

Viticulture



Top of the class

Central Otago wines have won awards at home and abroad. At the 2006 Air New Zealand Wine Awards wines from Central Otago received 46 awards, including four gold and 18 silver medals.



Stat attack

Central Otago accounts for around 5% of New Zealand's wine grape plantings and makes around 1% of New Zealand's wine.

At latitude 45° south, Central Otago is the southern-most wine growing region in the world.



Digging deeper...

Viticulture in Central Otago has its roots with a Frenchman by the name of Jean Desire Feraud. After striking it lucky as a goldminer, he bought land and was making wine near Alexandra by the 1880s. You can see two of his bottles at the Clyde Museum.

'There is no better country on the face of the Earth for the production of Burgundy grapes than Central Otago..' In 1895, this was how European wine expert Romeo Bragato viewed the region.

Indeed the flagship burgundy grape variety, Pinot noir, is the dominant vineyard fruit grown in Central Otago and, in a good year, the wines are stunning. The aromatic varieties of Riesling, Pinot gris and Gewurztraminer, also do extremely well in Central Otago.

Central Otago's hot, dry summers and very cold, frosty winters do make grape growing a challenge. Frosts can cause havoc for grape growers and can hit the region anytime between March and November. But the hot, dry summers, combined with careful vineyard practices, generally result in low grape yields with very concentrated flavours and that is the hallmark of good wine grapes.

It wasn't until the 1990s that wine grape planting really took off in Central Otago and it is still a rapidly growing industry. Central's wineries are very much boutique in nature and concentrate on producing quality wines rather than bulk supply. A tour through Central has to include visits to some of the wineries in and around Queenstown, Gibbston Valley, Bannockburn, Cromwell, and Alexandra.



Central Otago grape vines



Wine tasting is available at many Otago vineyards

