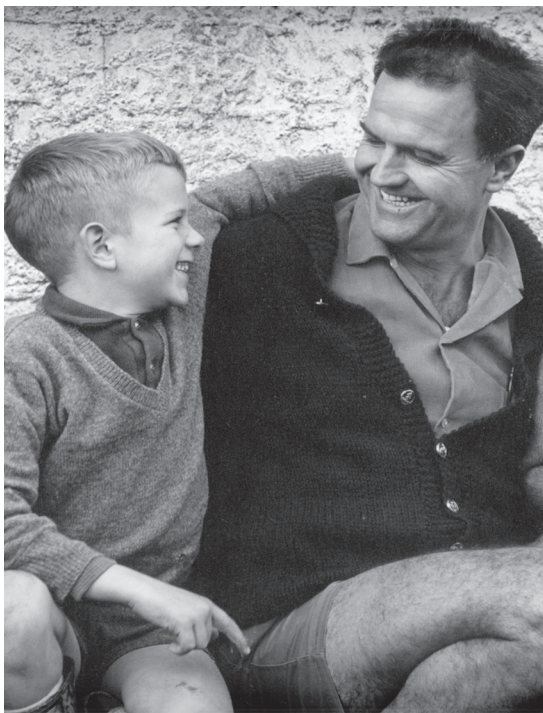


# A Historical Perspective



### Emigrants from Croatia

The story of Kumeu River Wines unfolds more than a half-century ago when the first generation of the Brajkovich family arrived in New Zealand. In 1938, Maté Brajkovich emigrated with his mother, Katé, and two sisters, Frances and Nevenka, from Dalmatia in southwestern Croatia to New Zealand. His father, Mick, had already been there for a year, working in the northern Kauri gum fields. After three years of public education during which time he learned English, Maté left school and joined his father digging Kauri gum. Two years later, the family moved to a dairy farm, then to Henderson in West Auckland where they worked in the orchards and vineyards. By 1944, they had saved enough money to purchase land in Kumeu.

### Becoming Winemakers

Although there was a small vineyard already in production on their new property, the main activity was mixed farming; so for the first few years, Mick, Katé and Maté grew fruits and vegetables and raised dairy cows. In Dalmatia, many families made wine for their own use from their own vines; it seemed only natural to do the same in New Zealand. The land was so well-suited for wine grapes that wine production in Kumeu far exceeded home consumption, and the Brajkovichs started making wine commercially. Although Mick died in 1949, Maté and Katé continued to run the family business which became known as San Marino Vineyards. They produced dry red table wine in the style that was preferred for everyday drinking back in Europe, which soon gained popularity among the literary and university circles of Auckland.



### A Family Legacy Begins

In 1957, Maté met his wife, Melba Sutich, whose grandparents had also immigrated to New Zealand from Croatia. Maté and Melba were married in 1958, and as the vineyard and winery expanded, so did the family. Michael was born in 1960, followed by Marijana in 1961, Milan in 1963 and Paul in 1967. For the children, being brought up around the winery established a strong foundation of industry knowledge and skill that would take the winery to a new level of success in years to come.

### Kumeu River: A New Name, A New Era

1979 was a watershed year for Kumeu River, when the Brajkovichs moved away from hybrid varieties used for the production of fortified and basic red and white wines to the now-common — but then-unusual — varieties such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Merlot. As Michael, Milan and Paul became more involved in the family business in the 1980s, the Brajkovichs continued to focus on quality and reputation; the winery changed its name to Kumeu River Wines in 1986 and began making a Burgundy-influenced style of Chardonnay that featured indigenous yeasts, extended lees aging and malolactic fermentation. The result has been a series of wines that are innovative, distinctive and unique in both style and quality for New Zealand. Today, Kumeu River produces 250,000 bottles annually from 30 hectares (74 acres) of estate vineyards in Kumeu, and another 10 hectares (24.7 acres) from local growers.

KUMEU RIVER

# Winemaking Philosophy



At Kumeu River Wines, the winemaking philosophy can be summarized in a single word: quality. The Brajkovich family endeavors to grow grapes of the highest quality and then treat them with respect when they turn those grapes into wine. In this way, the potential quality is maximized, and Kumeu River is able to make wines that are truly representative of its land.

From the vines to the wineglass, every drop of Kumeu River wine is a blend of tradition, innovation and dedication to both the science and the art of winemaking.

## *Quality Wines Begin With Quality Grapes*

### Wine Region

*Auckland:* Auckland has the distinction of being the historical birthplace of viticulture and winemaking in New Zealand. The first vines were planted in 1819 by Anglican missionary Samuel Marsden, though there is no record of wine being produced from the grapes. In 1839, Scotsman James Busby successfully made the country's first wines. In the late 1800s, immigrants from the now-Croatian Dalmatian coast came to New Zealand hoping to make their fortunes in the country's gum fields, eventually turning to farming and grape growing.

