



grape to glass

# Misha's VINEYARD



OLIVER 'OLLY' MASTERS  
Winemaker, Misha's Vineyard, Central Otago

*With a career predominantly based between Martinborough and Central Otago, Oliver 'Olly' Masters, winemaker at Misha's Vineyard in Central Otago has been around wine since he was a teenager.*

**H**is father, who taught Biology and Chemistry was a keen wine club participant, plus friends and family were also in the industry, so wine was always around.

"Winemaking was a part of my initial Biotechnology degree studies at Massey University and has always been one of the fun parts of life," noted Masters.

Unfortunately for him, but fortunately for the New Zealand wine industry, Masters' footballing aspirations suffered from his lack of ability. Instead, his first job in the wine industry, after graduating from wine studies at Lincoln University in 1989, was when he and a friend top-grafted rootstock in the merlot block of an Ata Rangī Vineyard.

"It was a scary first job but thankfully successful. As with this and what followed, it was the people I met that often determined the paths I subsequently walked."

For the following 15 years, Masters was mostly based in Martinborough with many years making wine at Ata Rangī. He then established a wine consulting company in 2005 and subsequently was approached by Misha and Andy Wilkinson to be involved in their new venture, Misha's Vineyard, in Central Otago.

"The opportunity to make Pinot Noir (and aromatic whites) in the Central Otago region on such a spectacular site was irresistible. This year marks the 15th vintage at Misha's Vineyard, and I've been at the helm for winemaking from the outset."

Misha's Vineyard grew from a passion for wine with the first vines planted in 2004. It started producing wine in 2007 with the first commercial release in 2008. Now Misha's has 26 hectares of vineyard on a 57-hectare estate with more to be planted. Misha's Vineyard now export to 14 countries and have been named one of the country's Top 20 Wine Producers.

"Misha and Andy established the vineyard with a 'no compromise' philosophy and that flows



sheep station and usually have some 700 merino sheep doing the 'winter mowing' on the vineyard.

"Our vineyard crew hand-tend and hand harvest the 65,000 vines on our single estate vineyard so we have minimal use of machinery. Our composting program utilises the grape marc after winemaking to ensure resources are used wisely. Careful stewardship of the land is an absolute priority for us. Also maintaining a viable business is also obviously a key part of that circle of sustainability."

Wine and vineyards are about balance, according to Masters.

"You want the vineyard to be healthy and still looking like that in 10+ years' time, just as the wines should be. Consistency of style lets the vintage and vineyard site be the loudest voice. Winemaking is done with native yeasts for the Pinot Noir fermentation and a portion of natural/wild fermentation is used across the range of aromatic white wines to give wines of great texture and ageability," he said.

"I love being in the vineyard. I think that our physical surroundings shape us and all that we do, especially when we let it happen. Central Otago wine will always have a purity and edginess that reflects the landscape and climate."

Being invited to judge at various wine shows across Australia and New Zealand over his career has been a privilege, explained Masters, and an aspect of the industry that he has always enjoyed, seeing it as a large part of his ongoing education. Masters' advice to those just beginning their journey in the world of wine is to go to as many wine tastings as possible.

"The more you taste, the better you understand and appreciate all the aspects of making great wine."

Masters said he has witnessed a flowering of a young industry in this country over the last 30 years that has been amazing. Continuing to share wines and knowledge with the rest of the world will only help progress the Kiwi wine journey and while vine age is one thing New Zealand often lacks, this quality driver is something only time will resolve.

Blending and finishing wines is the fun, final part for Masters, but ultimately, it's seeing the joy he can bring to people who interact with his product that is the most special, and he wishes to simply keep making good wines from older vines.

"It's been a privilege to be involved in the wine industry and meet many of the special people who have helped shape it." *LC*

through to the way we approach the viticulture, winemaking and how the brand is marketed. The idea is to get it right the first time and not to take shortcuts!"

Misha's Vineyard is sustainably farmed and certified as a member of Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand (SWNZ). The brand is also sustainably certified across the winery and the bottling line – so all aspects of wine production. They work closely with the adjacent high-country

