

The Cellar Club Inc



Established in 1980

July 2024 Newsletter

Club Mid-Year Dinner

A CITY TAVERN

THE FEATHERSTON

· SINCE 1984 ·

142 Featherston Street, Wellington

Please arrive at 7pm, no later than 7:15pm

Where you will be greeted with a glass of Club bubbles

This is a B.Y.O. event, so please bring along your favourite wine, or two, from your cellars to share with friends.

Below is a reminder of the menu for the evening, noting that you have previously selected your courses for the meal and sent this to Wayne. He will be confirming your seating and food choices in the coming week:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Entrée | Prawn fritters
Woodys smoked chicken breast
Pumpkin & haloumi fritters |
| Mains | Honey roasted ham off the bone
Prosciutto wrap chicken breast
Pan fried fish |
| Dessert | Deep south vanilla ice cream
Sticky toffee pudding
White chocolate cheesecake |

As an interesting change to what normally happens at our dinners, your committee has decided to complement your dessert with a sticky wine from our Club Cellar.

If you would like to catch public transport for the evening, please note that there are both train and bus services available, that arrive and depart not too far from our venue.

Let's Look Out for Each Other

As always, please if you are feeling unwell, do not attend the evening's function. Thanks

Looking Back - Brockenchack, Australia

Darren Naylor from Brockenchack Vineyard in Australia, and a family representative [son-in-law converted from swimming coach], presented to us last month, when we had 26 people for the evening. Those that couldn't attend missed a great evening and an opportunity to taste some new flavours, as this is the first time this family-owned vineyard has presented to us.

Their vineyard is in Eden Valley, which is described as being 'Barossa's beautiful high country, one of Australia's premier cool climate wine growing regions, characterised by its rugged beauty and varied topography'. Darren explained to us the complexities of their property and vines, and the weather that effects their harvests, and how they work with other vineyards at times. And while all their wines matter to the family, their Shiraz is their primary wine.

He also revealed that other vineyards have started to use casks from Hungary, but they had found these to be inferior to the French or US casks, so they don't use these in their productions.

While their senior vintner is Joanne Irvine, if you would like to know more about their vintages, please go into [Brockenchack vintages - Brockenchack Wines](#).

To remind you of the wines we tasted on the night:

- Y NV Great Scott Sparkling Shiraz *the Welcome Wine*
- Y 2023 Mackenzie William 1896 Riesling – *cellars well, they are drinking their 2010 nbow*
- Y 2021 Charli Jaye Chardonnay – *made from Mendoza clone, only planted 12 years ago*
- Y 2023 Tru-Su Rosé – *made from their Shiraz*
- Y 2021 Zip Line Shiraz – *60-95 years old vines*
- Y 2021 Miss Bronte Cabernet Sauvignon – *from 12-year-old vines*
- Y 2018 Jack Harrison Shiraz – *this will cellar for between 10-14 years*
- Y 2018 William Frederick Shiraz – *special taster of a premium wine and one of only two corked wines in their cellar. The rest of their wines are screw-cap.*

Contact details for Brockenchack with their NZ Agent, based in Queenstown:

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Our NZ base: *Brockenchack Wines NZ Ltd*
Queenstown
New Zealand

Wine orders on the night were good, thanks to everyone.

Committee Musings

1. Membership is at the top of mind for your committee. We want to encourage all members to seek out new members and to help you do this, we are currently preparing a small handout for you to use when explaining who we are and what we do. This will not only highlight what a great value proposition we are, it will also mention our range of activities and promote our closeness to both the Johnsonville train line and the bus station.

Please remember to promote that as a bonus for potential members, our meetings are held in close proximity to both the Johnsonville Train Line and the bus station.

The committee is formulating a short pamphlet for anyone who wants one to hand out to explain our Club a little bit.

2. Thanks again to everyone who helps with the tables and chairs at the start of our evenings and taking the same down after the meeting. Also taking the tables contents: spittoons/water jugs/cracker plates back to the kitchen.

Looking Ahead:

Y **August** – Wairaki, Hawkes Bay

Y **September** – Misty Cove, Blenheim

Y **October** - tbc

Wine News – **Prominent NZ wine grower James Millton smuggled Aussie vine cuttings into NZ in a suitcase**

Tracy Neal, Nelson-based Open Justice reporter at NZME

A prominent New Zealand winegrower who established vines from an Australian cutting he hid in his luggage and smuggled into the country has been described as a “misguided romantic” whose fall from grace has been significant and painful.

The actions of winemaker and vineyard owner James Millton, who in 2012 was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the New Zealand wine industry, were described by a judge today as “utterly inexplicable” and “unfathomable”.

Millton, an internationally renown organic wine grower, has now been sentenced in the Blenheim District Court to five months of community detention and fined \$15,000 on charges linked to him knowingly importing goods with no biosecurity clearance and knowingly making a false or misleading declaration to officials at Auckland Airport.

The Ministry for Primary Industries charged Millton after a Blenheim nursery raised concerns over the provenance of cuttings he wanted grafted, which turned out to be from the illegal vines already established in Gisborne.

He later admitted illegally importing the grapevine cuttings in his suitcase, failing to declare them, and later planting them in his garden and vineyard.

Millton’s actions risked introducing a suite of pests and diseases that had the potential to cripple the New Zealand wine industry, which is also one of the country’s major export industries, that has so far developed with relatively little impact from unwanted pests and diseases, MPI said.

