

RIPPON



Nick Mills

CENTRAL OTAGO

Founded: 1982
Winemaker/Viticulturist: Nick Mills
Acres owned: 30
Annual production:
2,500 to 5,000 cases
Estate grown: 100%
Owner: The Mills family
Known for: Schist- and wind-driven
pinot noir from the banks of Lake
Wanaka.
Importer: Station Imports,
Colorado Springs, CO
Website: rippon.co.nz

Emma Rippon was the daughter of a head cashier of the Bank of England. After she married and moved to Australia, her son, Percy Sargood, set up an office in Dunedin, on the southeastern coast of New Zealand's South Island. He ventured up the Clutha River valley toward the Main Divide and in 1912 purchased Wanaka Station, about 44,500 acres on a glacial lake in Central Otago. Rolfe Sargood Mills moved to a somewhat smaller family farm with his wife, Lois, in 1974. As a submarine lieutenant in World War II, he'd spent some time in Portugal's Douro Valley where the soils reminded him of the schist gravels in Wanaka.

Mills set out to experiment with vines, eventually planting his first commercial vineyard on its own roots in 1982, 15 varieties including pinot noir. He chose a north-facing slope close to Lake Wanaka, protected from the winds that crash over the mountains, skitter across the lake and then tumble over a small island just offshore that buffers their impact. Mills' son, Nick, spent five years in Oregon and Burgundy, including a year at Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, before returning to Wanaka in 2002.

The biodynamic practices he learned in France have since influenced his winegrowing. This remote vineyard, surrounded by snow-covered mountains, is now one of the most extreme places in the world growing a world-class *vin de terroir* from pinot noir.

The vineyard, farmed organically from the start, collects its compost at the center—what Mills calls “the liver”—of the property, its microbial life fostered by biodynamic preparations. At his sorting table, Mills tastes the stems and includes them when they are “digestible—when they feel good in your stomach.” His '08 layers scents of schist, red fruit, rhubarb and rose. It shares a racy acidity with the Tinker's Field Pinot Noir, from the original vines planted by his father, a red that achieves a harmony between its structural elements and the flavors that ground it in luscious textural depths. —J.G.



TOP-SCORING WINES

- 94** '08 Central Otago Rippon Pinot Noir \$55 (2/11)
94 '08 Central Otago Tinker's Field Pinot Noir \$89 (2/11)
89 '08 Central Otago Emma's Block Pinot Noir \$72 (2/11)