

# Vintage report

# New Zealand Pinot Noir 2014

This vintage is set to trump the excellent 2013, offering more complexity, depth and promise, and the same lush, pure fruit, structure and balance. Cameron Douglas MS gives the low-down on the regions and recommends his top 30 buys

NEW ZEALAND PINOT Noir fans will be pleased to learn that wines from the 2014 vintage have the potential to equal – if not surpass – the very successful 2013s. Winemakers are tap-dancing at the results, and the 30 wines recommended here give support to that enthusiasm. Many of the highlights are from boutique or small producers, and/or organically or biodynamically managed properties, with high-profile estates also turning out some outstanding examples.

The notable 2012 and 2013 wines are still on restaurant wine lists and retailers' shelves, with the rest safely tucked away in the cellars of the wise. Though it is early to be evaluating the 2014s, some key examples are already on sale, so it is a good time to consider which may be worth investing in – for drinking and for cellaring. A number of the wines listed here are not due for release in the UK before April 2016 – they will be worth the wait, as from early appraisal, most of the best will reward that extra time in bottle.

The 2014s have more immediate complexity and promise than the previous vintage; ➤

*'The top-scoring wines should retain their energy and vibrato for six to 10 years, and longer'*

Photograph: Mike Prior. With thanks to The New Zealand Cellar (www.thenewzealandcellar.co.uk) and New Generation Wines (www.newgenerationwines.com) for the loan of the bottles



*'Wines from the 2014 vintage have the potential to equal – if not surpass – the very successful 2013s'*

## Douglas' top 2014 NZ Pinots

*Wines are listed from north to south*

### Auckland

**Kumeu River, Hunting Hill, Kumeu 18 (93)**  
£19 **Farr Vintners, Lay & Wheeler**  
Complex, alluring bouquet of very red & black cherry, sweet plum and raspberry, generous oak layer, savoury moments. Dry, savoury, intensely fruity, firm ripe tannins, plenty of acidity and great bones. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 13.5%

### Wairarapa

**The Elder, Martinborough 18.5 (95)**  
£33 **Must Wines**  
Savoury, silty, mineral beginning, red fruits led by cherry and strawberry, bracken, dried herb, very complex. Palate facsimile of nose. firm to fine tannins, well-judged oak, backbone of acidity, long finish. **Drink** 2018-2025 **Alc** 14%

**Urlar, Select Parcels, Gladstone 18.25 (94)**  
POA **Berry Bros & Rudd**  
Definitively complex, silty mineral and fragrant dried herbs, baking spices, macerated red fruits medley and oak. Dry, vibrant, ripe red fruit flavours, medium to fine tannins, lots of texture and polish. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13.5%

**Ata Rangi, Crimson, Martinborough 17.75 (92)**  
£19.49-£22.99 **Carruthers & Kent, Drinkmonger, Exel, Liberty Wines, The New Zealand Cellar**  
Concentrated, complex, very ripe fruit and packed with Pinosity. Dark cherry, strawberry, sweet plum and baking spices. Palate reflects nose, good tannins and acidity, silty mineral tones, vibrant. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 14%

**Te Kairanga, John Martin, Martinborough 16.75 (89)**  
£29.99 **Matthew Clark**  
Silty, savoury and mineral-laden bouquet with ripe berry fruit, toasty oak and soft brown spices. Firm, dry and packed with flavour, dark berries and plum, good tannins and a crunchy finish. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 14% ➤



Nelson

**Neudorf, Moutere** 18.25 (94)  
£24.50 **Carruthers & Kent, The New Zealand Cellar**  
Mineral and ripe, light red fruit led bouquet, silty stony soils, smoke and spices oak, definitive complexity. Dry, firm texture, vibrant ripe tannins, backbone of acidity, long Pinot-centric finish. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 14%



**Aronui, Single Vineyard** 16.5 (88)  
N/A UK **www.aronuiwines.co.nz**  
Gentle nose of cherry and light red fruit and apple skin, savoury and light dried herbs.

Lots of fruit and vibrancy on the palate, fine tannins, stony minerals. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 14%

Marlborough

**Te Whare Ra, TWR** 19 (96)  
£29.90 **Swig, The New Zealand Cellar**  
Exotic, fragrant, floral and fruity; ripe red berry fruits, wild ferment aromas of honey, light dried herb and sweet new oak. Lots of texture and spice with firm ripe tannins – delicious!  
**Drink** 2017-2026 **Alc** 13.5%

**Villa Maria, SV Southern Clays** 18.5 (95)  
N/A UK **www.villamaria.co.nz**  
Exciting bouquet – immensely floral with wild flowers, wild red berries, warm summer air and intensely mineral. Fresh, crunchy, juicy palate, dry stone, dusty clay, abundant tannins, complex, long finish. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 14%