*Kumeu:* Kumeu is a sub-region of the Auckland wine district. Despite being situated well north of New Zealand's other viticultural regions, Kumeu's climate is kept cool due to its close proximity to the Tasman Sea, just 20 kilometers (nearly 12.5 miles) to the west, and the Pacific Ocean 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) to the east. These two large bodies of water generate clouds, keeping peak summer temperatures below 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit).

### Caring for Kumeu River's Vineyards

*Soil:* Kumeu River's 30 hectares (74 acres) of estate vineyards are comprised of predominantly clay soil over a sandstone base. These soil types retain sufficient water at depth, even during the summer months, ensuring that the vines are supplied with moisture without vigor getting too excessive. The vineyards do not require irrigation, a factor that is critical to the quality of Kumeu River's grapes.

*Trellising:* Kumeu River employs the "Lyre" or "U" trellising system to protect the vines from over-exposure to sunlight and UV rays resulting from the region's depleted ozone layer.

As you look down a row of vines, the u-shape of the trellis is clear, with two side curtains of vines rising from two opposing, 14-inch-long horizontal shoots which in turn originate from a 3-foot-tall trunk. The side walls are 28 inches apart at the base, inclining slightly outward towards the top of the canopies, and trellised on inclining posts. The fruit is born at the base of the canopy so the center is open for sunlight and air circulation. Kumeu River has developed a machine to trim the top and outside and inside walls of the vines.



WILSON DANIELS   
SINCE 1978

Imported by Wilson Daniels | St. Helena, California | [www.wilsondaniels.com](http://www.wilsondaniels.com)



# Winemaking Philosophy



***Bird Netting:*** Due to flocks of starlings, local blackbirds, thrushes and mynahs, all of whom can remove whole berries from the vines, bird netting is an essential part of growing grapes at Kumeu River. A smaller migratory bird called the white-eye pecks holes in the berries, causing rot and fermentation on the vine. To avoid losing too many crops to these birds, Kumeu River has invested in reusable netting to protect its vineyards.

***Harvest:*** All grapes that go into Kumeu River's wines are hand-harvested. Although it takes more time than machine-harvesting, harvesting by hand allows sub-standard grapes to be removed in the vineyard instead of back at the winery, resulting in a net yield of purely high-quality grapes.

## *Back at the Winery*

The fruit arrives at the winery intact in bins and is tipped directly into an air-bag press where it is directly pressed — Kumeu River does not use a crusher. The juice that comes out of the press is very clean and can go straight into fermentation.

## Fermentation

***Barrel Fermentation:*** Kumeu River barrel-ferments its best Chardonnays in a combination of new and old French oak, a technique that draws out flavor nuances that are crucial for fine-wine styles. Only indigenous wild yeasts are used to further enhance the texture and complexity of the wine (this is also the case with Kumeu River wines that are tank-fermented).

***Malolactic Fermentation:*** Although always common in red wines, malolactic fermentation was not as prevalent in white winemaking 30 years ago. Because it is a natural process that biologically reduces wine acidity and complexes the flavor — resulting in a wine with better acid balance and improved drinkability — winemaker Michael Brajkovich introduced malolactic fermentation to Kumeu River's white wines in the early 1980s. The result has been a series of wines that are innovative, distinctive and unique in both style and quality for New Zealand. In fact, Michael's Chardonnays are often compared to white Burgundy.

## Aging Chardonnay On Its Yeast Lees

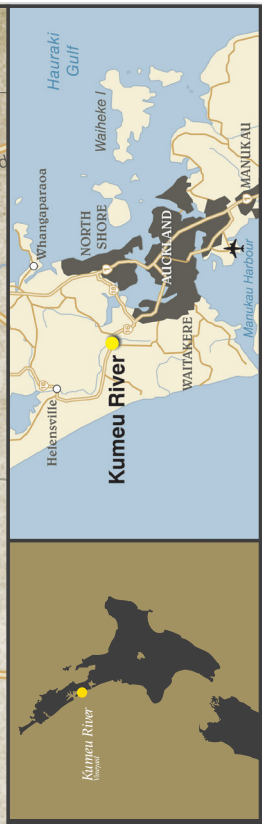
Michael believes that allowing the Kumeu River barrel-fermented Chardonnays to age on their yeast lees for an additional nine to 10 months after fermentation is one of the most important stages in winemaking; by doing this, the wine is kept in a reductive state, preventing it from oxidizing. Additionally, the alcohol in the wine slowly breaks down the cell walls, allowing the release of nutrients and other compounds back into the wine. In this way, the wine "feeds" on the yeast and regains some of the compounds that were removed from the new juice by the growing yeast cells. During this stage, the process is aided by stirring the barrels once or twice each week to re-suspend the yeast cells, a practice referred to as batonnage.





