

TE AWA
AND A 'BOUNDARY' RED VERTICAL
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By Raymond Chan

Te Awa Farm became Te Awa, following its purchase in 2002 by American financier Julian Robertson. Despite some unsettled times as is always the case with such events, the vineyards so well developed by the Lawson family and the winemaking under the talented Jenny Dobson have continued to create first-class wines from the Gimblett Gravels region in Hawke's Bay. Regional Wines was recently graced with Jenny Dobson presenting the latest releases under the Te Awa label. The wines covered a range of styles that demonstrated the region's suitability for different varieties, and Jenny's skills at fashioning a diverse portfolio. As a special focus, Jenny presented a small vertical of the flagship 'Boundary' wine, which highlighted the fact that Te Awa remains a most serious producer. In particular, the 'Boundary' wines are a testament to the blending prowess that Jenny developed from her stewardship at Chateau Senejac in Bordeaux. It is no coincidence that the 'Boundary' wine has much in common with the excellent wines from that famous vignoble.

Following are my notes and scores on the wines tasted:

Flight One: Rosé and Whites

Te Awa Hawke's Bay Rosé 2007

13.5% alc, based on CF, Sy and CS, saigné. Bright light pink with a youthful purple hue to the colour. Fresh, ripe berry and floral bouquet, sweet notes. Dry, this has good body, fresh, ripe berry fruit and a steely mineral edge. A little austerity gives quenchability. Softens a little on finish. A good dry rosé with a touch of delicacy. 18.0+/20

Te Awa 'Left Field' Hawke' Bay Chardonnay 2007

14.0% alc, unoaked, on lees 6 months. Very pale straw yellow, youthful. Fresh, pure stonefruit and citrus aromas with good ripeness. Dry, this has good body and ripe tropical fruits, clean and fresh, pure and simple, there is good acidity and good length. The acidity is prominent here. Described as "candy floss lemon pie". My score 17.0+/20

Te Awa Hawke's Bay Sauvignon Blanc 2006

13.5% alc, 50% BF and 15% fermentation in S/S barrels. The BF portion aged in oak for 6 months. Pale straw yellow with a pale edge. Ripe herbal nose with oak smokiness and barrel ferment characters, lees component, fine and tight. Elegant wine, with good power, depth and concentration. Some phenolic grip and allied to the acidity, this moderates the fruit richness a little. Oak works well with the fruit. 17.5-/20

Te Awa Hawke's Bay Chardonnay 2005

13.0% alc, clones 15, B95 and Mendoza from three sites. BF in 30% new French oak, aged 11 months in barrel, no MLF. Light straw yellow with some depth. Ripe melons and stonefruits on the nose, good intensity, but wine fineness. Some steely notes to the aroma. Lovely ripe fruits, on a medium weight palate. Slightly low acidity adds to the creamy barrel ferment texture, yet there is freshness and liveliness. Good long finish. 18.0+/20

Flight Two: Red Wines

Te Awa 'Zone 10' Hawke's Bay Cabernet Sauvignon 2003

12.0% alc, 100% CS, 12 days maceration, 17 months in 50% new oak. "Based on tannin." Dark, deep, ruby red colour, youthful hues. Fresh and clean bouquet, pure blackcurranty aromas, with herb and oak interest, just a hint of secondary development. Elegant, fine and tight on palate, this is more medium-bodied. The fruit is pure, with an aromatic lift to the blackcurrant expression. Well-judged and balanced extraction giving a dryness. Softening on the finish. 18.0+/20

Te Awa Hawke's Bay Syrah 2006

12.5% alc, 15 months in 20% new French oak. "Based on acidity." Very dark, blackish hued purple red colour. Very fine nose with white pepper and florals, good depth and intensity, beautifully fragrant. Elegantly sized wine with velvety, fine-grained tannins. The fruit is in the violet and white pepper spectrum, and this has spice notes adding to the interest. Good concentration. There is acid freshness and combined with the supple tannins gives good length. 18.0/20

