

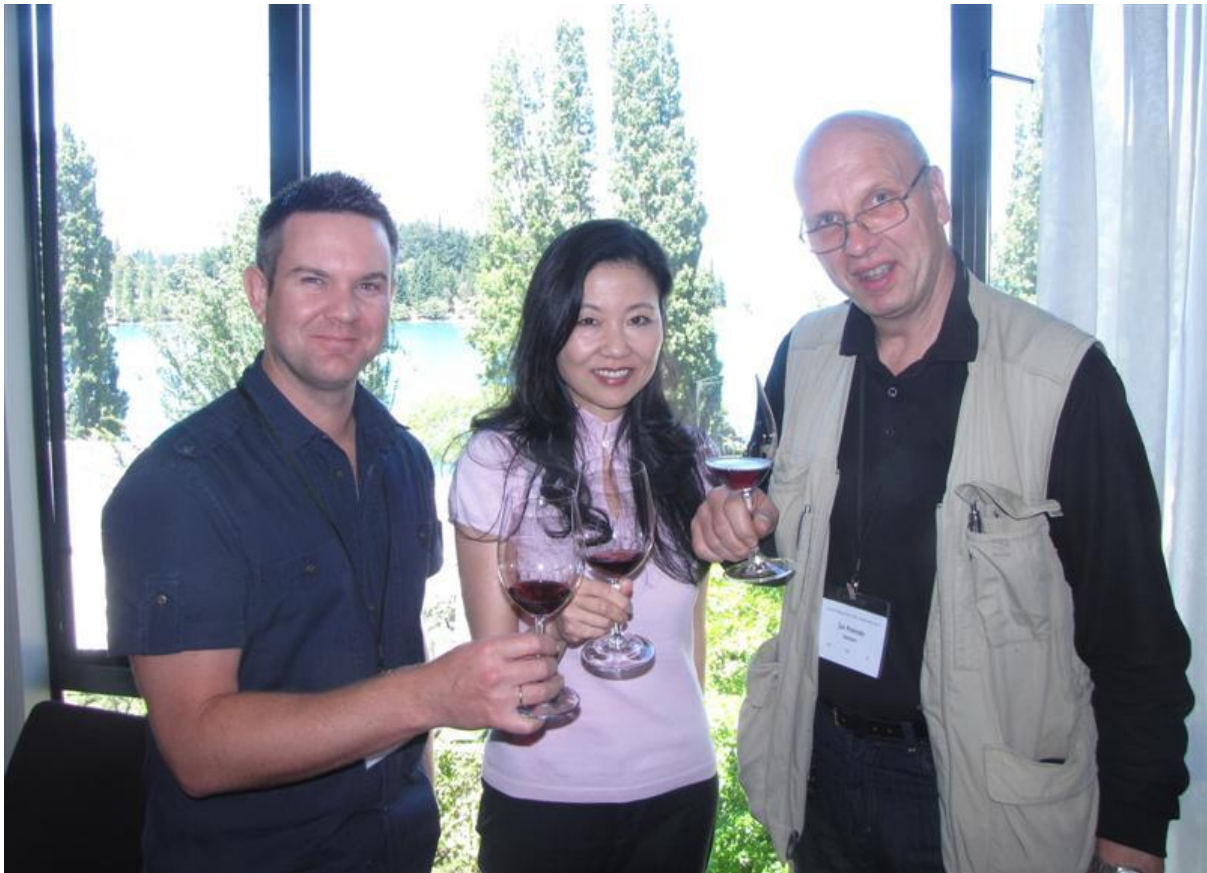
Otago Daily Times

Aficionados find paradise at pinot party

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By [Matt Stewart](#) on Fri, 28 Jan 2011

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(From left) Dan Sims, of Melbourne's Pinot Unearthed, influential Hong Kong critic Jeannie Cho Lee and Swedish Winewriters Association board member Jan Petersen sample wines from outside the region at a tasting at the St Moritz Hotel, in Queenstown, yesterday for the Central Otago Pinot Celebration. Photo by Matt Stewart.

A clutch of luminaries has descended on Queenstown for the Central Otago Pinot Noir Celebration, featuring a global cast of wine writers, media movers and hospitality heavyweights.

"It's always a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the diversity and quality of the region and it's always stunning to be back in Queenstown. Just look at the view," Dan Sims, of Melbourne-based website Pinot Unearthed, who is back after four years, said.

Mr Sims was on hand at the St Moritz Hotel, in Queenstown, with about a dozen pinot noir aficionados, as they were taken through a tasting tour of New Zealand's key pinot regions outside Central Otago, including Wairarapa-Martinborough, Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury-Waipara.

The characteristics of each region were outlined before the assembled pinot punters got down to the serious business of swirling, sipping and spitting, followed by bouts of furious note-making.

The theme for the 2011 event is "A Question of Vintage".

A panel of winemakers and international pinot noir specialists will lead two days of tastings and wine experiences, which are designed to showcase the best Central Otago has to offer.

About 40 wineries from throughout Central Otago are taking part.

This year's event is being attended by 175 guests, who are paying between \$1196 and \$1380 a ticket.

New Zealand pinot noir

- The first Central Otago vines were planted using holes blasted out of north-facing schist slopes.
- Despite being well-known in North Island vineyards in the late 19th and early 20th century, the variety languished until several acclaimed pinot noirs emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
- Total plantings grew 930% from 431ha in 1996 to 4441ha in 2007.
- Pinot noir has overtaken chardonnay and is now the second most planted varietal.
- Exports grew 1860% from 0.3 million litres in 2000 to 5.8 million litres in the year to June 2007.
- The UK, US and Australia take 79% of all New Zealand exports.

Source: NZ Wine