' HAWKE'S BAY VIOGNIER \$29

I was surprised to see the vintage of this wine, as its medley of ripe apricot, stonefruit, jasmine and mandarin were so fresh and vivid. With a succulent palate and elegant texture, it's a very smart viognier indeed.