

Ep 62 Marlborough, New Zealand with Kevin Judd: Cloudy Bays ...

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SPEAKERS

Janina Doyle, Kevin Judd



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 00:31

Hello to you wonderful wine lovers. Happy Monday. So within the wine industry, there are always winemakers who certainly changed the course of history. And I'm talking to one of them today. Now how many of you drink Sauvignon Blanc? And how many of you drink it from Marlborough, New Zealand? Now Sauvignon Blanc originates from France specifically in the Loire Valley. So Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé are the regions that will give you the best examples, but Marlborough has simply created a style, an intense, pungent, aromatic way of drinking Sauvignon Blanc that has just changed the outlook of so many wine drinkers. But this style of Sauvignon Blanc only started in the 1980s and started with a winery called Cloudy Bay. Now many of you have probably heard of this winery, it's become pretty infamous around the world. Now the winemaker I'm talking to, Kevin Judd was the first winemaker of Cloudy Bay and stayed there for 25 years. Following that, he now has his own winery called Greywacke, we will be touching on all of it. Now this episode, we're going to be looking at the soils, the region, certainly the history and a few of the stories behind these wineries. And then next week we're going to look at, drumroll please, Sauvignon Blanc, so I shall make you wait till next week to talk about that. But let's look at New Zealand for a second.

J

Janina Doyle 02:03

So New Zealand as a wine producing country is literally producing 1% of the world's wines. And within that, 70% of the vineyards are in Marlborough, so if there's going to be one wine region you know about within New Zealand this is it. So Marlborough is in the southern Island, but in the north-eastern part right by the coast. And this is a cool windy region with amazing diurnals so big difference between cooling nights and warm days and it is known to be one of the sunniest places in New Zealand. It has high high sunshine hours so much so the Maori people, this is the indigenous Polynesian people of New

Zealand, in the Maori language, they refer to the Wairau Valley as "Kei Puta Te Wairau" which means the place with the hole in the cloud. And that's basically what it is. And certainly that helps with those aromatics in the grapes, in the Sauvignon Blanc because that UV light is penetrating those skins. Now within Marlborough the shining star, of course is Sauvignon Blanc, which accounts for about 85% of the plantings. But if you've never tried any of the Pinot Noir or the Chardonnay from this region, you absolutely have to, it's just getting better and better. And look out for the aromatic white grape varieties so Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, they're fantastic. Grüner Veltliner, the grape variety from Austria seems to be doing very well, although only just a little bit planted. Well, as I said, Kevin is going to talk a little bit more about the regions and there's certainly three sub regions of Marlborough that you need to know about and are starting to appear on some of the labels. So definitely pay attention. Remember, there is a transcript, you go to the show notes and you'll see the link to download. So grab yourself a glass of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc if you have one lying around, and let's go and chat with Kevin now.

J

Janina Doyle 04:12

Kevin, I am honoured that you've given me some time to talk about your amazing wines and educate me on the world of Sauvignon Blanc and Marlborough. Well, you are, no, you are a Marlborough pioneer. How does that feel? Do you agree with that? It's true. But do you agree with that?

K

Kevin Judd 04:32

Well, I'm comfortable with the word pioneer.

J

Janina Doyle 04:34

Good.

K

Kevin Judd 04:35

Someone called me a, what did they call me?

J

Janina Doyle 04:38

How dare they! You are not old enough yet to be a veteran are you?

- K** Kevin Judd 04:42
Veteran. Yeah veteran annoyed me abit.
- J** Janina Doyle 04:44
Yeah, how dare they! Let's stick with pioneer.
- K** Kevin Judd 04:46
Pioneers alright? Not that I was the first here by any means.
- J** Janina Doyle 04:51
Yeah actually, you weren't the first here. But should we actually just talk about that for a second? So I mean, Brancott, obviously it was Montana at the time, they started in Marlborough in like 1973. But then after that, really it was Cloudy Bay winery, wasn't it? Or am I missing a whole chunk?
- K** Kevin Judd 05:11
When we established Cloudy Bay, we were the fifth winery to be built or the fifth wine company to be established based in Marlborough. Okay. So at that time, there was Montana, now know as Brancott, there was Te Whare Ra, which I think was the first to establish here, there was Hunters, and Cellier Le Brun.
- J** Janina Doyle 05:31
And then there was you, or at least Cloudy Bay. So let's talk about your history and your journey going into being a winemaker because, let's go back to the beginning. You're originally from Southampton in England, right?
- K** Kevin Judd 05:44
Yep. Pretty close.
- J** Janina Doyle 05:45
You are one of us. Very quickly, though. You didn't go to New Zealand. You went to Australia and grew up in Adelaide.

