

This inaugural vintage of the High Garden Vineyard also comes with a hell of a lot of street credibility. It's the personal project of Robin Tedder MW and is the highest vineyard in Gibston, Central Otago's coolest region. It's planted on a steep north facing slope which was planted twenty years ago with a range of clones and was made by Jen Parr, who is also the acclaimed and award winning winemaker at Valli. Enough said really.

Mid cherry red in colour it opens with beautifully seductive aromas. Powerful sweet dark cherry fruit with prominent young oak are lifted by savoury mushroom consommé, and truffle with a dusting of spice. It's then dry, finely balanced and quite light weight for Otago thanks to that vineyard altitude, yet still carries a powerful core of fleshy, gamey fruits with bright acidity and mouthcoating tannins. The finish is long and strong, with a classic peacock's tail gaining more floral and spicy complexity as it lingers till the very end. It's seriously impressive and an outstanding first release. It might not be cheap, but it is worth every cent, and more.

97 points

Angus Hughson

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When Robin purchased High Garden Vineyard (highgardenvineyard.com) in the Gibbston Valley, it seemed – in theory – as if he was taking on the most marginal of vineyard sites. Situated between 420m and 490m above sea level, on schist soils, the vines actually benefit from being grown in something like a sun-trap capturing long sunshine hours and radiated heat. Typically yields are very low averaging around 25 hectolitres per hectare, which is Grand Cru territory.

Nonetheless I am thinking about all the lessons Robin told me about investment and return on capital. Maybe he has become a softie or something?

I am sure Rita and Robin had serious misgivings about the timing of their vineyard purchase. Soon after the ink was dried, the pandemic prevented any travel and the 2020 vintage was made in absentia. But these difficult circumstances have been overcome by the support of well-known viticulturist Gary Crabbe and the highly accomplished winemaker Jennifer Parr.

Now that the 2020 High Garden Pinot Noir has been released, it somehow vindicates Robin's new-found madness. It's an incredible debut wine with extraordinarily beautiful black cherry, strawberry dried roses aromas, abundant fruits, underlying chestnut notes, lacy textures and superb mid palate viscosity.

Robin is one of the most driven people I know, with an insatiable appetite for knowledge, making a difference and physical exhaustion. Who would have thought his first Central Otago vintage would make such an instant breakthrough? But the journey – shared with Rita – has taken nearly 27 years through thick and thin. While still professing to be a student winemaker, I suspect he will be sleeping much better for having achieved this important and beautiful milestone in wine

Andrew Caillard MW