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## 2008 - A Milestone Year for Misha's Vineyard

Misha's Vineyard has just completed their first commercial harvest after seven years of planning, preparing and planting.

'Our objective from the outset was to establish a 'no compromise' vineyard and just finding the ideal location that met all of our criteria took nearly two years' explained Misha Wilkinson'.

Misha's Vineyard was subsequently established on 57 hectares of the spectacular north-west facing terraces of Bendigo overlooking Lake Dunstan. Dr Richard Smart, who worked with the Wilkinson's on the site evaluation, praised the high altitude location as one of the best he had seen in Otago due to its excellent cool air drainage, given that frost is an issue for most vineyards in the area.

Andy & Misha Wilkinson commenced with the first stage of vineyard development with 10 hectares of vines in 2004 under the guidance of their viticulturalist Robin Dicey. The planting program continued in 2005 with another 12 hectares and a further 4 hectares in 2007 taking the total vineyard to 26 hectares, with further planting planned in the future. Currently 2/3rds of the vineyard is planted in various clones of Pinot Noir and the rest comprise the aromatic white varieties including Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Sauvignon Blanc.

The Wilkinsons made a decision from the outset that they would wait until their Pinot Noir vines were four years old before cropping - a year longer than you would normally wait for a first harvest. "Quality is our most important driver and we wanted our vines to have an additional year put down their roots and really establish themselves in our stony terrain" said Andy Wilkinson.

However the Wilkinsons also wanted to do everything they could to ensure that this first commercial vintage would be successful. That meant testing the entire process from harvest through to bottling, so a decision was made to do a 'trial harvest' last April with a very small corner of the vineyard that had excellent growth on their 3-year old Pinot Noir vines.

"As the old adage goes, 'practice makes perfect', so we took just 1.5 tonnes of Pinot Noir grapes as our 'trial vintage'" which is currently luxuriating in French oak hogsheads and due for bottling mid year" said Misha. ""This will enable us to test a new bottling facility in the area, and also help us to understand the entire winemaking and packaging process."

"This 'trial vintage' has also given our winemaker, Olly Masters, the opportunity to taste and understand the flavours we're producing on the vineyard so that he can align his winemaking process and oak barrel choices to compliment our fruit".

A special label has been created by Tucker Creative, a specialist wine packaging design agency in Adelaide, for the 100 or so cases of trial vintage Pinot Noir which will be called Misha's Vineyard "The

Audition”.

“The wine is not intended for sale but will be used for marketing purposes, so it really will be used as an audition with our potential distributors and a little retained for library stock” said Misha.

Over the next eighteen months the Wilkinsons plan to take “The Audition” to their potential export markets which are destined to be Asia, Australia, the US, and a small amount to be distributed domestically.

The Wilkinsons have a strong connection to Asia having been based in Singapore for the past fifteen years. “Asia will be one of our most important export markets” explained Misha. “In fact a good part of our decision to establish a vineyard in Central Otago and produce Pinot Noir and a range of aromatic whites, was because we understood the Asian palate and preferences and realised it was a great fit with wines that could be produced in this region”.

The vineyard also has a special connection with Asia based on it’s history as it was on the lakefront terraces of Bendigo that many Cantonese settled during the gold rush of the late 1800’s, with remnants of the alluvial mining still visible in the gullies on the vineyard.

“We also have an uncanny recurrence of the number 8 – a very lucky number for Chinese” explained Andy. “Misha’s Vineyard is situated on State Highway 8, just 8kms from the nearest town of Cromwell, and on land that was originally known as sheep run 238. There are also 88 kms of vineyard rows which are aligned, by chance, in a direction of 288° with a total of 8 clones of Pinot Noir planted”.

The Wilkinsons hope that this gold-mining history and the auspicious nature of the site will bode well for the vineyard and its wines.

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#### About Misha’s Vineyard Wines Limited

Established in 2004 by Andy and Misha Wilkinson, Misha’s Vineyard is situated on 57 hectares of Bendigo Station’s most visually spectacular sites located on the north-west facing terraces overlooking Lake Dunstan. With 10 hectares planted in 2004, 12 hectares in 2005, and a further 4 hectares in 2007, Misha’s Vineyard plans further planting as well as the construction of an underground wine cellar and winery. Currently two-thirds of the vineyard is planted in Pinot Noir, with the remainder comprising a selection of white varieties including Pinot Gris, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc and Gewürztraminer. The primary markets for Misha’s Vineyard Wines will be Asia and the US with the full range of wines scheduled for launch in

2009.