K Kevin Judd 05:53
Yea correct.

J Janina Doyle 05:54
Right. So, as you were becoming a teenager, an adult, were you inspired much more about the Australian wine scene? How did you get into wine?

K Kevin Judd 06:05
That's a good question. I'm not, I wasn't born under a grapevine. In fact, when I started roseworthy agricultural college to study winemaking, I was one of the few students that really hadn't had any wine experience at all, almost zero. Winemaking was something that just appealed to me as a profession that sort of combined the sort of scientific bent that I had in my head. But it wasn't more of a sort of a rural agricultural focus it was being brought up in Adelaide, going to roseworthy was one of the things in what you can do after high school sort of things. My father was in a related industry in the packaging industry, I've had a few contacts in the wine game, and he did alot of packaging type work for wine companies and spoke to someone and sort of got me a bit of a leg up to get into roseworthy. But I must admit, when I started, I knew very little about wine. I didn't I didn't go for study wine because I deeply loved wine, but to study wine because I was interested in it.

J Janina Doyle 07:13
Okay, so then actually, the love of wine came after. That's pretty interesting. So how quickly did you get over to New Zealand then from Australia once you'd qualified.

K Kevin Judd 07:24
Well, I made what I worked for Chateau Reynella in South Australia, just south of Adelaide.

J Janina Doyle 07:30
Okay. McLaren Vale?

K Kevin Judd 07:32
Well, it's not technically McLaren Vale, it's just north of McLaren Vale, but it's close enough

so let's call it McLaren Vale. And frankly, a lot of a lot of our fruit came from McLaren Vale. And a bloke called Geoff Merrill for three years. In fact, I studied, one of the things you have to do in roseworthy is do a vintage in your third year with a company and I managed to get a position at Chateau Reynella and yeah, and then they offered me a full time job when I finished. And I was there for a couple of years. And then that company was bought by another company. By Harveys actually and my job description suddenly changed for the worst. And a few other things happened.

J Janina Doyle 08:14
And you are like, I am out of here.

K Kevin Judd 08:15
So I thought, I'm out of here. That's exactly what I thought. So I looked around in Australia, I think I was about 25 at the time. I'd been assistant winemaker and I wanted more. I wanted to be the winemaker.

J Janina Doyle 08:31
Why wouldn't you? So. Yes, nothing wrong with that.

K Kevin Judd 08:35
Yeah. Anyway, I applied for a few jobs in Australia. And didn't find what I was looking for and then, someone I knew said there's a few jobs going in New Zealand and I, I knew basically about New Zealand at that time. But I applied for these two jobs, because I figured it was a new frontier. And, probably more importantly, I saw it as a place that was potentially excellent for making cool climate white wine, which was my main interest. And I applied for two jobs. And I managed to score one of them. So I convinced Kimberly, who we just, we just got married. We would go to New Zealand for three years. That was the plan.

J Janina Doyle 09:17
That's perfect. You marry her and then she's like, now I have to follow. Okay, so that worked out well, because of course, she's helping you now with Greywacke so that's all worked out. That story ended well, right.

K Kevin Judd 09:29
Yeah. Well, after three years, we in fact, it was. It was only after about two and a half years, we were a little bit despondent about a number of things and thinking, thinking about going back to Australia, and I met a guy called David Hohnen.

J Janina Doyle 09:45
And that's when it changed.

K Kevin Judd 09:45
And that's when, all things, everything changed, actually.

J Janina Doyle 09:49
So how did Cloudy Bay come about? Had he heard about you? What was the idea of Cloudy Bay? Did they have any idea it was going to become so iconic around the world?

K Kevin Judd 10:02
Well, that's quite a few questions. Ah...

J Janina Doyle 10:04
Yeah, yes. Do you remember the first one?

