

## FIONA TURNER

Co-owner Tinpot Hut Wines

**F**iona Turner's involvement in wine came about by chance. After studying for a Master's in Biological Chemistry at the University of Canterbury, she was toying with heading to Europe when she stumbled on a job ad for a laboratory manager at a contract winemaking facility in Blenheim.

"And I thought 'if they are big enough to need a lab manager they might be big enough to need temporary lab staff over the harvest period in six months' time.' This would tie in nicely with finishing up my thesis, earning enough money to get a ticket to the UK."

She got the job, driving up and down from Blenheim to Christchurch over the following six months. "It was a fantastic experience, I had some great bosses, worked with all the top consultants and winemakers in the district, and gained a lot of experience in a short time."

Two years later she quit to get on the northern hemisphere/southern hemisphere vintage cycle.

Fast-forward to 2003, by which time she'd got engaged to Hamish (now Tinpot Hut co-owner). "I was working back in Marlborough with a winemaking consultancy company and

he was a project manager based in Wellington. If we wanted to live together after we married one of us was going to have to change what we were doing! Hamish had always wanted to be farmer as a boy and was becoming disillusioned with the stress and hours of his industry so we decided to look for a vineyard to run ourselves."

They found Blind River, a 20 hectare block in Marlborough, and signed the mortgage papers the same week they married in early 2005.

"We launched Tinpot Hut Wines from the 2006 vintage with the support of colleagues in Blenheim and the UK. We haven't looked back."

You wouldn't think 'work-life balance' and 'running a winery' might appear in the same sentence. But for the mum-of-two boys, that's been a pleasant surprise. "While there are times of the year that are super busy, there are also downtimes which allow us to spend more time with our kids, travel and enjoy the outdoors."

As for gender-specific challenges, she hasn't come across any. "The biggest challenge I see as a woman is how to manage your career once kids become part of the mix and that's not specific to our industry."

## TIPS AND *sips*

**1 YOUR ADVICE FOR WANNABE WINEMAKERS?** "Do a couple of vintages, get your hands dirty, do a season in the vineyard, get a part-time job in a wine shop... winemaking can look like a very romantic business from the outside; while it can be very rewarding, it can be plain hard work. Before you spend a lot of money getting qualifications make sure the reality measures up to the dream. Get as much experience and education as you can while you're young. Travel, read, ask questions, listen and taste from as wide a variety of regions, styles and wines that you can."

**2 FAVOURITE WINES OF THE MOMENT?** My top whites are the 2018 Tinpot Hut Barker Vineyard Riesling; 2015 Dog Point Chardonnay; and 2011 Rock Ferry Blanc de Blanc Methode Traditionelle. My top reds would be 2014 Bilancia La Collina Syrah; 2017 Maude Pinot Noir; 2014 Domaine Jamet Côte-Rôtie.

