



**PLUMPJACK**  
WINES

PlumpJack Wine Club

## February 2009

As an enological pilgrim, it is easy to get caught up in the challenge of always seeking out new and different wines in the hopes of attaining organoleptic bliss. Perhaps it is a wine lover's dream to be able to sit around the dinner table and tell friends and family about the wonders a Tannat from Uruguay can produce. In this ongoing search, we often overlook the tried and true classics. This month we have an opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with the array of flavors that New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and California Cabernet Sauvignon offer. While it is always fun to discover the new cutting edge varietal or wine region, there is something comforting in going back to the familiar. There is a reason for the popularity of these wines and the demand they hold in the marketplace, and it's not too complex to understand. They are delicious!

*2008 MOMO  
Sauvignon Blanc.  
Marlborough, New Zealand*



*2006 Six Sigma  
"Cuvée Pique-Nique"  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
Lake County, California*



Marlborough, one of New Zealand's sunniest and driest areas, is located close to the heart of New Zealand, on the northeast corner of the South Island, due west of Wellington City. When the first New Zealand growers planted grapes in Marlborough in the 1970's (there is evidence of plantings as early as 1870), it is unlikely they would have foreseen the extent of the growth and fame that the region's wine industry would achieve based upon a single varietal. The distinctive pungency and fruit flavors of the first Marlborough Sauvignon Blancs captured the imagination of the country's winemakers, as well as the attention of international wine critics and consumers, and sparked an unparalleled boom in vineyard development. Marlborough is now the largest wine-producing region in the country, responsible for 62% of New Zealand's total wine production - this has more than quadrupled in the past 10 years. By 2008, the region was estimated to reach 27,560 grape-producing acres. Today, there are 110 wineries, 450 grape growers, and vineyards are primarily planted in Sauvignon Blanc, but Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer are also produced. Our featured white wine this month comes from MOMO, meaning 'offspring' in Maori. MOMO is a second label of Marlborough's Seresin Estate, yet it is not a second wine in any way. Michael Seresin was born in Wellington, New Zealand, but left in the 1960's, when sheep, not grapevines, covered the Wairau Plains. He settled in Italy, where he was captivated by Italian food and wine culture, and began his career as a cinematographer. Over time Michael's interest in wine developed into a passion, and in the early 1990's, after investigating opportunities to start a winery in Italy, he became aware of the quality wines starting to emerge from his homeland. After visiting Marlborough, Michael decided to purchase a home there, followed by the purchase of some land in the Wairau Valley, which became Seresin's Home vineyard. Seresin Estate's first vintage was produced in 1996, and all of Seresin Estate's wines are made from grapes grown on its own 124 acre Wairau Valley vineyard. The MOMO wines are produced from vineyards managed by Seresin Estate, located in the cooler West Wairau Valley. Momo selects sustainably grown grapes from a small number of growers and uses minimal winemaking intervention to create wines with true varietal character and quality. The MOMO wines reflect the same quality and care in winemaking as that of Seresin Estate wines. The 2008 MOMO Sauvignon

Blanc is made from a blend of fruit from vineyards located on the plains of the Wairau Valley. The Sauvignon was picked between March 29 and April 11 in the late evening and early morning, to ensure the fruit was cool when it reached the winery. Fermentation took place at a low temperature in stainless-steel to retain fruit character. The wine was also aged *sur lee* to give greater palate depth and complexity. MOMO Sauvignon Blanc is unoaked and displays the classic mineral and crisp gooseberry fruit style of Marlborough. It has a real sense of poise and elegance, while simultaneously being lively, racy and thirst-quenching. The wine is balanced with good richness in the mid-palate and crisp acidity, to give a long and clean finish. This Sauvignon Blanc is delicious with all types of seafood and summer salads, or just by itself as a refreshing aperitif.

**The 2008 MOMO Sauvignon Blanc is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.**



North of Napa County and east of Sonoma and Mendocino counties, Lake County's 8,500 acres of vineyard border three of California's most influential viticultural regions. Although Lake County has a long history of grape growing, growers have long sold much of their fruit to wineries in Napa, where it was blended and then bottled under the more prestigious Napa name. Lake County's modern wine industry is still in its infancy, with only 14 wineries. Industry giant Kendall-Jackson started its business here in 1982 with the persevering talent of Jed Steele, the winemaker who helped create Kendall-Jackson's successful style of Chardonnay. Steele left Kendall-Jackson to make his own wine in 1991 and opened his Kelseyville winery in 1996. When Kaj Ahlmann wanted to invest in vineyards, the Dane initially looked at more than 20 properties scattered throughout Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake Counties, many of which were already planted with vines. In 1999, Ahlmann found 4,300 acres of land near the southeast side of Clear Lake. He believed that the future was in Lake County because of its great red volcanic soil and the moderating influence of Clear Lake, California's largest lake. Kaj decided to name his new property Six Sigma Ranch after the management process he had successfully implemented during his professional career. Six Sigma is an internationally recognized management process focused on producing high quality products or services to meet the customer's need. With its origins in mathematical models and developed by engineers, Six Sigma represents a philosophy and means of doing business in a way that minimizes errors, ensures consistency, and enhances customer satisfaction. It achieves those goals through a rigorous analysis of data that drives decision-making and practices. At Six Sigma Ranch, Kaj has applied his energy to doing things the "right" way. It began with the selection of land that would sustain vineyards at 1400-1700 feet altitude, providing the perfect terroir. The site for each vineyard was chosen with care, matching specific soils to specific varieties. The vineyards are farmed using sustainable practices, yielding grapes of pristine quality while preserving the land for generations to come. Ahlmann takes a wildland approach with Six Sigma. Vineyard plantings are essentially islands on the vast ranch. He has dedicated a portion of the land to a conservancy trust for hiking and the preservation of fauna and flora. His vineyards, like most other large ranches in Lake County, are designed with wildlife corridors, so paths for deer, boar, elk, bears and the occasional mountain lion aren't blocked by vineyard trellises. Kaj brought in the winemaking team of May-Britt and Denis Malbec. Denis grew up in France and learned to walk in the cellars and vineyards of Chateau Latour in Bordeaux where he watched and studied the work of his father, Jean-Noel Malbec and grandfather, Camille Malbec. While Denis was honing his winemaking skills, May-Britt was perfecting her craft as sommelier in Scandinavia. In 1992 she earned the Prince Henri-Melchior de Polignac award for "best sommelier" in the Nordic countries. In 1995, she moved to France to assume a role at Chateau Latour. Here, she met Denis who at that point in time was Cellar Master and Enologist. The couple stayed at Latour until 2000, and then left to start their own wine consulting company. The 2006 Six Sigma Cuvée Pique-Nique is composed of 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petite Verdot making up the remaining 5%. The wine was initially fermented in stainless-steel and then moved to new French oak barrels and aged for 18 months. A total of 665 cases were produced. The 2006 Six Sigma Cuvée Pique-Nique reveals complex notes of blackberry, blueberry and dark chocolate followed by attractive hints of coffee, licorice, cedar, spice box and delicate flowers such as lilac and violets. It has explosive flavors in the mouth of beautiful ripe fruit, a rich, lush mouth-feel and amazing length on the palate. This is a food-friendly wine that is perfect with cheese, grilled vegetables and meats including BBQ, flank steak, rib-eye and more traditional fare such as Boeuf Bourguignon.

**The 2006 Six Sigma Cuvée Pique-Nique is \$20.99/bottle, \$226.70/case.**