They could also have a significant impact on the wider New Zealand horticultural industry.

A statement to the court by the New Zealand Wine Growers Association outlined in stark terms what the industry feared as a result of biosecurity breaches, and that such actions put the whole industry, including 42,000 hectares of grape plantings, at risk.

Millton’s lawyer Peter Radich said while a risk was present, it was not in the league described.

“What we are talking about is two grape prunings of an inert kind - they are not like fertilised eggs,” Radich said.

During a trip to South Australia in 2019, Millton took the two cuttings from a Savagnin grapevine from his daughter’s vineyard in the Adelaide Hills - a vineyard he knew to be healthy and disease-free.

Savagnin is described as a variety of white wine grape with green-skinned berries, grown mostly in a region of France.

Millton was interested in the variety as it was not present in New Zealand and he wanted to cultivate it at his vineyard in Gisborne, and then later in Marlborough.

Radich said Millton was a “dreamer”, and an enthusiast who was on a “sensory expedition of his own”, but at age 67 his personal life had collapsed, he had suffered a massive life set-back from losing his business, part of his family and now the reputational damage associated with the offending.

Radich said that despite MPI’s submission that Millton showed no remorse and even downplayed the offending, he was a man who now “self-flagellated” and was sorry for himself and for what he had done.

“He’s a romantic, and in a romantic’s world these two dormant cuttings were not pieces of stick but capsules of his dreams and pathways to an exciting future experiencing the flavours of quality wines.

“He was a romantic, wanting an affair with a variety he met overseas,” Radich said.

Whether or not he had commercial intentions, as alleged by MPI but refuted by defence, was inconclusive, leading Judge Garry Barkle to render the argument irrelevant.

Nothing to declare

Millton wrapped the vine cuttings in plastic and placed them inside his suitcase, and on June 14, 2019, Millton flew from Adelaide to Auckland.

On the way he completed the passenger arrival card declaration and indicated that he was not bringing in any plants or plant product.

MPI said he knew this was false because he had the vine cuttings in his suitcase.

Millton handed over his falsely completed arrival declaration upon arrival and did not declare the grapevine cuttings when he went through biosecurity and customs at Auckland International Airport.

He took the vine cuttings home to Gisborne, where he lived at the time and in 2020 he planted them in a garden near his home at the vineyard.

He treated the cuttings with lime sulphate solution, which MPI said was neither an approved treatment for pathogens nor did it prevent unwanted viruses or other pathogens from surviving on plant material.

Judge Barkle said this showed he was not indifferent to the risk involved, even though it was not an approved treatment protocol.

Cuttings were later taken from these plants and grown in the vineyard.

In 2021 he took cuttings to a local nursery for grafting and falsely said they were “Chenin Blanc” grapevine cuttings.

The nursery grafted 134 cuttings and returned them to Millton who then planted them in the Millton vineyard.

Millton moved to Blenheim in 2022 but remained a shareholder in the Millton Vineyard business he and his former wife set up in 1984.

In 2023 he arranged for cuttings he called “Chenin Blanc Special Selection” to be sent to him in Blenheim.

He contacted a nursery in Blenheim and asked it to graft the cuttings for him, but after inquiring about the cuttings' provenance, the nursery declined to graft them and MPI was alerted.

Expensive and difficult

MPI said Millton was aware that he was required to follow a specified process to import grapevine cuttings to New Zealand, but he chose not to.

"He considered it to be expensive and difficult to bring them in legally."

MPI said Millton avoided the stringent requirements for importing nursery stock, including a minimum 16 months' quarantine in a registered facility for the stock to be inspected, tested and treated for regulated pests, which would have cost him just under \$5000 for two vine cuttings.

"There are many pests and diseases (bacterial, fungal, viral, insects) which, if introduced into New Zealand, could dramatically affect the production of grape vines grown for the wine industry."

Many of the pests and diseases could also have a significant impact on the wider New Zealand horticultural industry, MPI added.

The ministry said New Zealand's biosecurity system underpinned trade, primary production and biodiversity, and allowed animals, plants and food to be moved safely within New Zealand and to and from other countries.

Bypassing the system exposed New Zealand's primary industries to significant risks, MPI said.

Judge Barkle said in sentencing Millton that his ongoing conduct, after bringing the cuttings in, had compounded the offending he called deliberate and pre-meditated, and his extensive experience in the industry meant he was well aware of the procedures that had to be followed.

"His knowledge of this significant risk would have been far greater than the average New Zealander."

Judge Barkle gave Millton credit for his full co-operation with officials and for helping with the destruction of the cuttings, and all progeny.

In 2018 New Zealand businesswoman Joyce Austin was convicted and fined for faking wine export papers to the European Union, a crime which a judge and winegrowers say may have damaged the industry's reputation.

Austin, who operated New Zealand Boutique Wines Ltd (Boutique Wines), had admitted procuring wineries to falsify wine export applications for 44.5 cases of wine to be used as samples at sales events and for promotions in the Republic of Ireland.

Her sentencing was just days after Yealands Estate Wines pleaded guilty to its "unprecedented offending" of falsifying documents and adding sugar to its products and copped a \$400,000 fine.

Screwcaps

Screwcaps are still very welcome, please bring these along to any Club meeting and leave them with Anne, remembering that the cause that benefits from this collection is Kidney Kids NZ and their families.

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