

Ep 36 The Wines of Central Otago with Paul Pujol from Prophe...

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SPEAKERS

Paul Pujol, Janina Doyle



Janina Doyle 00:07

Welcome to Eat Sleep Wine Repeat, a podcast for all you wine lovers, who, if you're like me just cannot get enough of the good stuff. I'm Janina Doyle, your host, Brand Ambassador, Wine Educator, and Sommelier, so stick with me as we dive deeper into this ever evolving wonderful world of wine. And wherever you are listening to this, cheers to you.



- J** Janina Doyle 00:30
Hello lovely wine lovers. So today's episode is all about Central Otago. So this incredible region, the most southern wine region in the world, you can learn all about the terroir and the geography there and I'm chatting with a very special winemaker Paul Pujol. He has many experiences from working so many vintages around the world. So you're going to learn all about his journey and those wine regions, as we speak. We're going to look at different vintage variations, how that affects the grapes, his winemaking techniques, what he's learned on his journeys, and the other very famous winemakers that he has worked with. So instead of me talking and giving a bit of an educational aspect myself, I'm just going to go straight over to Paul, who will do all the work for me. I hope you enjoy this episode.
- J** Janina Doyle 01:20
Thank you so much, Paul. I'm so excited to talk to you and ask you all these amazing winemaking questions. So thanks for joining.
- P** Paul Pujol 01:27
Magic, great to be here.
- J** Janina Doyle 01:29
It is magic, isn't it? And the fact is that as we were just talking before I press the record button, you are 12 hours ahead so I've already found it just exciting and crazy and weird that here I am just after eight o'clock in the morning about to sip some wine but you're getting ready for bed. Probably got your slippers on and dressing gown, no?

P Paul Pujol 01:47
Yeah, well I've had dinner and and sitting down with a glass of wine for a chat. It's great.

J Janina Doyle 01:52
Actually, it is a nice time for you to sit down for a glass of wine but then again, my palate is going to be more awake than yours. This is the best time to taste.

P Paul Pujol 02:02
This is true.

J Janina Doyle 02:02
I say that, I've drunk some coffee. Do you think I've tarnished your wines already?

P Paul Pujol 02:07
Yeah, I'll be listening for your tasting comments

J Janina Doyle 02:09
Yea I'll be like, "um it's like mocha, the white wine is really mocha and coffee like, I think."
Okay, so for anybody who doesn't know who you are, Paul Pujol... so where did the last name come from by the way?

P Paul Pujol 02:20
Well my dad was French but he got lost in New Zealand, as you do and meet my mother and convinced her to go back to France with him, despite not having any English and they got married in France and then moved back to New Zealand just before I was born.

J Janina Doyle 02:40
Did he learn some English?

- P** Paul Pujol 02:42
He learned on the job and unfortunately for his English his job was, he was a boilermaker, so it was a fairly floral dialect of New Zealand English that he was picking up. A lot of interesting adjectives around the edges.
- J** Janina Doyle 03:02
Well, either way he got your mother. Here you are, you obviously speak fluent French then?
- P** Paul Pujol 03:07
Yes with a shocking New Zealand accent.
- J** Janina Doyle 03:10
Oh, if only I could speak French and then I could actually pick it apart but I can't see you're safe. So tell me. Okay, you have done amazing wine making trips all over the world, haven't you and spent a decent amount of time in France which now of course makes sense why have you gravitated there as obviously easier with your beautiful New Zealand French! Can you tell us about your amazing wine journey around the world before coming back to New Zealand because I think it's pretty intense. It's kind of mega.
- P** Paul Pujol 03:38
Sure. I studied in New Zealand. I did like a lot of people I did a few degrees and unrelated areas just to test out the university system and finally found my passion in Viticulture and Enology. So went and studied those at Lincoln University, which is just outside of Christchurch, and it's interesting when you do find your passion in terms of study, you go from basically bumming through university on straight sort of C grades to sort of topping your courses. Because it's fun, and it's interesting and you enjoy. So, found my passion and then worked in Marlborough, initially for Seresin Estate, umm, in the vineyard and followed the grapes through into the cellar. At the time, they were one of the very few organic producers and making the sorts of wines that I was really interested in learning more about which was traditional techniques like wild fermentation, which was a lot less common in the late 90s than it is now.
- J** Janina Doyle 04:45
For sure, well New Zealand winemaking, the industry really hasn't, it's actually very very

young, isn't it? I'd say what was it 1970s is that when kind of Sauvignon Blanc came to Marlborough. Am i right? 1980s?

P

Paul Pujol 04:56

I mean people people were making kind of all sorts but in terms of actual kind of fine wine, the really big development was through the 80s and into the 90s. So it's really in the 80s, that when people started getting serious about premium wine, whether it was in Martinborough or in Marlborough and in Hawke's Bay and so on. Before that, you know, because of government regulation, there was a lot of fortified wine. And yes, it was. It was Yeah, it was a lot less exciting. Lots of big jars of sherry, you know.

J

Janina Doyle 05:35

Oh, okay. Well, you've come a long way since then.