K Kevin Judd 10:07
So how did it come about? David Hohnen won the Jimmy Watson trophy two years in a row at Cape Mentelle in Western Australia. They put Western Australia on the map, as they say. But it also caught the attention of a few Kiwis in that there was a wine conference in Perth, and I think it was in 1983. And after the conference, a group of I think four Kiwi winemakers, although two of them were ex-pat Australians, but anyway, that's irrelevant. They jumped in a car, they rented a car in Perth and they travelled down the Margaret River to just to explore really well you know, after the conference. And they called into Cape Mentelle because this company has suddenly become had become world famous. After winning the second Jimmy Watson trophy for the Cabernet and David Hohnen showed them around and had a chat and anyway after that after they, when, just before they left, one of the Kiwis went out to the rent-a-car and grabbed the

bottle of Sauvignon in the boot and gave it to David and said thanks for your time, David. Here's a bottle of wine from where we come from and of they went into the sunset. And that bottle of wine was, was the bottle of wine that started Cloudy Bay. David was so so impressed by the pungency and the intensity, the clarity of the fruit that he, the next year he went, he flew to New Zealand to have a look around and find out where there's wine had come from.

J

Janina Doyle 11:33

Mm hmm. Yeah. And so funny. You hit the nail on the head, didn't you? The words pungent and intense. I mean, are just perfect words for Cloudy Bay, aren't they? Yeah, they are. And so you decided to take up the challenge. Probably not having any idea that it was going to be so big?

K

Kevin Judd 11:53

Well, none of us did. When I when I first received a, I mean I was making wine up in Auckland for a company called Selacks at the time.

J

Janina Doyle 12:01

Okay, yeah.

K

Kevin Judd 12:02

David Hohnen had been put in my direction by someone. I'm still not quite sure who but I got a fair idea. When I first tasted the fruit, the grapes, I was just just taken back and I realised as someone at the time I shouldn't be making wine, this wine, I should be selling it to the Australians. I should, just like, I'd never seen Sauvignon Blanc fruit like it, tasted juice like it anywhere in my experience in Australia. Yeah, on that visit when David came over to sort of suss out where this wine come from. He came to visit me and head up for a chat. And by that stage, he made the decision to set up a second wine company. He already had Cape Mentelle in Western Australia. And he decided to set up a New Zealand operation. And after he'd come to see me, he asked me lots of sort of random questions about you know, what I did on the weekend and where I lived and stuff like that. Which was a bit strange and I went home that night, Kimberly and I were talking about going back to Australia again. And I said actually I said, I said let's hang on a minute because I've got a funny feeling David Hohnen's gonna offer me a job. Then two weeks later, the phone rang. That was David Hohnen, offering me a job. He offered me a job to make wine for him in New Zealand. He had no land, he hadn't decided whether he was going to set

up in Hawke's Bay or Marlborough. And I accepted that on the strength of his reputation really, on the fact that he'd won two Jimmy Watson's and a few people that I'd talked to about him said he was a good bloke, so there you go.

J Janina Doyle 13:32

Well, seems to have worked out. Now what was it like at Cloudy Bay for you? You know, you've become a very, the king of Sauvignon Blanc, shall we say? Was it a real journey of learning? Were there real challenges on the way?

K Kevin Judd 13:48

Oh, how long have we got for this chat? Of course. When we started, when I accepted the job with David, as I say, there was no, there wasn't, we first had to decide which district we were going to, and it became Marlborough. And then we had to build a winery. I had to learn a thing or two, about all sorts of things.

J Janina Doyle 14:10

Is the winery right by THE Cloudy Bay, hence the name? Maybe that's a silly question. I actually don't know where the winery is based.

K Kevin Judd 14:18

Cloudy Bay is in the central, pretty much central spot in the middle of what's known as the Wairau planes, those, its a big flat, triangular alluvial floodplain known as the sort of lower Wairau Valley or the Wairau planes and Cloudy Bay is the bay that's at the mouth of that valley.

J Janina Doyle 14:38

And the winery is pretty close to it, presumably.

K Kevin Judd 14:40

Well, there are wineries that are closer.

J Janina Doyle 14:45

That's where it got the name from right?