**Nautilus, Southern Valleys** 18.25 (94)  
£22.90 (2012) **Christopher Piper, The NZ Cellar**  
Vibrant, complex and expressive bouquet with spiced red cherry and cranberry, noticeable mild toasty new oak, plenty of dry stone minerality. Delicious, complex, fruity and dry with firm yet fine tannins. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 13.5%



**Foxes Island, Fox by John Belsham, Awatere** 17.75 (92)  
£16.90 **The NZ Cellar**  
Complex bouquet with savoury ripe fruit, dried herb and stony mineral combination,

soft smoky toasty oak moments. Equally impressive on the palate with fine, silky tannins.  
**Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 13.5%

**Esk Valley** 17.5 (91)  
£17 **Amps, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Christopher Keiller, Coe Vintners, Eagle Wines, NZ House of Wine, WoodWinters**

there is more backbone in the acidity and finer tannin structure, as well as fleshy, plush fruit. By comparison, the 2013s displayed an exceptional purity of fruit, with a very clean and lush expression yet not quite the same depth of complexity. The 2012 vintage was a difficult one with a number of wines not quite reaching that essential sweet spot and heights of charm and elegance of both the subsequent vintage releases.

If you can tuck some of the 2014s away till 2017 and beyond, most of those wines rated 17.75 (92) or above should retain their energy and vibrato for six to 10 years, and longer in some cases. While the 2013s may follow a similar path, the 2014s show more tension, poise, minerality and depth, therefore more potential for ageing and bottle development.

New Zealand’s 2014 harvest was significantly larger than 2013, though the Pinot Noir crop only slightly so. Quality overall is high, influenced by an even bud break, few frosts, mostly warm, dry growing conditions and an earlier-than-expected harvest. The threat of rain in April pushed producers in most regions into hasty picking, yet more than 90% of the fruit came in at optimal ripeness and flavour. The net result is wines of complexity, depth, personality and – most importantly – great Pinot Noir character.

The largest percentages of Pinot Noir still come from Marlborough (2,492ha) and Central Otago (1,484ha), with Wairarapa (Wellington), Nelson and Canterbury maintaining significant plantings. A small



Above: Kumeu River’s famous Hunting Hill Vineyard produced one of Auckland’s best Pinot Noirs in 2014



Above: Ata Rangi’s winemaker Helen Masters and the founder of the Martinborough winery, Clive Paton, discuss the quality of their various blocks of Pinot Noir

amount of quality Pinot is also produced in Auckland, Gisborne, Hawke’s Bay and the Waitaki Valley, including from Kumeu River, Ostler Vineyards, Millton Vineyards, Mangaorapa Estate and West Brook Wines.

Auckland

Generally the wines are slightly leaner in style and lighter in body here, with ripe red fruit flavours, fine to moderate tannins and slightly more obvious oak. Keep an open mind about Pinot Noir from this region – 2014 is a definitively high-quality vintage. The growing season was excellent, with low disease pressure and near-perfect conditions for harvest. ‘One of the best flowering seasons I can remember,’ says Michael Brajkovich of Kumeu River Wines.

Wairarapa/Wellington

These wines show off their regional silty mineral core, plush strawberry/cherry fruits and very fine tannins. Wines from Wairarapa are for serious consideration: brimming with youth, concentration and ageing potential. ‘We didn’t get any real midsummer heat and saw a much cooler back end to the season,’ says Helen Masters of Ata Rangi Vineyard. Alistair Maling MW (Foley Wine Group) and Angus Thomson (Urlar Wines) seem quietly excited; though it’s early days, the concentration and complexity the wines are already showing demonstrate their potential.

Nelson

Overall these wines deliver on their core of fruit, very ripe tannins, structure and balance. With vibrant fruit flavours and naturally ➤

Complex, smoky, soft, a little mysterious, lots of red berry fruits, light baking spices, packed with pinosity. Juicy, fruity with plush textures and a touch of dried herb. **Drink** 2017-2021 **Alc** 13.5%

**John Forrest, Collection** 17.5 (91)  
POA **Adnams**  
Very complex mix of dark berry fruit, plum, toasty barrel, new oak, spice and very stony mineral, hints of dried herbs. Dry, warm, spicy and toasty, with plenty of tannin and acidity. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13.5%

**Marisco, The Ned, Southern Valleys** 17.5 (91)  
£14.99 **Waitrose**  
Savoury, fruity, mineral, light red and black fruit, dark red apple skin, finely tuned use of oak. Dry, packed with texture and whole-bunch flavour. Silky, rough-cut tannins and a youthful finish. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 14%

**Peter Yealands, Awatere** 17 (90)  
£14 **Carruthers & Kent, Enotria**  
Floral, perfumed and very fruity with ripe, sweet red fruits – raspberry, red cherry, red plum; brown spices mild oak moments. Dry with mild savoury, dry stone and red fruit flavours, fine tannins. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 13.5%