P

Paul Pujol 05:38

Exactly. But I guess back to Marlborough: So I was there for a year and that was a really formative experience for me seeing, following the fruit and seeing how everything that I'd picked up in the vineyard matched the end result of the wines. The blocks of grapes that were in lovely balance and very healthy, where the yield was really good and the fruit had loads of flavour, they were always the best wines. So you realise very quickly, there's kind of no shortcut. And Seresin kindly gave me the winter sort of off to go and do the northern hemisphere harvest season. And I was very keen to get to France, and I guess sort of fill in the blanks around old world and more traditional winemaking. And I was also pretty keen so I came up with a stupid idea to try and do 5 vintages in 12 months.

J

Janina Doyle 06:33

How stupid. That is pretty remarkable though. Yeah, 5 vintages in 12 months. Easy.

P

Paul Pujol 06:38

Yeah. It's a sort of like a competition of you know, how many tanks and barrels do you want to clean in a year? You know?

J

Janina Doyle 06:46

Yeah, it's not as romantic as people might think.

P Paul Pujol 06:49
Yeah, so how many 90 hour weeks do you want to work. So we did the vintage in the year 2000 in Marlborough in March and April. That winter I went to France and kind of followed the sun so, I did vintage in the Languedoc-Roussillon, in the south, because they kick off in August and did sort of a month or so there, and then went up to Sancerre where I had a connection with the Bourgeois family in Chavignol, who have a Domaine in Marlborough now and that's how I met them. Yeah, called Clos Henri.

J Janina Doyle 07:26
Of course. Yeah, I've had the Clos Henri.

P Paul Pujol 07:28
Yeah. So I'd met them when they were looking for land and so worked with them and their harvest is quite compressed because geographically it's a small area but also, it's only Sauvignon and Pinot, so it all comes in pretty quickly. And then, I went to Alsace, and they start in October, and, and my plan was then to do the Hunter Valley in Australia on the way home in January/February, before coming back to Seresin. So making it 5 harvests in 12 months.

J Janina Doyle 08:02
Did you come back?

P Paul Pujol 08:03
I didn't I got stuck in Alsace.

J Janina Doyle 08:05
I was going to say, as that's not the story I remember. Now you ended up working for a fantastic winery in Alsace. Now, do you pronounce them Kuentz Bas? Am I pronouncing it correctly?

P Paul Pujol 08:18
Yep, that's the one.



Janina Doyle 08:19

Now you might not big yourself up, which is why I'm gonna say this part because as we've already said, a kiwi looks at their shoes when they get a compliment. So, from the literature that I read, you not only their first ever permanent foreign winemaker, but since they started in like the 1700s, they had never had a winemaker that was not part of the family. And you just came on in there, announced yourself and said, "Hey, guys, I'm taking over. I'm taking over this roller coaster." Didn't you, basically.... Not quite?



Paul Pujol 08:49

In my head, you know, I was so enamoured with the wines of Alsace. I was determined to get there to work harvest and I was just so happy that I'd managed to get into this famous Domaine and I just thought I was there for harvest. And so I didn't realise that the winemaker was leaving and that they'd actually been looking for a while for a winemaker. No one told me anything. I just thought I was there to you know, clean tanks and you know...



Janina Doyle 08:54

Stir around some wine!



Paul Pujol 08:55

Exactly. Load the press and things like that. And so it was really at the very end of vintage where I remember the director saying "oh make sure you leave some time for us to have a chat before you make too many plans". And I was like, ah okay, I wonder what he's on about. And so turned out that they, you know, they offered me the head winemaking position, well basically in charge of production so responsible for the vineyards as well.



Janina Doyle 09:48

Well that's it in France, as well, you are vigneron, you don't just make wine. You take care of the vines, and that must have been so amazing working with, they have so many Grand Cru sites in Alsace. Did you prefer to make the Rieslings or the Pinot Gris, or it was just use equal. What was the most exciting thing about....?



Paul Pujol 10:03

Just the whole, the whole lot. Like Alsace is, for a winemaker, Alsace really is the ultimate

sort of Disneyland theme park of winemaking where you have, you know, 50, I think 51 now Grand Cru, all on different soil types. We're I was working, had holdings in half a dozen. You're dealing with old vines planted before the war. You've got 12 different grape varieties. You're making wine in 200 year old Foudre that you've got to seal the door with a sort of, sort of like a paraffin wax.

J Janina Doyle 10:42
Oh my gosh, wow.

P Paul Pujol 10:43
So the whole thing is just this absolutely amazing kaleidoscope of varieties, winemaking techniques, and different terroir and amazing how, and it really teaches you how different, the difference, that different soils and sites make to finished wine. Yeah, like an example of that was below the village Husseren-les-Châteaux where Kuentz Bas are, there's 2 Grand Crus sitting, the Husseren-les-Châteaux is the highest village on the Route des Vins. And so the vineyards lie sort of below it. And as you drive down to the next village, to the valley floor, there's a Grand Cru on either side of the road. And so we had great Riesling in both and we always picked them on the same day, the same elevation you could see one block from the other. And they were just the most opposite wines you can imagine.

J Janina Doyle 11:39
Just literally one side of the road compared to the other. How interesting

P Paul Pujol 11:42
Like one was floral and as Pfersigberg means 'Hill of the peach trees' in Alsatian dialect and would often have that sort of blossom and peach aroma. And the other side the Eichberg which means 'Hill of the oak trees' because there used to be an oak forest there, was very mineral, very steely, and basically takes, you know, five to seven years before it'll even start to open up. And you know, just amazing to see how those sorts of famous sites translated into wine, I wouldn't have experienced coming from New Zealand.