Te Awa Hawke's Bay Pinotage 2005

13.0% alc. 10 months in 15% new French oak. "Made like Pinot Noir." Medium depth ruby red colour, youthful in appearance. Savoury nose, very Pinotage with smoky and earthy notes adding to the florals and berry fruit. Medium weighted, this is soft and full with savoury raspberry flavours and some floral notes. There is not quite the fruit richness to match the extraction and acidity. 17.0+/20

Flight Three: 'Boundary' Vertical

Te Awa 'Boundary' Hawke's Bay 2004

85% Me, 10% CS, 5% CF. Darkish deep ruby red with a garnet edge. Full nose, quite broad, plums, black berries and savoury game aromas with some dried herbs. Some pepper, spice and liquorice notes. A little raw and brackish with slightly herby edge to the dark berry fruits and pepper. A sweetness to the fruit, some plumpness. The acidity is apparent. Good richness on the finish and length shows. Needs time to come together. The third preferred of the flight for the group of tasters. My score 17.5/20

Te Awa 'Zone 6' Hawke's Bay Merlot Cabernet 2003

13.0% alc, 61% Me, 37% CS, 2% CF. Potential 'Boundary' declassified due to high Cabernet Sauvignon component taking the wine out of style for the label. Dark, deep, blackish red with ruby hues. Firm, intense nose, attractive, ripe varietal Cabernet fruit predominant, blackcurrants and mint, quite tight. Silky smooth on the palate, very fine and elegantly sized. Blackcurrants, plums and game show. Supple tannins, making this a refined wine. However, the least preferred of the flight by the group of tasters. My score 18.5-/20

Te Awa 'Boundary' Hawke's Bay 2002

13.5% alc, 68% Me, 16% CS, 16% CF. 23 days maceration, 17 months in oak. Medium deep garnet red with dark brick hues to the colour. Complex, savoury bouquet, plump with rich plum characters, some mintiness, savoury earthy aromas, good secondary development. Elegant and fine-textured palate, still tightly bound. Lovely fragrant and aromatic fruit, no doubt from the high Cabernet Franc proportion, with dried herb notes, complex with savoury flavours. The tannins are very fine-grained. Very, very long. The fourth preferred of the flight by the group of tasters. My score 18.5+/20

Te Awa 'Boundary' Hawke's Bay 2001

13.0% alc, 82% Me, 15% CS, 3% CF. 18 day maceration, 16 months in oak. Medium deep colour, brick red, orange on edge. Very elegant and fine nose, with good intensity. Lovely fruit-cake aromas, with cedar and earth, complexity from secondary development. Elegant, refined palate, with complex and fine secondary flavours, some resinous oak comes through. Cedar and game. Lovely supple palate that shows some good integration. The second preferred wine of the flight for the group. My score 17.5+/20

Te Awa 'Boundary' Hawke's Bay 2000

13.0% alc, 85% Me, 10% CS, 5% CF. Deepish black-red colour, some brick on edge. Full, dense, solid nose, powerful with earth and game aromas, plums, and cedar fruit still showing. Full-flavoured wine with dark fruits and plums, blackcurrants and ink. The fruit is full and generous, quite plump. The structure is full and concentration matches the extraction. Yet the wine is open. A bigger wine, with the potential to develop further. The most preferred wine of the flight for the group of tasters. My score 19.0-/20

Te Awa 'Boundary' Hawke's Bay 1999

13.0% alc. Lighter colour, mahogany and brick. Slightly subdued nose with savoury game, mushroom and brettanomyces animal aromas. Quite complex. Full and rich on impact, with developed savoury flavours. Tannins are prominent and the fruit expression is beginning to dry out the mid-palate. The brettanomyces component is not dominating the flavour, however. Sufficient interest for several of the tasters to enjoy it. However, the second least preferred of the flight for the group. My score 16.0+/20