

KEEN ON WINE by Ricky Collins

Picking grapes, scoring wines

At the time of writing, harvest time is just around the corner for hundreds of New Zealand wineries and, hopefully, all their effort over the past year comes to fruition.

Choosing just when to pick their grapes can be tricky for winery owners, viticulturists and winemakers as they have to deal with several factors. For boutique wineries, the availability of pickers can be one of those factors.

Mark Borrie and Trevor Deaker have owned the relatively small Central Otago vineyard Tussock Ridge since 2001, producing pinot gris, pinot rose and pinot noir under the name of 8 Ranges Wines. Every few years, I join a crowd of their friends and family to spend a weekend picking their grapes. After a day-and-a-half of harvest you certainly know what manual labour is like, but it's



Grapes under cover at 8 Ranges Wines vineyard, which overlooks the Clutha River.

also great fun and a chance to get some hands-on experience at a winery.

Tussock Ridge overlooks the Clutha River between Alexandra and Clyde, and is just above the Central Otago Rail Trail. It has panoramic views of eight mountain ranges, so, spending time there picking grapes is certainly not hard on the eye.

When I visited Tussock Ridge a couple of weeks ago, it was pretty obvious that Mark and Trevor's vines were in great shape for this year's harvest. While there, I also evaluated two 8 Ranges wines from the 2013 vintage using the new wine scoring system I've developed.

I've built my system using multiple criteria decision-making software, known as 1000Minds (1000minds.com). Rather than me just picking a score out of 100 for each wine, I select the most appropriate descriptor for each of the 13 criteria I've built into my wine scoring model. The software then uses mathematical algorithms to calculate an accumulated percentage score, out of 100 per cent, from the 13 criteria descriptors I choose. I use these criteria:

- Wine faults
- Colour
- Aroma
- Varietal or varietal blend characteristics
- Aroma/flavour consistency
- Balance
- Depth and complexity of flavour
- Terroir
- Mouth-feel/texture
- Finish
- Length
- Wine and food matching
- Ageability

It may sound convoluted, but the feedback I've had is that it is a robust and transparent means of explaining my score for each wine I taste and evaluate.

So, here are my thoughts on the two 8 Ranges wines and the scores I awarded them using my 1000Minds wine scoring model.

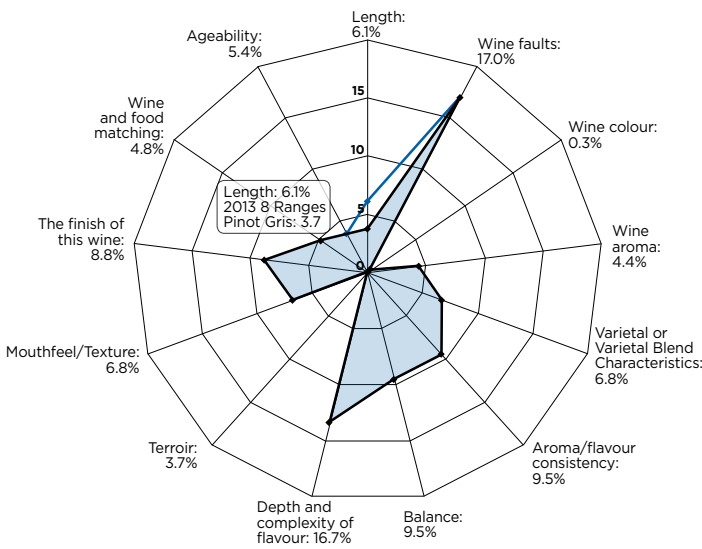


2013 8 Ranges Pinot Rose
Direct Order Price \$25
Score 91.2%

8 Ranges has traditionally focused on making a high-quality pinot rose and its 2013 release lives up to its high standards. It's very aromatic with strawberry and cream featuring. Taste-wise, there's a blend of different red berries, some nuttiness and a touch of spice. It has very good balance and a lovely silky finish. This is a great summer wine, best served chilled on a hot day.

2013 8 Ranges Pinot Gris
Direct Order Price \$25
Score 88.8%

This is a very bright, shiny wine, with pear and spice on the nose. On the palate the pear is less obvious, with pineapple and citrus fruits dominating. There's a zing to it on entry, followed by a broader mouth-feel, good structure and balance. While this is a drier-styled pinot gris, it has definite fruit sweetness that's very appealing. This wine should age very well and be even better when matched with fresh fish. I tried it with blue cod caught that day and it was sensational.



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