

LIVING

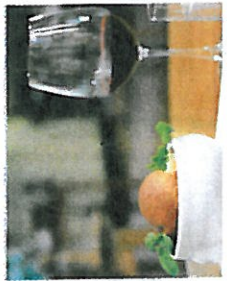
NE HELD CANVAS - 19 JUNE 2010! 40



FOOD



WINE



RESTAURANT



INTERIORS

26 | LIVING

WINE JOHN HAWKESBY

Tackling the taste test

WINEMAKERS OFTEN confess that in a blind tasting they sometimes can't pick their own wine.

I suspect that is the exception rather than the rule and red wines especially can evolve over time in the bottle, developing characters that may elude even the smartest of winemakers.

I put this to the test recently with veteran winemaker Danny Schuster of Waipara.

Schuster is one of New Zealand's great characters and respected palates. His viticultural and winemaking prowess means he is regularly flown to North America and Europe, most notably to the world-renowned Italian producer, Antinori.

Summoned by the aristocratic owners, the Antinori family, Schuster was asked "What will it take for premium Italian wines to overtake the best of France?"

Schuster, with his trademark twinkle, replied, "About 10 years and get rid of all the foreigners working in the vineyards. Find young, passionate winemakers born

RECOMMENDED

2008 Foxes Island Riesling

From winemaker, consultant and judge John Belsham. Hand-picked Marlborough fruit, producing a delicately tuned floral, flinty, supple, elegant and fresh medium style riesling. Lovely.

Price: \$34

2009 Elephant Hill Syrah

Hawkes Bay producer located on the Te Awanga coast. All the usual syrah character, smells of boysenberry, dark chocolate and anise. On the palate, ripe juicy black fruits. A great balance of spice and fruit sweetness.

Price: \$29

locally and train them."

That was a few years ago and Schuster still jets off to Florence to consult on a regular basis. Obviously he's an exception to

the "drop the foreigners" comment.

So meeting at a BYO restaurant, both of us have brought unusual wines from our respective cellars. Schuster reckons his Moraga-Bel Air Bordeaux blend 2004, a super premium Californian wine he consults for, will be hard to beat. I have a surprise wine already opened but hidden in a brown paper bag.

"We'll try this one blind first," I insist, "and I want you to tell me what it is, whose wine, the vintage, and country of origin."

He sniffs the wine in the glass. "New World... Southern Hemisphere. Pinot Noir... probably New Zealand but not your typical Kiwi style."

He takes a sip, then another and holds the wine for a moment in his mouth.

"South Island. Not Central Otago... could be 8-10 years old," he pauses. "Waipara... Omihiri Hills... It's mine, from 2001."

He's right. I ask if he's ever confused a pinot with a cabernet.

"Not before lunchtime," he replies. ©