- K** Kevin Judd 14:46
It's, we talk about how long it takes to drive places in New Zealand. It's sort of a 15 minute drive from Cloudy Bay to the real Cloudy Bay.
- J** Janina Doyle 14:55
Oh okay, yeah. Now talking of finishing and being at Cloudy Bay, you obviously decided, I imagine when Cloudy Bay gets so big, probably makes things a little bit difficult to make your own decisions? I don't know if that's fair to say? Is that what maybe inspired you to set up your own winery?
- K** Kevin Judd 15:14
Well, clearly, but it was an amazing journey. I mean, what we started in truth, I always get my decades mixed up. In 1985 was a small, was essentially a small family owned business. Well, in fact, it was tiny initially. Well not tiny, tiny, but it was certainly a small business owned by David and his brother's company. And 25 years later, when I left, we were not a huge company by any means. But we were certainly a medium sized company with with quite a established international reputation. And that was, that was an incredible journey. And I feel very thankful for being in the right place at the right time of being offered that opportunity.
- J** Janina Doyle 15:53
Yeah, well, you've got the skills quite clearly as well right? Unfortunately, I don't think it would have been as iconic as it is now had you not put you know your magic to it right?
- K** Kevin Judd 16:04
It wasn't all about me, but it was it was a great journey.
- J** Janina Doyle 16:09
Some good grapes too.
- K** Kevin Judd 16:10

We had good grapes. We had David Hohnen, was a clever guy and very intuitive. It was an opportunity.

J

Janina Doyle 16:18

Big thumbs up. So setting up Greywacke, how did it happen? Why did it happen?

K

Kevin Judd 16:27

Why? I actually, I actually registered the name Greywacke in 1993.

J

Janina Doyle 16:32

Ah, so you knew, you knew....

K

Kevin Judd 16:34

We had a, I had a, Kimberly and I had a small vineyard literally down the back of Cloudy Bay and we grew a bit of Sauvignon Blanc and it was an extraordinary stony part of the valley and reading something one day and I learned that the stones were from a rock known as Greywacke. It's not a New Zealand term, it's derived from German word Grauwache. And it's found all over the world, it's certainly found in parts of Ireland and Wales and Scotland as well. It's all over the place. But the Egyptians carved things out of the Greywacke. Anyway, I discovered that the stuff was called Greywacke, so Kimberly and I named our vineyard Greywacke vineyard in the early 90s. And then this is a story that you won't hear from Moët Hennessy.

J

Janina Doyle 17:23

Oh, I love a secret story.

K

Kevin Judd 17:24

Well it's not a secret by any means. In 1990, I employed a guy called James Healy who was at Cloudy Bay for many years as a winemaker and went on to, with Ivan Sutherland to establish Dog Point. But anyway, he was keen to experiment with wild yeast, which I thought was a bit nuts. But anyway, we tried it first on chardonnay and I was, we were so impressed we as in David Hohnen and I that we decided to start experimenting the following year in 91. Actually, maybe it was 92 and in 92 we first experimented with wild yeast in Sauvignon Blanc and we just needed a small batch of Sauvignon Blanc so I

volunteered fruit from our own vineyard which was Greywacke vineyard and we made we made this yes batch of wine, but unlike with the Chardonnay where we started blending the wilds, the wild fermented component with the rest of the Chardonnay, with Sauvignon Blanc, by the time we'd finished fermenting the stuff, the other Sauvignon Blanc had been blended and was already being consumed. So we had this sort of random batch of Sauvignon Blanc that have been fermented with wild yeast from my, from our vineyard, that we needed to work out what we're going to do with this stuff. So we ended up bottling it and sold it through the Cellar door and we call it Greywacke...

J

Janina Doyle 18:39

Oh yeah, but this is the the Greywacke vineyard that's now known as Te Koko, no?

K

Kevin Judd 18:43

Yeah. Eventually it became Te Koko, but the very first one the 92, which was fruit from our vineyard, we called it Cloudy Bay Sauvignon 1992 and then in fine print Greywacke vineyard, so it was a single vineyard wine. So Greywacke vineyard was actually in fine print on the front label of that early experimental Sauvignon Blanc that we made.

J

Janina Doyle 19:02

How exciting now Greywacke, so you said it's a very stony soil. What does that give to Sauvignon Blanc compared to a lot of the other kind of Silty Sandy loams that are in Marlborough?

K

Kevin Judd 19:17

Well, the the main, the main Wairau Valley is essentially a big alluvial, floodplain and Greywacke, is actually the principal bedrock of New Zealand. So the river stone...

J

Janina Doyle 19:29

Okay, okay, there's lots of it.

