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## Kiwi Maestro blue meets its perfect match

The Taylor's Port Champion of Champions Cheese 2008 Ferndale Maestro just happens to have found its perfect match in award sponsor Taylor's Port.

'King of the blues' Ferndale Maestro won the top award in this year's Cuisine NZ Champions of Cheese Awards, announced on Tuesday 4 March.

With its rustic, aged, sharp flavour and creamy texture, Maestro is an ideal match for Taylor's Late Bottled Vintage Port 2001, a wine with a rich fruity character, complexity, depth and structure that can match even the most assertive blue cheese.

While Ferndale Maestro and Taylor's Vintage complement each other perfectly, it's not just blue that brings out the best in port says Taylor's Port brand manager Antica Soljan.

"Firstly, all ports are not created equal and, like all fine wines, you will get different flavour profiles and characteristics with each style, whether ruby or tawny, as well as age and vintage.

"Traditionally, people would associate only blue cheese with port, such as the renowned port and stilton combination in Britain. However, New Zealand has such wonderful diversity of cheese producers that there are cheeses to match every port – whether it's a robust ewe's or goat's milk cheese, a crumbly vintage cheddar or a nutty gouda," she says.

However, there are a few things to remember before crafting the perfect match, says Antica.

"Firstly, consider the assertiveness of the cheese and the weight of the port – is the cheese pungent, salty or sweet? Look at the texture of the cheese – for example, brie or camembert with their soft, creamy textures, are not ideal cheeses for ports, they are too mild and sweet. A strong vintage cheddar or mature gouda, however, with an aged port will be a match made in heaven.

"Also remember that a red wine glass is best for drinking port – as with all wines, the nose and flavour of port can be enjoyed most when the wine is allowed to breathe in the glass," she says.

Bearing these few guidelines in mind, choosing the right New Zealand cheese to appreciate your port, whether it's a Ferndale Maestro Blue or Mercer Mature Gouda, becomes a much easier and thoroughly enjoyable task.

### Tasting Notes for Taylor's Port and New Zealand's Finest Cheese

One of the best-known cheese and port combinations is vintage port and robust blue cheese. Vintage character or late bottled vintage port pairs well with a full-flavoured, slightly salty or soft ripened cheese

such as Ferndale Maestro Blue (Taylor's Port Champion of Champions – Cuisine NZ Champions of Cheese Awards 2008), Kapiti Awa Blue, Ferndale Blue Supreme or Whitestone Highland Blue.

#### Taylor's Late Bottled Vintage Port 2001 and Blue Cheese

Robust blue cheese has a strong association with port. Roquefort, stilton and gorgonzola are among the world's greatest blue cheeses. New Zealand also creates some outstanding blues. Mildly pungent, the flavour of a good blue develops as it ages to create a smoother, more delectable taste. The cheese is a creamy-coloured semi-hard cheese with greenish blue veining radiating from its centre.

Taylor's Late Bottled Vintage Port 2001 is a selection of the best wines from a single year, and spends four to six years maturing in wood. It is a wine with a rich fruity character, and its complexity, depth and structure can match the most assertive blue cheese.

The key difference between a late bottled vintage and a vintage port is the length of time it matures in wood casks before bottling. Vintage wines will spend only two years in wood and are bottled long before they are ready to drink. Vintage ports slowly develop their distinctive aromas and flavours as they rest for years, or even decades, in the cellar.

Try a Ferndale Maestro Blue (Taylor's Port Champion of Champions in the Cuisine Champions of Cheese Awards 2008) or Ferndale Bleu de Montagne, Puhoi Valley Publican's Blue or A Gibbston Valley Cheese Kawarau Blue.

Prepared on behalf of the Taylor's Port by Goode PR, Auckland. For further information, images or to organise interviews with the Master Judge, winners or New Zealand Specialist Cheesemakers Association, please contact Petra Milhaljevich on 09 480 9948, 021 509 062 or email [petra@goodepr.co.nz](mailto:petra@goodepr.co.nz)