J Janina Doyle 12:09
Amazing. I'm gonna pause that story, because you've been able to bring back all this knowledge to New Zealand and I have the Pinot Gris in my hand because yeah, we should break things up with a little bit of drinking. Have you got the same? Have you got the

same wine as me? Have you got the Pinot Gris with you?

P Paul Pujol 12:35
I do I do.

J Janina Doyle 12:36
Do you have the 2018? Or did you decide to throw me off and bring a different vintage?

P Paul Pujol 12:40
No no, I've got the 18 as well.

J Janina Doyle 12:43
Yay. So I love this nose. For me this wine is so textural, it is beautifully perfumed and aromatic, exactly as I would expect a Pinot Gris to be which I just want to point out for anyone listening. Pinot Gris typically is the flavoursome style of Pinot Gris whereas when you see Pinot Grigio, typically from Italy, it may be picked a lot earlier and it's much just greener. They're very, very different. And this is just sublime. So how do you make your white wines? How do you make your Pinot Gris? I'm gonna have a little sip. Now once you tell me.

P Paul Pujol 13:15
Well, I think the key to Pinot Gris for us, our approach, and I think what really creates the biggest points of difference is really in the viticulture. So we found the grapes with very low yield and so we have a lot of concentration of flavour in the fruit. And we're really fortunate in Central Otago, that we're in a climate where Pinot Gris needs a long slow ripening process to get aromatic flavours into the grapes. If you pick it in a hot climate early, it doesn't have time to develop any flavour. And so we have a climate here in Central Otago where you can ripen the grapes into an aromatic spectrum but you hold acidity because our nights are really cool.

J Janina Doyle 14:00
You have a really long, I mean you have really long summers, don't you? I mean it's, this is the only continental climate wine region in New Zealand, isn't it?

P Paul Pujol 14:09
Yeah, well, semi continental because...

J Janina Doyle 14:11
Semi sorry.

P Paul Pujol 14:12
We like to think, we'd like to think we're a continent but we really only an island or two. But we're Central Otago is, we're surrounded by big mountains. So we're cut off from the maritime influence, whereas New Zealand's other growing growing regions, are maritime climates. And so our summers, because of the latitude, we're one of the Southern most areas growing wine in the world.

J Janina Doyle 14:36
45 degrees for anyone.

P Paul Pujol 14:39
Yeah 45 so we're the same as Patagonia and Chile.

J Janina Doyle 14:43
I have mentioned in other podcasts in Patagonia, the most southern vineyard in the world and officially it is in Argentina, but you are the most southern commercial winemaking region because ultimately you have that one winery in Patagonia whereas as a region, you are the most southern commercial wine region right. Take it, take it.

P Paul Pujol 15:01
Yeah. We'll take it. There's not a lot of competition in the southern hemisphere, because on the 45th parallel, there is basically us, Patagonia and a bunch of whales, so you know, like there's essentially just ocean.

J Janina Doyle 15:17
But let's talk about Central Otago just for a second, because everybody who hasn't looked

online should google it or should go and visit if you can. These are like incredible snow capped mountains everywhere and all these beautiful panoramics and loads of valleys and glacial lakes and it's just stunning. It's an amazing wine region. That's pretty extreme.

- P** Paul Pujol 15:35
Yeah, absolutely. And it's very small. There's only 2000 hectares of grapes in Central Otago in six different sub regions. So for scale, there's there's many many wineries around the world with more grapes than that themselves. I guess what's interesting about Central Otago, there's a tendency sometimes to think of new world wine regions as being one thing. So you think of different regions in South Australia or New Zealand, you think of them as sort of, you have a sort of formed idea that the region is one thing but in Central Otago, there's 2000 metre mountains between two of our sub regions, you know, like...
- J** Janina Doyle 16:14
Yeah that makes a difference. Absolutely. Just a little bit.
- P** Paul Pujol 16:17
So the climates not, between the areas, is really distinct and different each season. So it's not a region I think that you want to sort of pigeonhole is one style or one thing because each site is going to be so different.
- J** Janina Doyle 16:31
And I would say your site, you have two vineyards, they're both in Bendigo sub region. Am I correct?
- P** Paul Pujol 16:37
Yeah, they're both in Bendigo on sort of...
- J** Janina Doyle 16:39
Bendigo. Bendigo, everyone repeat after me. Bendigo. Yep.
- P** Paul Pujol 16:45
The names in Central Otago are thanks to some pretty unimaginative gold miners.

J Janina Doyle 16:51
Yeah, well that is what it was built in, wasn't it?

P Paul Pujol 16:53
Yeah, who kept recycling the same names from previous gold rushes that they'd been to in other countries. So there's a Bendigo and a Bannockburn in Australia. And then those names were recycled in New Zealand.

J Janina Doyle 17:11
But this, okay, so Bendigo is actually probably one of the the more warmer sub regions with say, Bannockburn, as you said, and Cromwell Basin, they're the warmer ones.