K

Kevin Judd 19:31

There's lots and lots and lots of it's, so the stones have washed down the river. Basically, primarily Greywacke and the Wairau Valley is just a big gravel pit full of sandy loam with

varying proportions of Greywacke river stones. Does the Greywacke influence the way the wine tastes? Hmmmm, I'm not sure. But certainly the river stones are a very free draining soil type as distinct from the Southern Valleys where we're actually based. We're actually, we're headquartered in Greywacke in the Southern valleys, which are sort of a number of perpendicular valleys to the Wairau. They are sort of, they sort of run perpendicularly, not sure if that's a word, to the south. And they're sort of renowned for more clay content, which supposedly is actually finely ground dust that's blown down the Wairau from the glacial days. So it's a wind blown clay, and it's full of gravel. But a lot of that is also Greywacke, but it's a totally different sort of structured soil. I'm not a geologist.

J

Janina Doyle 20:42

But Southern Valleys is becoming a bit more of the hotspot for Pinot Noir, isn't it?

K

Kevin Judd 20:47

Yes, well, it's a southern valleys. So it encompasses the, to the, to the west, the Waihopai, the Omaka, which is why we're based, and then the Brancott, and then the Ben Morvan, their the most well known Southern valleys, like you could arguably include a few others, like the Taylor Valley, and a few others, but collectively, they're the valleys to the south of the Wairau and they are typically, much more clay, even the valley floors are sort of a clay with a broken gravel, rather than the Wairau which is sort of sandy loam and the rounded river stones.

J

Janina Doyle 21:27

And do you agree though, that Pinot Noir, have I heard correctly, that Pinot Noir is doing really well in that more clay based soils?

K

Kevin Judd 21:35

Yes, that's the short answer to that. Absolutely.

J

Janina Doyle 21:40

Keep it simple, yes!

K

Kevin Judd 21:41

When we, when we first started playing around with Pinot Noir in the early days at Cloudy

Bay we had it growing in the stony Greywacke riverbed soils, and it really wasn't very successful. Partly because of the soils I think, partly because we had the wrong clones.

J Janina Doyle 21:58
Yeah, I suppose the development and the learning.

K Kevin Judd 22:01
So we got the better clones. We got the Dijon clones. And we as in Marlborough started seeing evidence that the southern, the clay valleys, the clay soils in the southern valleys, were producing superior Pinot Noirs even, you know, back seven years ago. And also the Southern valleys provide some sort of hillsides sites on which to grow Pinot Noir which is also a benefit. So we've got hillsides, and we've got clay, and we've got much better Mesoclimates for growing Pinot Noir in the Southern valleys than Wairau.

J Janina Doyle 22:35
Is there more altitude in the southern valleys than in the Wairau Valley?

K Kevin Judd 22:42
Yeah, yes. It's um, I would, I would say it's fairly insignificant.

J Janina Doyle 22:47
Okay. So there's some hills, some slopes, but nothing really.

K Kevin Judd 22:52
People do, it is technically higher in altitude.

J Janina Doyle 22:56
It is not Mendoza.

K Kevin Judd 22:57
It is higher in altitude but no, it's not. It's not in the same league as what we're talking

about in the Mendoza region.

J

Janina Doyle 23:05

No, but then Marlborough is not trying to be Mendoza. So we've touched on just the Southern valleys, obviously, you've mentioned the Wairau Valley, which is the biggest and most well known, but what about the other major sub region, the Awatere Valley which is to the, which is slightly to the south?

K

Kevin Judd 23:23

The Awatere is the southern side of the hills, to the south of the Wairau. Most people call them the Wither Hills. That's incorrect. It's the, the Blairich range separates the Awatere, or the Blairich and the Black Birch range separate the Awatere and the Wairau. So the Southern valleys are part of the Wairau system and then completely separate to that, to the south is the Awatere, and the Awatere, when David Hohnen and I first grabbed a car and drove into the Awatere, there were no vineyards. There was not one vineyard anywhere and now...

J

Janina Doyle 24:01

Quite a few!

K

Kevin Judd 24:02

Now the Awatere, if the Awatere Valley was a separate region, which it's not because it's part of Marlborough, but if it were, it would be the second biggest region in New Zealand. It's a lot bigger than Hawke's Bay.

J

Janina Doyle 24:13

Oh, Do you know, actually am I correct. It's Wairau would be number one. Awatere would be number two and then Hawke's Bay would be number three.

K

Kevin Judd 24:19

Correct.



Janina Doyle 24:20

If we were talking that, okay, yeah, yeah, so that's really interesting. So that, I've now started seeing a lot more winemakers in Marlborough, obviously, writing their sub regions, if they're not doing full regional blends and the Awatere wines, I think, are actually very interesting. They're a little bit greener, sometimes a little bit more mineral a little bit more precise. They lose the more tropical, for me, I'm talking Sauvignon Blanc in general.



