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Good Taste: Festivities

By [Rebecca Gibb](#)

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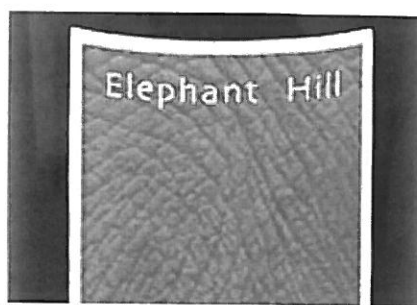
The wine festival and vineyard concert season is in full swing, with the next date for your diary the Hawke's Bay Wine and Food Festival on January 29.

The event sounds like a cracking day out with more than 20 wineries pouring their wines at Roy's Hill on the world-famous Gimblett Gravels. This sub-region of Hawke's Bay has come a

long way in the past 30 years when vines were first planted on a former riverbed. Previously, the land had been considered useless and was home to a go-kart track, rifle club and landfill site. Now the Gravels are full to bursting with red Bordeaux varieties such as cabernet sauvignon and merlot, as well as syrah, chardonnay and viognier. The world's wine critics rave about its wines and land prices have sky-rocketed.

The new darling of the international wine media is Hawke's Bay syrah but it makes up just 3 per cent of plantings here. Silver fox Tony Bish will be hosting a Kiwi syrah vs Australian shiraz tasting. Get your ticket for the transtasman challenge, and be sure to ask the Sacred Hill winemaker lots of difficult questions.

There will also be bands, DJs, a fashion show, and lots of food stalls at the festival. While you're supping wine, send the designated driver to the rather weird-sounding workshop on



Elephant Hill Sauvignon Blanc 2010, \$22.
Photo / Supplied

eggs titled "The seed of life – caviar, quail, chook and ostrich".

The event is sponsored by car manufacturer Mercedes, which is rather odd considering drinking and driving aren't natural partners. Take one of the organised buses to Roy's Hill if you are planning on swallowing not spitting.

Wines of the week

Sacred Hill Syrah 2010 (\$21.99, supermarkets, fine wine retailers) Peppery like a Steak Diane sauce, this would be great served with a fat steak. It's simple, juicy and full of attractive raspberries and blackberries with plenty of mouth-watering acidity to cut through that steak. You can't ask for more at \$21.99.

Elephant Hill Sauvignon Blanc 2010 (\$22, advintage.co.nz) Hawke's Bay isn't known for its sauvignon blanc but this one is really interesting. Delicate and balanced, it has lovely lemon sherbet, pear and green capsicum on the nose. It has texture thanks to some time in barrel and the acidity's well balanced. A really good effort.

Te Awa Left Field Merlot Malbec 2009 (\$26, Fine Wine Delivery Co) Like a pair of silk knickers, this wine feels amazing: it's smooth, supple and slips down. Reminiscent of violets and black fruits. At \$26 it's bloody good value – unlike those silk knickers.

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