

## MICHAEL COOPER



### WINE GEMS

When tasting the releases of new wineries, it often feels as if the winemaker is learning on the job. Not so with Gem. Corey Hall worked at Matua Valley for 10 years, climbing from cellarhand to senior winemaker, so it's no surprise his first wines, now on sale under the Gem label, are immaculate and full of personality.

Corey and his wife, Megan (Gem is Meg backwards), work from their house at Te Henga (Bethells Beach), on Auckland's west coast. Their Studio Wine Company has no winery or vineyard. Grapes are bought from around the country and the wines are crafted by Corey at an Auckland winery. Gem Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2005 (\$27) is delicious now, with a basket of vibrant fruit flavours; Gem Gisborne Chardonnay 2005 (\$32) is a very sophisticated style, ideal for cellaring.

Megan, who has worked in restaurants, as a model and marketing manager, "looks after the outside of the bottle, while Corey takes care of what goes inside". Newcomers to the range from the 2006 vintage include a Marlborough Pinot Gris, Hawke's Bay Merlot and Wairarapa Pinot Noir.