Kevin Judd 24:47

That's absolutely correct. It is a generalisation but it is a, it's a very good generalisation. But I have sourced some Sauvignon Blanc, I don't at the moment, but in recent years, I have sourced some from some really stony, beautiful stoney vineyards in the upper Awatere and it was actually quite similar to what we'd expect on the Wairau. But the lower Awatere is definitely hallmarked by by what you've just said.



Janina Doyle 25:13

Okay, so lower, fine. And the lower Awatere is closer to the ocean,



Kevin Judd 25:18

Correct!



Janina Doyle 25:19

Am I correct? Fine. So then of course, much cooler, probably even more windier.



Kevin Judd 25:25

It does get a bit more influenced from the southerly. Because the Wairau is, the southerly influence gets slightly more diverted by the Kaikoura ranges, the inland and the Seaward Kaikouras.



Janina Doyle 25:40

Okay. Now I think is really interesting. And then it generally, the, even budbreak and the harvest is a few weeks later. So it's really very, very different to the more northern Wairau Valley. Right?

K Kevin Judd 25:53
Ummm, yeah, it changes a bit from year to year.

J Janina Doyle 25:55
Maybe.

K Kevin Judd 25:56
Yeah, but generally it's like you say. Generally.

J Janina Doyle 26:01
How would you describe then Marlborough as a climate? If somebody said...?

K Kevin Judd 26:08
Maritime.

J Janina Doyle 26:08
Why does...Maritime, okay. Why is it so good for growing grapes there?

K Kevin Judd 26:13
It just has a really excellent combination of temperature regimes. It's, the main influence is climatic, I mean, sure, within that, soils are important, but soils, I think, are much more minor part of the equation. The fact that Marlborough has an extremely maritime climate, but it has a high level of sunshine. Think about the northern hemisphere. If you think about Marlborough, and you thought, and you talk latitude? What sort of latitude do you think we're at? I mean, you might you may already know this, but I found it intriguing when I, when the penny first dropped. You probably instinctively think that it would be a similar latitude to somewhere through the middle of France.

J Janina Doyle 26:57
But where is it in comparison?

- K** Kevin Judd 26:59
We're at 41 and a half. And at 41 and a half north doesn't even go through France. It goes through the middle of Italy.
- J** Janina Doyle 27:04
Now that's interesting, isn't it when you consider how cool a climate Marlborough is.
- K** Kevin Judd 27:09
But we're very cool. So because, we're cool because it's maritime. We are cool because there's no landmass. There is no landmass. So we get an intense sunlight. We're closer to the sun, the likes of Sancerre, or even Burgundy. So we get intensively of sunlight. We get lots of sunlight most years, but we're also very cool because we're just completely surrounded by water. So it very rarely, and it is getting warm. And there's no doubt about that. So we won't go into that discussion. But...
- J** Janina Doyle 27:42
We haven't got time have we!
- K** Kevin Judd 27:43
I used to say that it almost never got above 30 and 10 years ago, that was probably true. But we have, we might hit 32 degrees but we don't hit 38. We don't hit 40, we don't hit 42. So we don't get heat.
- J** Janina Doyle 27:56
Yeah, but interesting you say about you know temperatures rising. Are you finding that vintages are very different? Do people need to pay attention to vintages or especially with for instance, the Sauvignon Blancs and the Pinot Gris you do, they're fruitier, is that, they can just drink whatever vintage and there's not too much variation?
- K** Kevin Judd 28:21
We still get vintage variation. We get sort of different vintage variation to what we did 30 years ago. The 90s were full of extremes, extraordinary extremes actually. We had in 1990 we had a minus five frost halfway through harvest to defoliate the entire valley. That was

pretty extreme. We had 93 which is still the coldest vintage in the history of grape growing and Marlborough. We had 95 which was the, and I think still is the wettest ever. Yeah. And then we had 98 which was at the time the hottest but has since been eclipsed.

J Janina Doyle 28:58
Well, you know what. I'm kind of glad that I wasn't drinking wine in the 90s.

K Kevin Judd 29:02
Although we made some great wines.

J Janina Doyle 29:03
Sounds to me like it was an interesting... ok!

K Kevin Judd 29:05
Yea, we made some great wine.

J Janina Doyle 29:06
Yea in the good vintages!

