

2017 Paper Road Sauvignon Blanc

Borthwick Vineyards, Wairarapa, New Zealand

Product details

Vintage:	2017	Drinking:	
Producer:	Borthwick Vineyards	Alcohol:	
Region:	Wairarapa	Variety:	Sauvignon blanc
Country:	New Zealand		

About the producer

BORTHWICK WINES

If you settle down to a Sunday roast of British pork and open a bottle of Borthwick Vineyard Pinot Noir from New Zealand to accompany it, you might just hear a ghostly whisper of appreciation... In the 1890s, one Thomas Borthwick was a butcher at London's Smithfield Market when he developed a way of successfully exporting frozen meat around the world - he was later knighted for his achievement. His grandson PJ Borthwick decided to export himself to New Zealand, buying the 1,600-hectare Te Whanga Station, a few hundred kilometers north of Wellington in the Wairarapa district, in the south of North Island. Even today, the station is home to 10,000 sheep and 700 Angus cattle, tended by PJ's son Robin.

Robin's son Paddy Borthwick had a different idea, however, seeing the potential of a particular patch of this land - an old, stony river terrace with free-draining alluvial soil and a unique micro-climate (comparatively low rainfall, warm days and cool nights) - for growing premium wine grapes. Paddy took his time about the project. In 1985, he left home to attend the prestigious oenology course at Roseworthy Agricultural College in Adelaide, before gaining a decade of experience in various wine regions around the world, notably Burgundy.

In 1996, Paddy Borthwick returned to Wairarapa and began planting vines in the 27-acre site just north of Gladstone, between Dakins Road and the Ruamahunga River. His first year of production was the 1999 vintage - which immediately spurred Armit Wines into action, securing exclusive UK distribution since 2001. As you might expect from a man who took to Burgundy like a duck to orange, Paddy's main focus was and is on Dijon-clone Pinot Noir vines, although, for his white wines, he planted Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Pinot Gris in addition to Chardonnay.

Paddy Borthwick's method is to stay relatively hands-off in the vineyard and winery. Paddy believes in sustainable viticulture to benefit generations to come. It's a philosophy which influences the whole of the Te Whanga Station's operations. For a prime example, take the 3.5 hectare garden first planted by Paddy's grandparents and now tended by his wife Sarah. It is recognised by the NZ Gardens Trust as a Garden of National Significance, with two gullies planted woodland style with magnolias, rhododendrons and camelias. It's a real treat to stay at the Gardener's Cottage, which visitors can book, and explore both the grounds and vineyards.

In the Borthwick winery, fermentation of Pinot Noir is via natural yeasts, hand plunging optimises the fruit and tannin balance. There is further maceration on skins before the wine is drained and pressed to barrel (French oak - 30% new) for 11 months' ageing. After blending, the Borthwick Pinot Noir undergoes minimal fining and filtration prior to bottling. With candied fruits and dried cranberries on the nose, it delivers black cherry, herbs and oak on the palate, with seamless tannins.



Paper Road Pinot Noir is named after a planned thoroughfare which, had it been laid, would have cut right through the Borthwick Estate. Less oaked than the main Pinot Noir (both in terms of time and percentage of new wood - eight months; 15%), it is bright and savoury, with spiciness, velvet tannins, sour-sweet cherry and chocolate notes, before a zesty finish.

In the best years, Paddy Borthwick and assistant winemaker Braden Crosby indulge in a thought exercise made real and liquid. Selecting a premium parcel of Pinot Noir each, they vinify them to represent the different nuances of their personalities - Right Hand for the "intuitive, impulsive and thoughtful" Borthwick, and Left Hand for Crosby, who is "logical, creative and precise".

Pinot Noir is also used to produce an excellent rosé. Picked early to retain low alcohol, refreshing acidity and fresh fruit flavours, the fruit is soaked on skins for 12 hours prior to gentle pressing. The juice is inoculated and fermented slowly to retain its summer aromatics - berries, stone fruit and watermelon.

Quick processing is key to Paddy Borthwick's white wines too. This retains the signature Borthwick vibrant acidity and aroma. In the Sauvignon Blanc it brings out intense cantaloupe and gooseberry, with tropical overtones of passion fruit, guava and lychee. In the Riesling, the winemaking picks out white blossom, cooking apples and the lime end of the citrus spectrum. In the Pinot Gris, it results in apricot, nectarine and pear aromas, leading to a rich palate and a crisp finish.

Similar aromas in the Chardonnay give way to a creamy mouthfeel (thanks to extended yeast contact) with toasted brioche and almond flavours over intense fruit. There is great depth to this wine which can be cellared for five or more years.

Around 90 per cent of the Borthwick Vineyards's wine production is exported. Sir Thomas Borthwick would undoubtedly approve.

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