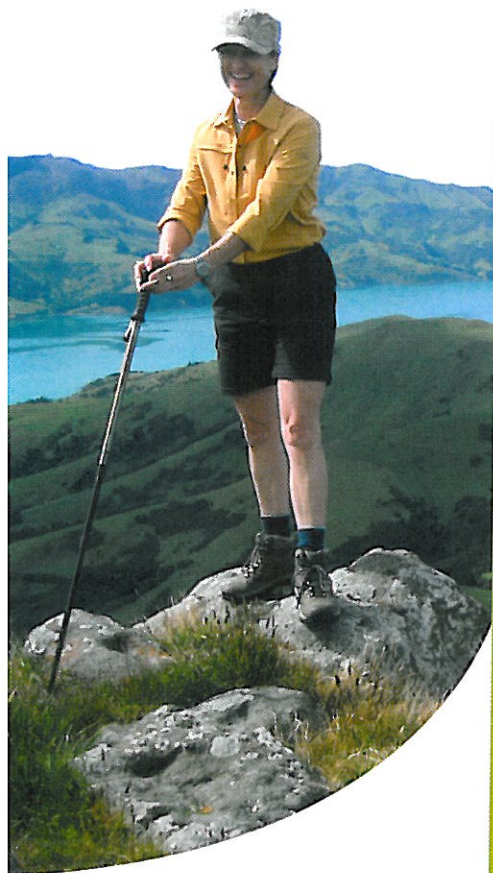


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nz pinot noir



Well over half the awards in this tasting were collected by one region, Central Otago

★★★★ **ELEPHANT HILL CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR 2008** \$29 | -3

Elephant Hill, like a number of Hawke's Bay-based wineries, looks to the south for grapes when it comes to Pinot Noir. The grapes for this wine were grown in Alexandra, and it delivers the succulent, bold, fruit-forward, velvety style for which this sub-region is renowned. [B]

★★★★ **ESCARPMENT VINEYARD PINOT NOIR 2009 (WAIRARAPA)** \$45 | 2-5

"Lovely swirl of spicy complexity," noted Nick Stock. That's Martinborough - and Escarpment Pinot maestro Larry McKenna - for you. The region's signature Christmas cake spiciness and the accompanying rich tannins lend this wine real interest and stature.

★★★★ **HAWKSHEAD PINOT NOIR 2008 (CENTRAL OTAGO)** \$38-\$40 | -7

Hawkshead has been a quality-driven label since it began planting its Gibbston Valley vineyard 10 years ago. This wine displays typical Gibbston complexity and drive: red and black fruit notes, a whiff of coffee, firm tannins and racy acidity. Not particularly subtle, but very effective.

★★★★ **KINGSMILL TIPPET'S DAM PINOT NOIR 2008 (CENTRAL OTAGO)** \$39.95 | -8

Excellent fruit concentration and flavour complexity mark this expression from Bannockburn (Tippet's Dam served as part of the old goldminers' sluicing

systems). Kirschy fruit notes are joined by brooding licks of spice and leather. Try it with a chorizo-rich paella. [D]

★★★★ **LOCHARBURN PINOT NOIR 2008 (CENTRAL OTAGO)** \$29-\$35 | -5

This Carol Bunn-made, Cromwell basin-grown Pinot flows like a large, slow-moving river. Round and softly textured with lashings of plush, dark fruit framed by an elegant tannin structure. The oak is a little forward, which was noted by some tasters. A fine partner for lamb rack with herbes de Provence.

★★★★ **LOWBURN FERRY HOME BLOCK CENTRAL OTAGO PINOT NOIR 2009** \$42-\$48 | 2-7

The panel was initially divided over this wine. The 'yays' praised its sophistication, intensity and lithe texture; the 'nays' felt it overly rich and oaky. After a spirited discussion, there was agreement it had too much going for it to be presented as anything less than a sexy, four-star Pinot.

★★★★ **MAIN DIVIDE TEHAU RESERVE PINOT NOIR 2008 (WAIPARA)** \$32.95 | 5-8

Thanks to a steady upward march in quality, Pegasus Bay's second-tier label, Main Divide, has become an annual must-taste for Pinot lovers. Quality Waipara Valley fruit was used to make this rendition, which is ripe, nicely structured, concentrated and rich in spicy, smoky complexity.

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