P Paul Pujol 17:21
Sure. Yeah. No, no, that's right. Of course, it pays to be a little careful. Because you know, warm for Central Otago doesn't mean warm, like, I don't know, the Barossa or something like, you know, you're in a properly marginal region. So an example would be two weeks ago, the vines have started growing here at Spring. And so we've had bad burst. And two weeks ago, the entire region got covered in snow. So...

J Janina Doyle 17:50
that must have been tough.

P Paul Pujol 17:52
Yeah. So...

J Janina Doyle 17:55
A challenge.

P Paul Pujol 17:57
Yeah, so it didn't matter if you were in the nominally warmer sub region, or the cooler sub

region..

J Janina Doyle 18:04
You were still stuffed.

P Paul Pujol 18:05
Yeah, it's snowed everywhere. So you really are in a marginal climate. And it's, I think, on the fringes, where you see, with cool climate, grape varieties, the best expressions. You know, when you think about Burgundy and Pinot Noir, its a marginal climate, you know, they have very difficult seasons and face a lot of the same challenges that we do. And likewise, likewise, in Alsace. To get an aromatic expression of Pinot Gris, there needs to be a cool climate, again, sort of on the edge of, of getting it ripe so that you've got acidity and you've got that richness in the wine, and you're getting that concentration and aromatic expression.

J Janina Doyle 18:44
I'm getting all that in this glass right now. I love it. I actually don't know, it's a shame - It's a shame I haven't got the Riesling because Riesling was always my favourite before, but that was back in the past when we first met and I think that's, we go back like seven years. So who knows? And but this for me, and for anyone who's wondering this is dry. This is, there isn't ummm...How much residual sugar would be in this?

P Paul Pujol 19:08
It depends on the year because all the ferments are wild, the wild ferment, the indigenous yeast very rarely go to zero grams of sugar. They're not selected, like cultured yeast, commercial yeasts are. So there's typically between sort of 5 to 10 grams residual sugar and which helps, which helps to balance the naturally high acidity that we have.

J Janina Doyle 19:31
I would not have even guessed that I would have been saying 2 or 3 just because yeah, the acidity is fantastic, but for me, it's about, I love this peachy, apricoty, kind of, the texture, the silkiness on the palate is very round. Do you do any lees stirring?

P Paul Pujol 19:47
No lees stirring.

J Janina Doyle 19:49
Or is it left on the lees?

P Paul Pujol 19:50
It is for a long time. So..

J Janina Doyle 19:52
okay, so that's where it's kind of maybe just adding that little texture.

P Paul Pujol 19:55
So basically, I make the Pinot Gris the same way that I made the wines in Alsace, so they are whole bunch pressed and there's no skin contact. They're all wild ferment and old barrels. And I don't, I don't unfortunately in New Zealand, it's really hard to find 200 year old Foudre like you have in Alsace, like they just don't exist here. But hey anyway, I, we do what we can. So we've got a bunch of smaller old oak barrel, so completely neutral barrels, some of our barrels are over 20 years old. And so barrels are really nice environment for indigenous yeast wild fermentation and then ferment takes place pretty slowly. Our ferments are normally going for three to four months. Oh, wow. Very long slow ferment. And so a lot of the wines from that vintage, are already released by the time ours have only just finished fermentation.

J Janina Doyle 20:57
Absolutely. That's a very long fermentation. What do you feel that does? Intensify? Homogenise? It just brings out, it lifts out the aromatics more, by doing a much longer fermentation?

P Paul Pujol 21:08
Yeah, I think wild yeast will always be less vigorous and slower to ferment, then commercial yeast. And the difference being that with a commercial yeast, you have one strain that you throw in your wine and of it goes. Whereas what with wild yeasts you've

got all of the different species of yeast that are coming in with the grapes and so it's almost like a kind of crazy relay race, with all sorts of different strains adding their little piece to the wine, and they're always much slower. Our autumns get cold quite quickly as well. So the temperatures aren't that warm, and I just I think you get a lot of depth and complexity from that, you definitely get more texture. And then once ferments have finished, we just leave it, we don't rack the wines, we leave them on all of the gross lees, what we call it, until just before the next harvest and we only bottle just before the next vintage. So the wines have had 10 months on lees with no steering. We're not trying to impact the flavour profile of the wine, like you might do with a Chardonnay, but it does help give the wines that weight, depth of flavour, those layers and the complexity.

J

Janina Doyle 22:18

I love this. I get more the apricot on the palate, but the nose is it's just so full. There's even, there's Apple, there's lemon peel, there's honey suckle, it's very floral, it's a bit spicy, even like a bit of, even like ginger or cinnamon or something. It's, It's gorgeous. So what, do you agree with that?

P

Paul Pujol 22:34

No absolutely. You get a lot of spices in that wine like every year. Depending on vintage, there's normally a sort of an interesting little continuum of pear flavours, where in 2018 which is a warmer year, it's more in the sort of Nashi pears, quite crunchy. Whereas it can be in really sort of white ripe Poire William flavours in other seasons. Yeah, I was always fascinated by the wines of Alsace and my mission going to Alsace was to work out why those wines have that amazing texture. When you, when you blind taste Alsace aromatics against the New World, the texture always jumps out at you. And what I realised when I got there was that no one bottles their wines three months after the harvest, like we're so fond of during in the New World. They leave them in the Foudre on lees, they bottle them before the next harvest. And part of that it's keeping the Foudre full because you don't want them drying out and starting to leak. But there is a trade off. You need to build some bottle age into those wines because when they've had that long lees contact, you get amazing texture but the wines take more time to open up. So your classic New World winemaking where it's fast, temperature controlled, stainless, you know, bottled very quickly. Those ones will be really overtly aromatic you know, almost from the word go. Whereas this longer...

