



Collaboration game

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Up-and-coming Hawke’s Bay winemaker Julianne Brogden decided to go it alone with the recent creation of her Collaboration Wines label, but with a little help from her friends, as Yvonne Lorkin discovers.

inemaking is addictive,” says Julianne Brogden. “It involves physical, dirty, hard labour and long crazy hours, but the friends you make from countries all over the world and the many laughs, great food, loud eclectic music and of course fine wine make it all worthwhile.”

Returning to New Zealand after many years abroad, this well-travelled life of wine, art, food and friends has led 35-year-old Julianne (Julz to her mates) to join forces with Californian artist Angela Tirrel to create Collaboration Wines: wine crafted from select Hawke’s Bay vineyards. With names reflecting the colours of gold and silver, Julz has released an impressive 2011 chardonnay (Aurulent) and an elegant, beautifully balanced 2010 cabernet sauvignon (Argent).

Born and bred in Hawke's Bay, at the age of 17, Julianne began studying for a Bachelor of Wine Science at the region's Eastern Institute of Technology. However, it wasn't until she was well into her third year that she realised winemaking was what she really wanted to do. Inspired by field trips out to smaller boutique wineries, where creativity and hands-on craft and graft is the norm, Julianne hatched a plan to get as much experience under her belt as possible.

Julianne began working weekends in the cellar door and as a student cellar hand at Pask Winery from 1997 before moving on to cellar hand positions at Vidal Estate and Morton Estate. In 2001, she got the call to move stateside and begin work in the cellar and laboratory at Havens Wine Cellars in California's Napa Valley. This was to be the beginning of a seven-year stint in the Napa, where her talents were also taken up by two other family-owned wineries, Clos Pegase and Lewis Cellars. Julianne also managed to step sideways for a southern hemisphere vintage at Naturaliste Vintners in the Margaret River in 2006 before returning to California for a year. But the call to come home and make wines of her own rang strong. She returned to the Bay, but while plotting to do it herself, she landed work at Pask again, working in the cellar, the laboratory and the bottling line.

Since coming home, Julianne has managed to source fruit from several different Hawke's Bay vineyards grown in the Gimblett Gravels, the Bridge Pa Triangle, Ohiti and Havelock North.

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In addition to her Argent cabernet sauvignon and Aurulent chardonnay, Julianne has just



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released a cabernet merlot blend called The Impression (with The Impression white due for release in 2015), and her merlot cabernet franc 2013 blend called Ceresia currently ageing in the barrel.

Julianne is quick to acknowledge the immense contribution friends and family make to her new venture.

"My family and close friends have been incredibly supportive in so many ways. For instance, my family always helps out with the vineyard work, thinning, leaf plucking, pruning, picking and

the like. Providing their labour at no cost really helps me out financially at this stage of the business," she says.

"I run the bottling line at my main job, so I manage to get my mum, older sister and friends to put the bottles on the line and pack at the other end when I am bottling my own wine."

Julianne's father lends his building truck to cart the grapes from the vineyards to the cool store and to the winery during vintage.

"He also lends his builders as pickers if they don't have any work on at the time," she adds. "The builders tend to like the change of scenery!"

Speaking of scenery, a mutual love of art led to the label collaboration with Tirrel.

"Aurulent is the colour gold, and it was painted especially for the chardonnay label. Argent is the colour of silver, and it was a painting I always loved of Angela's," Julianne explains. "It used to sit in the dining room of her house in Napa where I rented a room. I always said if I had my own label one day I would use that painting."

Collaboration wines are now distributed through Dhall and Nash after Brandon Nash discovered them at a post-judging tasting at the Hawke's Bay Regional Wine Awards where, as it turned out, he had scored both her wines highly.

"Our skill and passion is identifying the absolute best wines available in the market place and to build their presence and reputation," says Dhall and Nash's Puneet Dhall. "Every producer has to start somewhere. In Julianne, we see a person who is connected to the land, is able to identify the best sites, has the winemaking skills garnered from a long apprenticeship working with the best winemakers globally and finally, understands the concept of marketing to her audience. Our job is to help fan that flame."