**Stoneleigh, Wild Valley** 16 (86)  
£14.99 **Pernod Ricard UK**  
Crisp, fresh and vivacious aromas of cherry, cranberry and sour strawberry, wild flowers, red apple skin, dry stone mineral and mild oak tones. Light weight, fine tannins, medium acidity. **Drink** 2016-2019 **Alc** 13.5%

Canterbury

**Pegasus Bay, Waipara Valley** 19 (96)  
£26 (2012) **D Byrne & Co, Fortnum & Mason, Highbury Vintners, Imbibros, Must Wines, NZ House of Wine, Swig, The Good Wine Shop, WoodWinters**  
Wow! Fabulous, complex bouquet of broody dark red berries, layers of mineral and savoury whole-bunch and dried herb nuances. Juicy, lush, generous and complex on the palate, with generous oak and ripe, very fine tannins. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 13.5%



**Tongue in Groove, Cabal Vineyard, Waipara Valley** 18.5 (95)  
£23.95 **Lea & Sandeman**  
Wonderfully complex and enticing bouquet of limestone-like

mineral, ripe red berry fruits, distinctive oak and spice moments. highly textured, complex, dry, ripe berry flavours, layers of oak, fine silky. **Drink** 2017-2025 **Alc** 14% ➤







Above: Neudorf’s 2014 Pinot Noir has been described by Douglas as having ‘vibrant ripe tannins, a backbone of acidity and a long Pinot-centric finish’



higher acidity, they are perfect for short-to middle-term cellaring. Most vigneron had one of the earliest harvests on record – ‘Fruit was harvested under excellent conditions,’ says Judy Finn of Neudorf Vineyard. Many of the wines (including the Neudorf) offer what I’d term the Gemini Effect – two sides to the story: great early drinking as well as ageing potential.

Marlborough

These wines reflect their provenance, with tense, poised, high-energy red-fruit flavours and dry, stony minerality. They would perhaps be better cellared and tentatively broached at the end of 2017 before deciding on their next period of ageing, which is likely another four years minimum. Many vineyards required fruit thinning: ‘We dropped more than 18 bunches per vine to get to the cropping levels we like,’ says Brian Bicknell of Mahi Wines. This attention to detail means the resulting wines reflect a holistic approach – depth and breadth on the palate coming from the quality of the fruit. The 2014 vintage here was one of the earliest of the last decade. ‘It was an exceptional vintage, characterised by a textbook summer and very even ripening,’ says Anna Flowerday of Te Whare Ra.

Canterbury

The wines of Canterbury – from benchmark producers as well as newer, emerging brands – continue to impress. Many wines show immediate complexity on the nose that carries through to the palate, fine tannins and fantastic texture prolonging the finish. ➤

‘It was an exceptional vintage, characterised by a textbook summer and very even ripening’

Anna Flowerday of Te Whare Ra (above)

Central Otago



**Burn Cottage, Bendigo** 19 (96)  
£40-£46 **Exel, Harvey Nichols, Highbury Vintners, Les Caves de Pyrène, Swig, The NZ Cellar, Vin Cognito**  
Seductive, floral and

gently perfumed with a core of light red fruits and sweet oak. Softly spicy and organic. Complex, plush, soft, generous and enticing. Very fine tannins, exciting wine, long finish. **Drink** 2018-2026 **Alcohol** 13.4%

**Felton Road, Cornish Point, Bannockburn** 19 (96)  
£22.50-£42.50 **James Nicholson, Justerini & Brooks, Les Caves de Pyrène, Stone Vine & Sun, The Secret Cellar, WoodWinters**  
Quietly fragrant with wild flowers, thyme and ripe red fruit, nutmeg and baking spices. Juicy, lush, fresh, precise tannins, firm acidity, long dry finish, abundantly textured, complex. **Drink** 2017-2026 **Alc** 14%

**Mount Edward, Morrison’s, Lowburn** 18.5 (95)  
£29.85 **Amps, Carruthers & Kent**  
Complex mineral, ripe berries and soft wild herb scents; newish oak and light brown spices. Equally complex palate, concentrated, lush and rich in pinosity, abundant fine tannins; very lengthy finish. **Drink** 2018-2026 **Alc** 14%



**Two Paddocks** 18.5 (95)  
£26.55-£33 (2012)  
**AC Gallie, Haynes Hanson & Clark, Love Wine, The New Zealand Cellar**  
Complex, intense and complete – a bouquet

with personality boasting layers of light red fruits laced with spice and minerals Fabulous palate, textured, ripe, finely tuned tannins and a lengthy finish. **Drink** 2017-2022 **Alc** 13.5%