J

Janina Doyle 24:05

A little shy. These are shy wines.

P Paul Pujol 24:07
A longer approach. Yeah, it takes time to open up.

J Janina Doyle 24:10
You've got to tease them out.

P Paul Pujol 24:12
Yeah, well and the plus side is they aged incredibly well. They open up, and they get, they get more expressive and more fruity as they age, rather than starting off with everything and fading.

J Janina Doyle 24:22
Yeah. Okay. Well, I've had a look in the UK. You can get this from Vinvm - I mentioned them a few times, they actually have so many wines that I'm trying, so they're a great source for amazing wine. And they're selling this for £22 a bottle. Definitely worth it and I would so have this with like Thai fish cakes or something like mushroom on toast or just any kind of spicy, not not overly spicy not at all, but just kind of that, that kind of lighter, fresher curries, Thai, Indian, these kind of dishes, I think, you know, it pairs perfectly with any of these fusion dishes. It's got a, I think Pinot Gris, especially the way you've made this with the texture and the acidity, it has so much versatility.

P Paul Pujol 25:00
Yeah it's an amazing food wine and this style of Pinot Gris, absolutely, because you have the weight and depth of say Chardonnay, but without those strong dominating flavours that are going to jump all over the food like new oak or really strong malolactic characters and so, but it can stand up to spice and strong flavours, like you say with Thai, it works really well with Coriander, Ginger, a bit of chilli and so on.

J Janina Doyle 25:29
I haven't had my breakfast. Obviously I am not going to have Thai food for breakfast but still you make me hungry. And Also, if anyone doesn't believe how yummy it is from mine or Paul's opinion, I mean this is, this is in the Fat, well it was, let's, I mean, who knows now what's going on with the restaurant situation, but this was in The Fat Duck. If anyone doesn't know; Three Michelin Star restaurant in England, so you know, they know their

stuff. I think that's a top recognition for how good this wine is. No?



Paul Pujol 25:53

Yeah, that was, that was a really fun visit and amazing to have the wine on the fixed menu at The Fat Duck for a season was really special.



Janina Doyle 26:01

Well there you go Prophets Rock - tick. If they don't believe me that your winery is amazing. I mean, there you go! Can we go back to the story now? So you're in Alsace, you're making these super wines, learning everything about Alsace. You were there for about three years, right?



Paul Pujol 26:15

Yeah, that's right.



Janina Doyle 26:16

And then you said, You know what, guys? I've got more to do. I've got more to learn. I got to, I've given you the best I can, I gotta go now. Is that what happened?



Paul Pujol 26:23

Well, I guess, you know, the short version is that I sort of chased Pinot Noir and aromatic whites, cool climate whites, around the world, and ended up back in New Zealand because from Alsace, I went to a small organic producer in Oregon called Lemelson Vineyards and spent a couple of years there, basically macking, not the amazing 12 varietals set that you get an Alsace, but focusing on similar sort of varieties, so Pinot, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, and an interesting place to work at. A lot of similarities to Central Otago in terms of, at the time, the size, is a little bigger now. You know, a really close knit winemaking community and that amazing focus and drive for cool climate Pinot Noir.



Janina Doyle 27:13

So do you think Pinot Noir for you has been, What attracts you to cool climate varieties? You've obviously led yourself down that path rather than Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz. And you know, so what is it for you?



Paul Pujol 27:27

I think it's a lot of things, that seemed to me quite early on, that the wines that were the most engaging to me and really spoke to me, they were both from marginal climates. So where life was pretty tough. And you know, there was no guarantee of success. And they were these cool climate, grape varieties. And I guess my first love was viticulture, so I really love the farming and the growing of the grapes. And when you're dealing with cold climate varieties, you know, in places like Central Otago, the farming is everything, like you're on the line. And that's where you win and lose. Same in Alsace and Burgundy and Oregon and in Central Otago. If you get it wrong in the vineyard, you're not making a viable or high quality wine. And so I really enjoy that challenge. And the wines seem to speak of it too. There's just so much depth, complexity and interest in the wines from those climates. You know, even like you were talking about Cabernet, but when you think of, you know, the wines of Bordeaux, like for Cabernet and Merlot and Cabernet Franc and so on, that's actually a marginal climate. So...



Janina Doyle 28:48

They have all their own problems, don't they.



Paul Pujol 28:50

Yeah, so again, you're on the fringes and you could say the same for the Northern Rhone for Syrah. So, in my case, I really gravitated towards cool climate where I liked the challenge and I really enjoy everything you do is trying to push the grapes towards getting ripe. You're not in a climate where it's really really hot and you're trying to preserve acidity or pull back ripening. You know, all your efforts are in a really positive direction of making sure your yields are low, you know, you're keeping the vines healthy and disease free. You know that you're picking them at the right time that you're watching the weather and it's really grounding. You're completely responsive to what these cold climates are throwing at you. You can't go in, you can go into a place like Central Otago with a game plan at the start of the season because it'll be blown out of the water straightaway.



