

TAMAR RIDGE

Tasmania

The island of Tasmania is approximately the size of England, yet has fewer than half a million human inhabitants. (If you flattened it though, the locals like to claim, Tas would be as big as Texas.) Vines, however, are nowadays a good bit less spares than people. At around the latitude (42 degrees) of Marlborough, New Zealand and blessed with typically moderate temperatures and a long growing season, this micro-climatically diverse island is beginning to attract the attention of the wider world for its successes with many of Europe's classic "cool climate" grapes. The climate here immediately announces itself in wines that are naturally balanced and refreshing because, unlike so many of their New World brethren, their's is natural – not added – acidity.

Tasmania had vineyards even in colonial times, and the island achieve a reputation in the twentieth century as Australia's foremost fruit and vegetable purveyor. But it is only in recent years that this huge island has begun to emerge as a viticultural powerhouse and in particular as a potential source of world class Pinot Noir.

Tamar Ridge was only founded in 1994 – by a group of private investors – and crushed its first grapes in 1999. In the short time since, they have become established as one of Tasmania's largest and finest wineries, as well as one of the few to be active in the export market. Tamar Ridge is also among those proving that the rosy viticultural future here is not by any means confined to the propagation of Pinot Noir. The winery was purchased in 2003 by Gunns Limited, Australia's largest timber company.

It was natural that Tamar Ridge would avail themselves of one of the world's foremost viticulturalists, Dr. Richard Smart, as he retired to the neighborhood in 2003 and now has his office at the winery! Smart has selected a more than thousand acre tract in the



Mount Cameron area of northeast Tasmania for a major Tamar Ridge expansion. Interestingly in view of importer Robert Whale's and Vintner Selects agency for Seifried, Smart reported that the sophisticated computer program used to locate spots with high potential for Tamar Ridge expansion was programmed to "search for a climate close to that of Nelson in New Zealand"!

The emphasis at Tamar Ridge will continue to be on Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling, but a number of smaller projects have also borne significant fruit, most notably the winery's distinctive Pinot Gris.

Total acreage: *More than 1,000 acres, with new property coming in to production. All are in the northern part of the island.*

Varieties: *details below.*

Viticultural and winemaking details: *See below.*

Sauvignon Blanc

From vineyards on the West Tamar, this lovely Sauvignon pairs the gooseberry passion fruit familiar from Kiwi variations with a noteworthy depth of fruit and lushness of texture.

Riesling

This dry Riesling boasts a ripe yet invigoratingly tart apple and citrus fruit, steely acidity and salty minerality, making for a taste almost like a cross between Alsace and the Saar! There is not other New World Riesling like it.

Pinot Gris

Combine some of the citrus and salts typical for the region with the peaches, toasted nuts, and spice that accrue to Pinot Gris in its Alsace variants, and you are beginning to imagine Tamar Ridge Pinot Gris. A small portion of the blend is matured in cask for added complexity and textural interest.

Pinot Noir "Devil's Corner"

The "Devil's Corner," named for the treacherous ocean passage to Tasmania, is vinified in closed stainless tank to retain fruit and enhance a soft fruity impression. A delightfully gulpable Pinot that responds favorably to a light chill.

Pinot Noir

Tamar Ridge's "regular" Pinot Noir is vinified with inspiration from Burgundy. A combination of open and closed fermenters is employed, with various means of extraction and with post-fermentative maceration and malolactic in barrel, where the wine remains for a full year.