**Maude, Wanaka** 18.25 (94)  
£20 **Boutinot, The Secret Cellar**  
Dark cherry, plum and dried raspberry, full of energy and tension, with oak spices. Dry,

generous and fruity, fine silky tannins are tense and flavourful. **Drink** 2017-2026 **Alc** 14%

**Rockburn** 18.25 (94)  
£18 (2013) **Hallgarten Druitt, Novum**  
Distinctive, fragrant, spicy, fruity and packed ➤

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with Central Otago pinosity, vibrant red fruits, just enough oak, complex. Delicious on the palate, firm youthful tannins, lightly savoury, tense long finish. **Drink** 2016-2020 **A/c** 14%

### Hawkdun Rise, Alexandra 18 (93)

N/A UK [www.vineyardstay.co.nz](http://www.vineyardstay.co.nz)

Fragrant, brambly and savoury, light red fruits, gently spicy oak and a whisper of smoke. Wonderfully balanced with flowing fruit, oak and fine tannins. **Drink** 2017-2024 **A/c** 13.5%

### Wanaka Road 18 (93)

£20 Alliance Wine, Carruthers & Kent, Highbury Vintners  
Broody nose of rich savoury dark red berry fruits, spicy oak with layers of spice and vanilla. Dry, textured, savoury and juicy, rough silk tannins, long finish. **Drink** 2017-2022 **A/c** 13.9%



### Black Peak, Wanaka

17.75 (92)

N/A UK [www.blackpeakwines.co.nz](http://www.blackpeakwines.co.nz)

Powerful aromatics, plum, black currant, black cherry, undergrowth, mineral,

spicy oak. Dry, firm, youthful, uber-ripe tannins, dark berry fruit flavours, plenty of acidity, lengthy finish. **Drink** 2017-2020 **A/c** 13.7%

### Grasshopper Rock, Earnsclough Vineyard, Alexandra 17.75 (92)

£25 Naked Wines

Complex with a core of mineral, ripe fruit and judicious oak. Sweet spices and toasty. Fleshy, lush and vibrant, firm tannins, backbone of acidity, dried herb, red beet, textured. **Drink** 2016-2022 **A/c** 13.4%



### Mt Difficulty,

Bannockburn 17.75 (92)

£25.90 Christopher Piper,

Halfwine, The NZ Cellar  
Mineral-laden bouquet with raspberry and dark cherry laced with oak and light baking

spices. Dry, spicy, fruity and packed with pinosity, dark berry fruits, fine tannins, fabulous length. **Drink** 2017-2024 **A/c** 14%

### Wooing Tree, Beetle Juice 17 (90)

N/A UK [www.woointree.co.nz](http://www.woointree.co.nz)

Brambly, dark red berry fruits, dried raspberry and crunchy black cherry, light brown spice and moderate oak. Pristine, juicy, fresh, core of red fruits and floral; fine tannins, lengthy finish.

**Drink** 2016-2020 **A/c** 13%

For full details of UK stockists, see p123



Wines from here have the potential to age for a decade or longer. 'Good flowering and fruit set, hot summer, nice ripening – great result,' says Jannine Rickards of Pegasus Bay.

## Central Otago

The wines from Otago are outstanding, with attention to detail in all aspects: ripe fruit, ripe tannins and ripe flavours, delivering wines with poise, tension, complexity and a great finish. The wines tasted so far promise real complexity, and a long life is assured for many, which will be drinking well from 2020.

The vintage delivered unusual consistency across all sub-regions. 'A mild winter followed by a warm, calm spring, above-average conditions for flowering, fruit set and even spring growth,' says Sarah-Kate Dineen of Maude Wines. Nick Mills of Rippon Vineyard in Wanaka says the wines are 'bright and forward – not as compressed as in recent years – which means they may reach their optimal drinking time earlier than usual'.

'We ended up harvesting over our normal time frame: early April till the beginning of May,' recalls Olly Masters of Misha's Vineyard in Bendigo. 'All the fruit was picked in pristine condition and we believe we've ended up with the best varietal expression to date.'

'Individual blocks and clones offered themselves for harvest at a steady, pleasingly unrushed pace,' recalls Blair Walter from Felton Road Wines in Bannockburn. 'Yields were balanced with good levels of acidity.'

In Alexandra, Otago's oldest wine sub-region, a few spring frosts meant lighter bunch weights, but a healthy outcome overall.

'The fruit was in exceptional condition with excellent flavours and balance – it was a cracker!' enthuses Phil Handford of Grasshopper Rock Wines. If his 2014 is indicative of the rest of the production, then it's a must-have for the cellar – keep it safe till 2018 for the first sip. **D**

**Above: the Pinot Noir harvest gets underway at the Wooing Tree vineyards in Central Otago**

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