Janina Doyle 29:51

I think, I love hearing you say that because I think for people listening, people often you know, they take a glass of wine, 'Umm this is delicious', and they drink it and it's all good. Very often we forget to like, look into that glass, smell it and taste it and really think like, wow, what happened in that year? What did the winemaker have to do to make it? There's so many decisions, gambling, chance, you know, winemaking techniques, there's

so much that goes into a glass of wine. And we often forget how difficult it can be how exciting how...

P

Paul Pujol 30:19

Oh absolutely. And the wines themselves carry the memory and the souvenir of that entire growing season in your glass. And so in the case of the 2018 Pinot Gris that you've got, we had the warmest growing season on record for us, which sounds impressive, but remember, we're down near the icebergs. So spring was like summer, and it stayed really, really warm. And so by the time we got to within a couple of months of harvest, we knew we were going to be picking earlier than we'd ever picked before. And so I was like, Oh my god, you know, we're gonna be picking in March. What does that even mean? And then I realised that in a northern hemisphere context, that would be the equivalent of picking in September Yeah, which would be a completely normal harvest in Burgundy. So I was like oh ok. Clearly Pinot can grow on this time frame, you know. It's just us that are freaking out. But I guess one of the things that translates to that wine is that you think, okay, it's going to be this really warm season, but on the first of February, so, you know, just six weeks before we picked the grapes, it snowed on the first of February in the hills, in the middle of summer.

J

Janina Doyle 31:36

Yeah. Oh, good fun.

P

Paul Pujol 31:38

And there was a frost on the valley floor, which didn't affect us. And the month of February was one of our coldest months of, you know, summer months on record. So you had the hottest season on paper, but the lead in to harvest was actually really, really cool. So what you had was a vintage that was really solar and driven by all the sunshine and so you get those ripe flavours in the glass, but the lead into actually picking the grapes was really quite cold. And so you have that freshness and vibrancy that comes from quite a traumatic February where it was cold, and cloudy and kind of rainy. So, you know, all of, all of those conditions end up in your glass of wine, which is, which is pretty cool.

J

Janina Doyle 32:20

I think that a lot of people are very much like, okay, vintage matters in Burgundy, Bordeaux, just in the old world in general, because marginal climates, things are very tough. When we think of the New World, we're like, oh, it's okay. in general. Yeah, it's a lot

more standard. You don't need to worry as much. New world winemaking techniques. They're making wines that you can just open up straight away and enjoy and it sometimes makes things easier. However, I think that that's a great stereotype. But it really is not fair to say for Central Otago, with your type of climate with how extreme it is, I would imagine and I know from tasting different vintages, the vintages really do change and do matter in Central Otago, don't they?

P

Paul Pujol 32:59

Yeah, absolutely. I think because we've now got a lot of experience here as a region, you know, the grapes, the grapes, we always managed to get them ripe. So you're not dealing, you know, yeah, you're not dealing with truly kind of off vintages, if you like, where the Pinots are going to be green and vegetal. And you know, the whites aren't going to have any aromatics, like the viticulture is tuned in to the point where we can manage our vineyards to achieve ripe, high quality premium wines every year, but there will be significant vintage variations. So the 2018 Pinot Gris is, is really quite different to the 2017. Quality wise, like, you know, like, if you were scoring them, you'd probably end up scoring them, you know, very similarly but you wouldn't be saying, Oh, yeah, that's clearly a flavour really the same wine. They're very different flavours profiles.

J

Janina Doyle 33:58

So I now got in front of me, the Pinot Noir, The Home Vineyard 2015. So how was 2015 as a vintage for Pinot, and the worse thing it's probably, it's different for Pinot as it's different for Riesling, it's different for Pinot Gris.

P

Paul Pujol 34:12

Yeah, absolutely. So whereas in 2018. You had a season that was warm early with a warm finish to winter and southern very early summer, if you like that, that stayed hot for a long time. And with a cool finish and an early harvest. With 2015. We had quite a mixed spring. You know, there were some light snow falls in the hills that called things off. And it finally settled down to a pretty reasonable sort of a summer with some fairly decent rainfall at the start of March. But the picking, the picking date for Pinot in 2015 was a month later than it was in 2018. The vintage of the Pinot Gris. So in 2018, was a bit of an anomaly in terms of how early it was, but you will get differences in picking data of weeks, you know, between seasons. And so in 2015, I guess what was interesting about that harvest was normally by the time we get into April, which is when the grapes were picked for this wine, which would be October say in a Burgundy context, normally our temperatures are getting pretty cool. So the day you'll have these lovely blue sky days, just pristine sky and

no wind with a cold morning, that will be you know, under five degrees when you go out into the vineyard, so it'll be cold, which is nice for the fruit that comes into the winery nice and cool. And the day will only sort of just scrape up to 20 if you're lucky, whereas in 2015, coming into the harvest period, we had a little Indian summer where temperatures were actually getting up into the mid 20s consistently for a few weeks, there were a couple of little rain days and harvests that didn't really affect us in terms of when we wanted to pick things, but it was a vintage that I think of is a little more solar like sometimes in Burgundy, they talk about mineral and solar vintages. So you know, have you had, has your ripeness been driven by sunshine and UV on the fruit or has it been driven just by time so and in a cooler cloudier vintage, you know, you'll still get to the finish line if you like but the journey will just take longer, whereas in a solar vintage like 15, you've got lovely sunny skies and so there's a sort of warmth and a little more spice I tend to find in the 15.



