

## \$15 WINES THAT TASTE LIKE \$50: 10 NEW ZEALAND SAUVIGNON BLANCS



Sauvignon blanc from New Zealand might often be avoided by sniffy connoisseurs, but it is still responsible for more than 70 percent of the country's total wine production, with most of it exported. It is valued for its purity and tropical fruit, and for being less austere than equivalents from the Loire. It is a forward and flamboyant wine, with passion fruit, kiwi, gooseberry and guava notes. It is generous but possibly less intriguing than some Sancerre. In other words, it is a wine one can enjoy without needing too much wine know-how.

But with so many bottles produced every year in New Zealand, quality can be a bit hit-or-miss. Yes, if picking from a bunch of mediocre whites, a Kiwi sauvignon blanc should be on your list because of its crisp acidity and expressive bouquet. But there is no need to drink mouthwash when you can find high quality wines just above the \$15 price tag. This is where spending just a few dollars more on an unknown bottle might make all the difference.

While Marlborough is considered a classic region for sauvignon blanc, Martinborough, Canterbury/Waipara Valley, Hawke's Bay and Nelson and other areas throughout the North and South Islands all yield high-quality sauvignon blancs. Styles from regions and specific sites exist, but winemaking efforts not to manipulate too much play a pivotal role here. With lower yields, better selection of clones and yeast, wiser decisions made on picking time as well as lees contact and choices of maturing vessels, more Kiwi sauvignons now have purity, engaging complexity and depth. Producers like Dog Point, Greywacke, Cloudy Bay, Clos Henri, Villa Maria, Craggy Range, Ata Rangi and Neudorf, among many others, make excellent wines with drive and energy, while a few producers like Pegasus Bay offer great buys with the sauvignon-semillon blend.

Sauvignon blanc from New Zealand can also be as age-worthy as many Loire bottles (most notably Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé, and the less-known but great-value Menetou-Salon). But there's not as much patience for an outstanding NZ sauvignon blanc as there is on an outstanding Chablis, for example. Most consumers are so tempted to binge on the fresh, crisp character and aromatic allure of the wine that they forget an absorbing kiwi sauvignon blanc also keeps well. I find those wines with reductive characters on top of excellent concentration and acidity, such as what the classic, composed Dog Point often produces with a tell-tale struck match, flinty character (turning at some point to rotten eggs), which seems to "block" the fruit from oxidation, can create an even longer shelf life.

Sauvignon blanc may be a mixed bag in New Zealand, and plenty of wines can be commercial, some in an off-dry style, but the best can be as focused and contained as a striking Sancerre with restrained complexity, finesse and immense drinkability. The following 10 wines (all 92-93 points) make a memorable flight for sauvignon blanc where quality meets value. For those New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc haters, maybe it's time to give it a second thought.

## 10 top value New Zealand sauvignon blanc wines

**Nautilus Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2019** – JS93

Available at [K&L Wines](#): \$14.99

Available at [Wine.com](#): \$15.99

Available at [Vivino](#): \$15.99

**Villa Maria Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough Reserve Clifford Bay 2018** – JS93

International Price: \$16

**Te Whare Ra Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2018** – JS93

International Price: \$16

**Clos Henri Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2018** – JS93

Available at [K&L Wines](#): \$19.99

**Main Divide Sauvignon Blanc Waipara Valley 2019** – JS92

International Price: \$11

**Dog Point Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2018** – JS92

Available at [Vivino](#): \$16.97

Available at [K&L Wines](#): \$18.99

Available at [Zachys](#): \$19.99

Available at [Wine.com](#): \$20.99

**Craggy Range Sauvignon Blanc Martinborough Te Muna Road Vineyard 2019** – JS92

Available at [K&L Wines](#): 18.99

Available at [Wine.com](#): \$18.99

Available at [Vivino](#): \$19.99

Available at [Zachys](#): \$21.99

**Neudorf Sauvignon Blanc Nelson 2017** – JS92

Available at [Wine.com](#): \$18.99

Ata Rangi Sauvignon Blanc Martinborough Raranga 2018 – JS92

US Average Price: \$20

Greywacke Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough 2018 – JS92

US Average Price: \$21

– *Zekun Shuai, associate editor in Beijing*

## TASTING NOTES

### CLOS HENRI SAUVIGNON BLANC MARLBOROUGH 2018

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Marlborough

**Vintage** 2018

Score

93

Attractively fragrant wild-grass and beeswax aromas here. Some honey, too. There's a swathe of fresh and lively fruit on the palate with a sleek, compact and long, lemon-pastry finish. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### NAUTILUS SAUVIGNON BLANC MARLBOROUGH 2019

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Marlborough

**Vintage** 2019

Score

93

Some attractive flowers and grassy elements with fresh limes and grapefruit pith, as well as a very juicy and fleshy array of vibrant, rich and bright melon that delivers a fresh, zesty and intense feel with so much flavor. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### TE WHARE RA SAUVIGNON BLANC MARLBOROUGH 2018

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Marlborough

**Vintage** 2018

Score

93

Super quality here. This really is a flavor bomb with such intense fresh lime, green passion fruit and green mango delivered in zippy, enlivening mode. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### VILLA MARIA SAUVIGNON BLANC MARLBOROUGH RESERVE CLIFFORD BAY 2018

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Marlborough

**Vintage** 2018

Score

93

Beautifully fresh, herbal notes of basil and betel leaf lead to a refined array of limes and just-ripe tropical fruit. The palate has a fine, taut edge with a spear of punchy acidity and a lithe, focused finish. Very good sauvignon. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### ATA RANGI SAUVIGNON BLANC MARTINBOROUGH RARANGA 2018

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Martinborough

**Vintage** 2018

Score

92

This has a refined, citrus edge with such focused and compact lemons and limes, as well as some green mangoes. Long, linear and fresh. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### Craggy Range Sauvignon Blanc Martinborough Te Muna Road Vineyard 2019

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Martinborough

**Vintage** 2019

Score

92

A very fresh, lithe and juicy feel to this sauvignon with bright, juicy green passion fruit and green mangoes taking center stage, amid fresh, stony resolve. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### DOG POINT SAUVIGNON BLANC MARLBOROUGH 2018

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Marlborough

**Vintage** 2018

Score

92

This offers a complex take on fruit-driven sauvignon style with fresh limes and lemons, as well as peaches on offer and there's a succulent wrap of smooth-textured fruit to close. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### GREYWACKE SAUVIGNON BLANC MARLBOROUGH 2018

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Marlborough

**Vintage** 2018

Score

92

This youthful sauvignon has attractive lime-leaf and fresh-herb aromas with passion fruit and a succulent, fine and fresh lime finish. Immediate enjoyment here. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### MAIN DIVIDE SAUVIGNON BLANC WAIPARA VALLEY 2019

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Waipara Valley

**Vintage** 2019

Score

92

Very attractive freshness and a flinty edge that adds interest from the outset. The palate has notable, juicy build with impressive rich citrus and tropical fruit flavors, holding long and fresh. Drink now. Screw cap.

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### NEUDORF SAUVIGNON BLANC NELSON 2017

**Country** New Zealand

**Region** Nelson

**Vintage** 2017

Score

92

A rich and flavorsome sauvignon with subtly creamy complexity adding interest to the ripe mangoes and guava. The palate has a smooth, ripe array of melon and peach flavors. Drink now. Screw cap.

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