



The Winemaker: George Fistonich and the Villa Maria Story

Kerry Tyack

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Biography of New Zealand's most awarded wine-industry leader. Over the last 15 years, the New Zealand industry has increasingly globalised, as international corporates take a dominant role in our wine production. Villa Maria has always fiercely guarded its independence as New Zealand's largest privately-owned wine company, an independence that can be tracked back to the day in 1961 when a young George Fistonich told his Croatian-immigrant father that he wanted to give up building and take over the family winery. In the 50 years since, he has turned a cottage business making fairly average table and fortified wines into a widely admired company that produces some of this country's very best wines (for which it has won a multitude of local and international awards), has considerable landholdings, is a major exporter, an energetic sponsor, and has an innovative culture. George Fistonich has won the coveted Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award, was knighted, and, in 2011, was honoured with one of the international wine industry's leading awards. This book traces the arc of his life, from his hard-working Mangere childhood to his self-taught marketing audacity, from having to save his beloved business from receivership to taking big bets on the future. What emerges is the portrait of a determined, savvy and visionary man, whose life in wine tracks the history of the modern New Zealand wine industry. The book features a tribute by celebrated UK wine writer Oz Clarke.

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