Janina Doyle 36:43

Hmm, for me, I think I find it quite savoury and masculine in terms of there's lots of, you've got that these lovely cherry notes, but it's lots of even herbs and thyme and there's a bit of wet earth, and maybe some crushed leaves. It's autumnal, perhaps I should say for me, and I get this autumnal vibe. I haven't actually tasted it. Wait, wait, wait for that. Now, for me, it's very, it's grippy and it's big and it's full. I mean, you talk about an ageworthy wine This is not a flouncy, is that a word? You know, this is not a pretty, this is not a pretty Pinot that skipping and dancing down the street. This is pretty robust, and it's saying hey, look, listen, I'm here for the long term. There's some really grippy but very ripe tannins and there's quite a powerful Pinot. Darker, it's a brooding Pinot Noir for me. I love it and actually I can see the, yet if anybody is used to Pinot Noir that's red cherry fruits and lovely and soft and new world and yay it's, it's not that at all.



Paul Pujol 37:46

Yeah, I don't think anyone's ever described out Pinot as being a fruit bomb.



Janina Doyle 37:53

Not at all. That is the complete opposite. It's very impressive. This is a very serious Pinot Noir. Again, the oak flavours are really in the background, it's not very okay for me. A little bit of spiciness, a little bit of black pepper in there in the finish, and actually I think that this wine, it'd be interesting, I should decant the rest for dinner. I think this will absolutely, you know I poured this in the glass and it was in a glass for probably about half an hour before you know, I have drunk it I think it will really open up and probably give me so much more I can tell that actually it probably is a little bit tight this needs time. This is a

big wine.

P

Paul Pujol 38:30

Yeah, it's a vineyard this definitely not scared of getting some oxygen. You know, it does take some air to really open up and you know the florals and so on come out with a little bit of time in the glass or in a Decanter. I still decant the 2015. It's a vineyard that takes a while to unwind. And the 2015, so sort of five years on, is about when it starts to show his colours for me, in a really, in a more open sort of engaging way. Yeah.

J

Janina Doyle 39:00

You said you're playing the long game. These are wines that are not necessarily, of course you can open them up when they're released, but these are wines that really can age and so very much like in France. Some of the best wines when they talk about amazing vintages as well, you need to wait 10 years and then you're going to really see them giving you, you know, in their glory, right?

P

Paul Pujol 39:18

Yeah, absolutely. We try and hold the wines back and sort of release them with a bit of bottle age on them. But you know, collectors will certainly be rewarded. It's interesting your comments, I'd I tend not to think of it, I guess you know, I've been here a long time, as being a sort of a big, you know, big masculine Pinot or something. Umm the site itself, because of this elevation you're up at 400 metres, is right on the edge of where you can grow grapes in our region. It starts to get a bit too cold higher than that and the soils interesting. It's an ancient glacial terrace that was carved out a long time ago and the schist rock, which is the parent material of the region, has been withered down to clay and chalk. And it's that chalk and the soil that gives it that drying, slightly sort of grippy tannin profile. Yeah, it's not from winemaking. It really is a character of that site. In fact, you know, my journey with their vineyard has been really interesting where I've progressively eliminated all the elements of winemaking input that I thought took the wines away from the vineyard. And so obviously, they're indigenous yeast wild fermentation. Very early on, I eliminated using the stems or whole bunches and the ferment because at our elevation on our site, it gave a pronounced flavour, which was nothing for me to do with the terroir, was really a winemaking input, and stood apart from the wine. So get rid of whole bunch, it's all destemmed. And I guess the biggest journey was, I ended up essentially eliminating extraction so that wine was only hand punished once for the whole time it was in tank for fermentation. So essentially, no extraction, and yet it has all that structure.



Janina Doyle 41:15

Yeah, the colour is, I mean, you know, we're not expecting something that's really really deep, but it is exactly how I would expect a standard, in terms of colour and concentration, to be. So the fact that you're doing you know, you said one hand punch down and no pumping overs and no, wow, okay, impressive. That just shows how terroir really can make an effect, right?



Paul Pujol 41:35

Yeah, it's one of the amazing things about Pinot Noir is, it will give you this wonderful expression of place without plunging it and extracting the hell out of the wine in the winery, or having to add tonnes of oak or stems and trying to sort of manufacture something. If you really step back, what it revealed to me as I made that shift, was you suddenly had the natural tannin profile of the vineyard, which was so much more elegant and beautiful than what I was constructing in the winery with my clumsy winemaking.



Janina Doyle 42:09

Ha ha. Come on, stop it. I mean, so just for anyone to know, this is actually kind of the flagship Pinot Noir. Anyone again in the UK, I can say it's about £30 a bottle. You make some other Pinot Noirs. Now you make a wine with François Millet.



Paul Pujol 42:24

Yeah, that's correct.



Janina Doyle 42:25

Did you go to Chambolle-Musigny? For anyone, Chambolle-Musigny is an amazing place in Burgundy. Did you go there and do some vintages or work with Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé? Am I right?



Paul Pujol 42:35

No, no, that's correct. I got invited to work a vintage there in 2009.



