



Media Release

For immediate release

Misha's Vineyard Supports Rising Stars

CROMWELL, Central Otago, New Zealand, 6 August 2014 – Misha's Vineyard Wines is delighted to announce the appointment of Michelle Dacombe as Vineyard Manager for the spectacular estate on the edge of Lake Dunstan, and also announces its sponsorship of the inaugural New Zealand *Junior Sommelier of the Year*. The Vineyard Manager appointment is part of Misha's Vineyard's new phase of development with the vines now reaching the next level of maturity and the sommelier sponsorship is a way of giving back to the industry by inspiring young wine professionals.

Michelle will be responsible for viticulture and vineyard operations at Misha's Vineyard – a dramatic 57-hectare estate with 26 hectares of vineyard planted on the north-west facing lakefront terraces which provide the optimal conditions for producing world-class Pinot Noir and a range of aromatic white varieties. The challenging site stretches from 210 to 350 metres above sea level and has very complex soils which are a combination of glacial outwash and river gravels. With the vines now reaching 10 years of age, one of the key initiatives Michelle will undertake is developing a program that focuses on building up the organic matter in the extremely low-vigour soils for the continued improvement of soil and vine health.

Michelle, who grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, moved to New Zealand nearly 10 years ago where she embarked upon a career in agriculture. Since then Michelle has worked with several of Central Otago's leading organic and biodynamic wine producers including Burn Cottage Vineyard, Mount Edward Wines and most recently Felton Road for over four years where she reported directly to their Viticulturist with primary responsibilities for the acclaimed Calvert Vineyard. Supplementing her practical vineyard experience with a National Certificate in Horticulture, from Otago Polytechnic, Michelle has also twice competed in the *Markham's Young Viticulturist Competition*, placing both times and finishing runner up in 2012. Since then Michelle has been on the organizing committee for the competition. "I'm passionate about supporting youth coming through the industry and this competition is a great opportunity for young people to gauge their knowledge and to develop any areas of weakness – and it's also a lot of fun" she said.

Continuing the theme of developing and inspiring youth, Misha's Vineyard has become the sponsor of the inaugural *Junior Sommelier of the Year*, which is part of the New Zealand Sommelier of the Year Awards under the direction of Master Sommelier Cameron Douglas. The competition is the brainchild of Celia Hay, director of New Zealand School of Food and Wine and will be judged on Monday 15th September as part of Auckland's new Wine and Food celebration.

"With Misha's Vineyard now well established as a predominantly on-premise brand, we're excited to be able to provide a little education and hopefully a lot of inspiration to the industry's upcoming sommeliers" said Misha Wilkinson, Director/Owner of Misha's Vineyard along with her husband Andy.



“Encouraging people to gain skills and expertise is very much part of our philosophy at Misha’s Vineyard. We provide wine education to many groups around the world ranging from students at hospitality colleges, to special interest groups and through to hospitality and wine professionals and we’re currently working on a project with a group of graduate students studying International Marketing at the University of Otago” she said.

The prize offered by Misha’s Vineyard to the winner of Junior Sommelier of the Year includes return flights to Queenstown, a helicopter tour with Heliview Flights and in-depth tasting sessions to better understand the Central Otago region. Luxury accommodation will be donated by The Rees Hotel in Queenstown – one of the super premium hotels with whom Misha’s Vineyard works closely and where General Manager, Mark Rose, shares the same passion in encouraging and supporting young hospitality professionals.

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New Zealand Sommelier Awards:

For more information on the ***Sommelier of the Year Awards***, please go to:

<http://event.foodandwine.co.nz/Sommelier.html> and

http://www.foodandwine.co.nz/Sommelier_Comp

For more info on ***NZ School of Food & Wine event*** (14-22 September 2014), please go to: <http://event.foodandwine.co.nz/>

About Misha’s Vineyard Wines Limited www.mishasvineyard.com

Misha’s Vineyard is located on one of the most spectacular sites in New Zealand at the edge of Lake Dunstan in the Bendigo sub-region of Central Otago. The sun drenched north-west facing terraces of the 57-hectare estate provide the optimal conditions for producing world-class Pinot Noir and a range of aromatic white varieties. The ‘no compromise’ philosophy behind Misha’s Vineyard wines require an exacting sustainable viticulture regime, hand-picking of the estate-grown fruit and considerate as well as minimalist winemaking methodologies. Under internationally renowned winemaker Olly Masters, the range of Misha’s Vineyard wines have won critical acclaim since their launch. Named as one of ***New Zealand’s Top 20 Producers*** by the prestigious ***Decanter*** (UK) magazine, the wines are now exported to more than 20 countries around the world.