K Kevin Judd 29:07
Yeah, it was hard work. Yeah, I can imagine. Okay, but in then, the noughties. That decade, things got a little bit better? A little less up and down?

K Kevin Judd 29:16
Yeah? When you're in a maritime climate like this, on two little islands here on the South Pacific, you do get vintage, you do get climatic variations. What what's happening now, though, is we're definitely getting warmer, warmer, vintages more consistent, more consistently, but the thing that's stresses me a little is the fact that they're predicting that we'll get more influence from the sort of South Pacific cyclone type systems and we have seen that in 2017 and 2018. Since then, we've had a good, a good run, but...

J

Janina Doyle 29:50

Okay, but now interesting you say that. One of the big stories that's going around now that we all have to prepare for, because people are going to be very, very upset is that we are going to run out of Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough. They think certainly in the UK by Christmas, we're going to be gone until you get the next vintage. So what has happened? Why are we running out of Sauvignon Blanc? Whats happened?

K

Kevin Judd 30:19

Well, vintage 2021, there's no, you can't say it's because of this or that. It's just every now and then you get vintages that don't yield as well as others. And people put it down to a whole bunch of things, you know, a little bit of damage from frost and a very, very dry conditions. But at the end of the day, we got very small bunches, we got very small berries, and we got not many of any of it. And Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc crop in 2021 was somewhere in the vicinity of 25 to 30% down. Worse than that the Chardonnay and the Pinot Noir was 50% down for us. And the Pinot Gris was 60% down. It was just it was just a whole bunch of things.

J

Janina Doyle 31:04

Yeah. Not the best for running a business is it?

K

Kevin Judd 31:09

It's frustrating. It's frustrating, because, you know, this time last year, we were expecting the world to come to an end with the pandemic, in terms of you know, you think you've done well by establishing markets all over the world and you're safe from a market crash but you are not safe from a world crash. And that's what we thought was about to happen. But as it turned out, there wasn't a crash at all. And the world actually drank more Sauvignon Blanc.

J

Janina Doyle 31:37

We, it turns out, it turns out if you're celebrating or you're commiserating, you drink alcohol.

K

Kevin Judd 31:44

Exactly. So we got thirsty people around the planet drinking more than what we expected.

And then we get slammed by a tiny vintage, so unfortunately...



Janina Doyle 31:57

Two things don't work out so well.



Kevin Judd 31:59

Unfortunatley we, were short of wine in New Zealand full stop.



Janina Doyle 32:02

Yeah, well, I'm sorry that we keep on drinking it.



Janina Doyle 32:08

So I apologise if I am the bearer of bad news. And this is the first time that you've heard of the Sauvignon Blanc drought. We must prepare ourselves soon, possibly this side of Christmas to go cold turkey, of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. But as you have probably already figured out, Kevin knows what he's doing with winemaking. So when there is no more of his Sauvignon Blanc, do go and check out his Pinot Gris so that is the same grape variety as Pinot Grigio, but in a much richer, more aromatic sense. So think about a more pear, appley, apricot style with that lovely kind of smoky, honey edge, and lovely freshness. So go and check that out, or his Chardonnay, which is oaked so will offer you this smoky, nutty richness with lovely ripe stone fruits. Now, make sure you come back next week so you can hear Kevin talking about his Sauvignon Blancs. After all, he did put Sauvignon Blanc on the map in New Zealand. Now he has two Sauvignon Blancs, one with wild yeasts and some barrel ageing, and then the other as you would expect, light and fresh. So two very different styles. So I'll see you again next week. Now before you go, it is wine quote time, and I found another from Sir Roger Scruton. So I've used one of his quotes before, he's an English philosopher and a writer. But in this one, he says:



Janina Doyle 33:34

"Wine is not just an object of pleasure, but an object of knowledge. And the pleasure depends on the knowledge."



Janina Doyle 33:42

Now hopefully, after just hearing a little bit more about those sub regions and

understanding Marlborough is a little bit more complex than you had possibly realised, you will get far more pleasure out of the wines that you are drinking. Thanks ever so much. That is it for today. If you have not subscribed on whichever podcast app you're listening to please do that now. Share it with any of your wine loving friends. If you're listening on Apple podcasts, please leave me a review. If there's a review option on any of your apps, please do it. It all makes the podcast more discoverable. Right, well, you know where I'm going to be next week with two very delicious glasses of Sauvignon Blanc. So until that episode, cheers to you.