Janina Doyle 42:41

That's pretty special right?



Paul Pujol 42:42

Yeah. And Chambolle-Musigny, well is, you know, amazing. For me, that's the, just the, the global epicentre of Pinot, and to work at de Vogüé way, this domaine that's been around since the 1400s was just absolutely amazing. And another formative experience in France. And François and I, you know, really connected and discovered, you know, I'd never met him before, that we had all these common points in terms of our winemaking philosophy and approach, and sort of funny weird things, too. We're walking into the barrel cellar there. It turned out we used the same barrels. Like the same cooperage, the same forest and the same toast levels, ha ha.



Janina Doyle 43:31

Oh, you were wines soulmates.



Paul Pujol 43:34

Which was kind of odd, even though neither of us think that new oak is like a really crucial part of top Pinot. But anyway, we connected in terms of our approach. When you look at his wines in Chambolle, and he's also making wines with us, for himself with his family at home, as well. What you see is the most transparent lense on the vineyard you can imagine, like the wine clearly can only be from a place, it's not from a person or a winery. And I just absolutely loved working there. And his son came and worked, Julien came and worked with me in Central Otago in 2013, and ended up staying in Central Otago for a year and a half. So during that time, François and Michelle came out to visit a couple of times and stayed up at the vineyard. And you know, François really like the wines. He really loved our vineyard. And so I sort of cheekily suggested that if he liked it so much, he should really come and make some. And to my surprise...



Janina Doyle 44:39

Put your money where your mouth?



Paul Pujol 44:40

Yeah. Well, and to my surprise, you know, he said, Yeah, that would be really interesting. And so we came up with this collaboration.



Janina Doyle 44:52

And this is called, can you pronounce it? Is it Cuvee Aux...



Paul Pujol 44:55

Cuvee Aux Antipodes or you know. You can call it Antipodes, I don't mind.



Janina Doyle 45:06

I wasn't sure. I would imagine it would have the French way. That's why I wanted to see how you say it. Are you both, between the two of you, the collaboration, you're making the Pinot Noir and also a white because I know you have the Blanc version as well.



Paul Pujol 45:17

Yeah, no, that's right. So with those two wines, so François comes out. He comes out at least twice a year. Obviously, that's been a little more difficult this season, thanks to global pandemics and things but he will come at least twice basically with the Pinot and the Chardonnay, or the Cuvee Aux Antipodes Blanc. You know, I really wanted it to be his vision, to really just facilitate François making his expression of Central Otago, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from from our sites.



Janina Doyle 45:51

I think that's so exciting.



Paul Pujol 45:53

Absolutely and fascinating for me to see someone else's interpretation and winemaking of fruit that I've made every vintage, you know.



Janina Doyle 46:03

Yeah, no for sure.



Paul Pujol 46:04

It's like, it would be like having a guest chef in the kitchen, using the same ingredients, making the same menu, but you know that it's gonna be different. You know, there's so much nuance to winemaking where even if our philosophies are quite similar, you're going

to have different wines.

J

Janina Doyle 46:22

I just think it's amazing, Paul, you make stunning wines. I've tasted so many of them so, well not all of them. Feel free to send me the most expensive ones. That's fine. But I have to say for anybody who hasn't tasted any of Prophet's Rock, they really are sensational wines. Central Otago offers something pretty special. It's a very different area so people should really get involved but there's so much more we could go into but I just think, Thank you. It's so interesting. just explaining your journey. It's got me excited I'm so glad I have the rest of the bottles to drink.

P

Paul Pujol 46:55

No perfect. Thanks for having me. Always happy to to chat about this region. It's been remarkable for me to, I guess have chased those wines around the world, but to have ended up somewhere that I connect with as strongly and that is as beautiful as Central Otago. Being able to make the wines that I'm making, is just an amazing place to have ended up. I'm pretty happy here.

J

Janina Doyle 47:18

Well, we're happy that you're making those wines. So thank you so much for joining us today. And and I guess Good night. I'm gonna start my day and sleep well.

P

Paul Pujol 47:26

You have a good day.

J

Janina Doyle 47:27

You have a good night. Take care. Bye.

P

Paul Pujol 47:31

Cheers.

J

Janina Doyle 47:35

So seeing as Pinot Noir really is the king grape variety of Central Otago, I will finish off

with a nice wine quote about this great variety. Now, sadly, it's from Rex Pickett, who is an American novelist, not New Zealand, my apologies. But he is most famous for the novel and the film Sideways. So this is a very interesting wine film if you haven't checked it out, so go and have a look at that. Now he says:



Janina Doyle 48:01

"Pinot Noir country, my grape, the one varietal that truly enchants me. Both stills and steals my heart with its elusive loveliness and false promises of transcendence. I loved her and I would continue to follow her siren call until my wallet, or liver, whichever came first, gave out."



Janina Doyle 48:23

How many of you would agree with that? So as I always say, guys, if you haven't subscribed, if you haven't commented, shared, all these kind of things, it really does help the podcast become more discoverable. And for all of you who cannot get enough of all the action, please go to patreon.com/EatSleepWineRepeat where you can become a Patreon member of this podcast and listen to exclusive episodes just for you. So yes, more my voice and more, wine knowledge. So until the next episode, cheers to you.