

# FROM THE CELLAR... FRAMINGHAM WINES

## YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“We have an outstanding garden, and our Rieslings are the best in New Zealand!”

Mary-Jo Potez, Cellar Door Hostess, Framingham Wines



*The logo stamped on the floor en route to the cellar door, as well as a view from inside the homey space.*

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

March 11, 2019

Walking onto the grounds at Framingham Wines in Renwick, Marlborough, New Zealand, we could tell considerable effort had gone into the estate. From pristinely maintained lawns to neatly pruned rose bushes, everything appeared well looked after.

At the same time, a subtle quirkiness permeated the place. This emerged from multiple sources, including some famous quotes adorning the stone walkway leading to the Cellar Door, a vintage scooter sitting next to a retro-looking billboard showcasing a recent outdoor concert at the winery, and the philosophy of Framingham Wines, namely, “Rule No.1? Do what you love.”

Not a bad way to start our wine tasting adventure in the Marlborough region...

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

Framingham Wines began making wines in 1994 and lay claim to having some of the oldest Riesling vines in Marlborough, which date back to 1981. The estate covers 17 hectares and shines against a stunning, hilly backdrop.

Wellingtonian engineer Rex Brooke-Taylor, who planted the first vineyard, chose the name ‘Framingham’ to pay homage to his English ancestral home town. It took until 1997, however, for Framingham to bring the entire winemaking process under its guise.

They also claim to produce the best Riesling in the country, a rather bold statement, but one they are willing to put to the test. Interestingly, the winery follows the German Prädikatswein classification system, presenting a range of offerings, including Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese, Beerenauslese. It also offers a late harvest Riesling.



Framingham recently reworked its logo to create a more distinct appearance and to enhance brand recognition. The new textured label certainly succeeds in these regards, at least in our view, offering a classy, distinguished-looking end product.



One of the many quotes decorating the winery.

## WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

Audited and accredited as 100% sustainable, the family-owned Sogrape company is clear on its winemaking philosophy: Do what you love.

As we came to understand, the staff adore aromatic wines that pair well with food. Having experimented with different varietals over the years, Framingham has focused on varietals the staff enjoy making and drinking, such as Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Montepulciano, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Viognier.

Thinning vines (removing excess *grappes* or bunches of grapes) remains an integral vineyard activity at Framingham Wines. This allows the fruit to breathe and properly ripen, which directly translates into the quality found in the bottle.

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*“Our rule is do what you love. Wine should be fun and enjoyable. If you like the wines you produce, even better.” – Mary-Jo Potez, Cellar Door Hostess*

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## ONE-ON-ONE WITH MARY-JO POTEZ, CELLAR DOOR HOSTESS, FRAMINGHAM WINES

We lucked out during our visit to Framingham with an informative, interactive tasting at the hands of Mary-Jo Potez, who has worked at the estate for about a decade. Originally from London, England, she now calls New Zealand home. That she wouldn't want to work anywhere else says a lot about the winery and the fruits of its labour.



Mary-Jo Potez, and some of the wines she loves.

### **Q: What do you like most about wine?**

A: It's versatile. It's great that you can have it with your friends. It covers a whole lot of occasions, like christenings, weddings, and graduations.

### **Q: Of all the wines you produce, which one is your favourite and why?**

A: This is a very hard question. I love our Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling... I love them all.

### **Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?**

A: Pinot Gris. Anything from New Zealand because it's very fresh and bright. I love the luscious fruit.

**Q: What’s the best part of your job?**

A: Meeting people and chatting with them. Being a Framingham ambassador is also good fun. It’s a great industry, too. People are really friendly around here. It’s a Kiwi thing.

**Q: What’s the worst part of your job?**

A: Nothing, really. I suppose there might be something once in a blue moon, but nothing really stands out.

**Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?**

A: The other day, we just brought out our Framingham Chardonnay (with the recently rebranded label). It was really busy in the Cellar Door and I somehow poured the Chardonnay instead of the Sauvignon Blanc for a woman. Oops! I couldn’t call back the lady I’d given the wrong wine to, so had to go chasing through the garden to find her. Luckily she hadn’t taken a sip!

**Q: Tell us one thing about you or your winery nobody else knows.**

A: Our winemaker, Andrew, is not a formally trained winemaker. He has a Ph.D. in organic chemistry. He’s also had throat cancer, so unfortunately, he has lost his voice, but he’s a very special person. Also, we’re a winery that doesn’t follow the rules. We drop a lot of fruit because it’s not of sufficient quality. We go for quality, not quantity. And, it’s a lovely place to work.

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*“In a world of increasing blandness, we remain individual.” –  
Framingham Wines*

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**THE TASTING...**

We had the privilege of tasting nearly the entire Framingham lineup, including offerings from their limited-edition F-series, an “experimental” series, and their Framingham series. The latter showcases wines with more mouth-filling texture and flavour, as well as more nuanced and balanced minerality.

We began with the 2017 F-Series Sauvignon Blanc (price: \$29.99 NZD) and ended with the 2018 Framingham Noble Riesling (price: \$39.99 NZD for a 375 ml bottle).



Some Framingham wine bottles showcasing the new labels.

In between, we tasted the:

- 2017 F-Series Old Vine Riesling (price: \$44.99 NZD)
- 2018 Framingham Classic Riesling (price: \$24.99 NZD)
- 2017 F-Series Riesling Spätlese (price : \$39.99 NZD)
- 2018 Framingham Pinot Gris (price: \$24.99 NZD)
- 2018 Framingham Chardonnay (price: \$24.99 NZD)
- 2016 F-Series Pinot Noir (price: \$39.99 NZD)
- 2016 Framingham Pinot Noir (price: \$29.99 NZD)

For us, the 2016 Framingham Pinot Noir stole the show, so to speak. Pale-to-medium ruby in appearance, we enjoyed raspberries, forest floor, white pepper, and bay leaf in the bouquet. In the mouth, this light bodied red with medium-high acidity and medium tannins, served up red cherries, raspberries, charred wood, sage, and savoury spice. The sustained finish left us with sour cherries, charred wood, and savoury spice. Beautifully balanced, this Pinot Noir, with 13.5% alcohol, could probably be cellared for 5-6 years, although it might prove challenging to wait that long to drink it. We can see this wine pairing well with a variety of vegetable and light meat dishes.

The 2018 Framingham Classic Riesling came in a close second. Now, whether or not it beats everything else in New Zealand, as the folks at Framingham claim, remains to be determined. But in our view, it would take something special top it given that it hits all the right notes in a vibrant, refreshing way.

## FINAL NOTES

Many of the Framingham staff have worked there for years, which in our book, says pretty much everything you need to know about the estate. If you have never heard of the winery, you have to check it out, or at least get your hands on a bottle or two.

As a first taste of Marlborough, both literally and figuratively, we can see why the region has earned such a reputation for producing world-class wines, and not just Sauvignon Blanc.

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