



## **Media Release**

***For immediate release***

### **New Zealand's Junior Sommelier Winner Gets a Taste of Central Otago**

**CROMWELL, Central Otago, New Zealand, 10 February 2015** – Winner of the inaugural New Zealand *Junior Sommelier of the Year*, Oliver Carr, has been getting a taste of the high life in Central Otago with tutored tastings of the region's top wines, a specially-prepared degustation dinner at the award-winning True South Dining Room at The Rees Hotel in Queenstown and a helicopter tour over the vineyards of the region.

The program of activities were part of the prize offered by Misha's Vineyard, who sponsored the *Junior Sommelier of the Year* award, open to those under 30 years of age, in order to provide some education and inspiration to the country's up and coming hospitality professionals.

The competition is the brainchild of Celia Hay, director of the New Zealand School of Food and Wine, and was judged last September during Auckland's Wine and Food celebration. The rigorous judging for the sommelier awards was under the direction of New Zealand's only Master Sommelier, Cameron Douglas and included two other leading judges, Tim Hanni, a Master of Wine from California and Therese Herzog, acclaimed restaurateur from Marlborough.

"Within Misha's Vineyard, the focus has always been on working with the country's leading restaurants who distinguish themselves with outstanding food and wine but also outstanding service" said Misha Wilkinson, Director and owner of Misha's Vineyard. "With our sponsorship of this sommelier award we're hoping we can play a small role in motivating and encouraging young industry professionals".

Oliver, or "Ollie" as he's known, spent an afternoon with Oliver Masters, Misha's Vineyard winemaker and renowned international wine judge, for some tutored tastings with some of the top rated wine producers in the Central Otago region including Burn Cottage and Aurum Wines.

A special degustation dinner was created for Ollie at True South Dining Room at The Rees Hotel Queenstown by Executive Chef and rising culinary star, Ben Batterbury. This special dining experience was generously provided by Mark Rose, General Manager of The Rees Hotel Queenstown, whose strong belief in delivering accommodation and dining experiences at the very highest standards, result in the many accolades that the hotel and restaurant receive.

Included in the prize from Misha's Vineyard was a helicopter trip over the main winegrowing region of Central Otago. Flying with the new Cromwell-based helicopter



company, Heliview Flights, Ollie toured around the Bannockburn region and the vineyards in the Cromwell basin where the majority of Central Otago's grapes are grown. Vineyard Manager for Misha's Vineyard, Michelle Dacombe, who has spent many years working on vineyards in the region, provided the commentary during the flight.

It certainly seems Ollie has developed a taste for Central Otago as he is now temporarily based in the region and will be working as part of a local vineyard team over the next few months to broaden his knowledge and understanding of viticulture, having just completed a post-graduate diploma in Viticulture and Oenology at Lincoln University. He then plans to do some travelling and work at various wineries overseas during vintage to gain further experience.

“Coming from a family involved in hospitality with his father a restaurateur for over 20 years, it wasn't surprising Ollie was attracted to the hospitality sector” said Misha Wilkinson. “Ollie has gained some solid experience in hospitality while working in Wellington, and along with formal qualifications and experience in vineyards and wineries, he certainly will have a fantastic base on which to launch his career in whatever direction he chooses within the hospitality or wine sectors.

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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#prizes>

**About Misha's Vineyard Wines Limited** [www.mishasvineyard.com](http://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.