The map displays the Kumeu River and its surrounding area. Key locations and features include:

- Waterways:** Kumeu River, Waikohu Valley.
- Settlements and Areas:** KUMEU, HUAPAI, WAIMAUKU, Coddington.
- Landmarks:** Hunting Hill, Maté's Vineyard, Kumeu River Winery.
- Roads:** Main Road, Station Rd, Trigg Rd, Puke Rd, Foster Rd, Awa Rd, Tawa Rd, Pomona Rd, Waiwaka Road, Old North Road, Riverhead Road, Deacon Road, Matua Rd, Murwai Road.
- Legend:**
  - Clay Quarry (Green square)
  - Pine Cuts (Yellow square)
  - Pine Plantation (Purple square)
- Watermark:** KUMEROA RIVER



## Kumeu River Wines Regional Map

Despite being situated well north of New Zealand's other viticultural regions, Kumeu's climate is cooled through its close proximity to both the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean. This climate, combined with soil types very efficient at retaining water where needed, results in conditions that enhance the fantastic aromas and flavours from early ripening varieties such as chardonnay and pinot gris.

## Kumeu River Wines Regional Map

Despite being situated well north of New Zealand's other viticultural regions, Kumeu's climate is cooled through its close proximity to both the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean. This climate, combined with soil types very efficient at retaining water where needed, results in conditions that enhance the fantastic aromas and flavours from early ripening varieties such as chardonnay and pinot gris.



## KUMEU RIVER

# Biographies



At Kumeu River, wine is a family matter. As a business, Kumeu River has some of the most qualified, experienced and dedicated staff in the industry; as a family, working together is a dynamic and rewarding experience. Just as each Kumeu River wine has its own distinct character, so, too, do the individuals who work hard to produce them.

### Melba Brajkovich, Managing Director

Melba Brajkovich was a primary school teacher when she met her husband Maté in 1957. In the many decades since, she has become one of New Zealand's most experienced and knowledgeable women in the wine industry. Although Maté passed away in 1992, Melba has remained involved in all aspects of the family business, now run by their four children, Michael, Marijana, Milan and Paul. From its humble beginnings to its distinguished standing in the industry today, the success of Kumeu River Wines has been a labor of love for Melba, and she looks forward to many more years of success as the business continues to flourish under a third generation of Brajkovichs.



### Michael Brajkovich, M.W., Winemaker

Michael studied winemaking and viticulture at Roseworthy College in South Australia, earning a bachelor's degree in oenology in 1981. In 1983, he went on a tour of the wine regions of California, Oregon, Washington and Italy. Michael then spent several months in France working in Bordeaux, before visiting Burgundy, Champagne, Alsace, and the Rhône and Loire valleys. This tour was very important in molding much of Michael's winemaking philosophy. On his return to New Zealand, Michael was able to adapt many of the successful techniques he had observed and put them into practice at Kumeu River. The result has been a series of wines that are innovative, distinctive and unique in both style and quality for New Zealand. In fact, his Chardonnay is often compared to white Burgundy. In 1989, Michael became the first Master of Wine in New Zealand.

Michael is married to Kate and has two children, Milla and Markus.



### Milan Brajkovich, Vineyard Director

With a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Auckland, vineyard director Milan Brajkovich is the mind behind much of the machinery and technology at Kumeu River Wines. Milan manages 40 hectares (nearly 100 acres) of vines, including 10 hectares (24.7 acres) belonging to the regional growers that supply grapes to Kumeu River.

One of the things Milan finds most fascinating about winemaking is how minor variations in soil can result in major variations in how wine tastes. "We have two vineyards that are practically next door to each other growing the same grapes in the same conditions, yet their minor soil differences are very obvious in the final product."

Milan is married to Karen and has two children, Matthew and Anna.

# Biographies



### Paul Brajkovich, Marketing Director

Looking for new ways to promote and market Kumeu River Wines is at the heart of marketing director Paul Brajkovich's role. With a strong background in sales and marketing and bachelor's degree in commerce from the University of Auckland, Paul has been instrumental in securing Kumeu River's place within the international market.

Married to Kelly and with two children, Maddy and George, Paul is actively involved within the local community and enjoys coaching his son's cricket team.

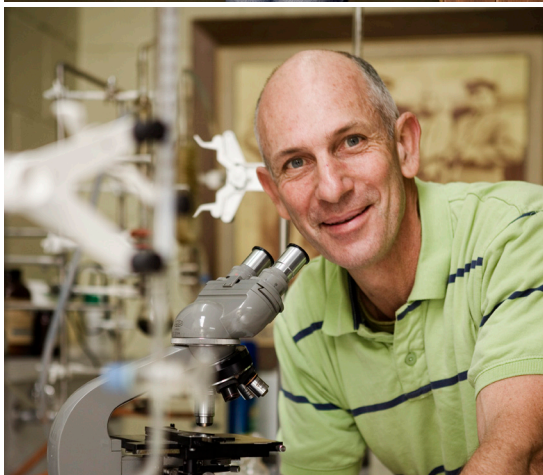


### Marijana Brajkovich, Marketing Director

Marijana enjoys working in a thriving family business where the day-to-day routine is very much a cooperative effort. Her background in sales and marketing and a bachelor's degree in commerce from the University of Auckland is an enormous asset to Kumeu River Wines.

Growing up at the winery and surrounded by three brothers has provided Marijana with valuable experience for her role within the business, as well as her role as mom to three boys of her own: James, Scott and Charles. Marijana is married to Grant and enjoys balancing her family time with her involvement in many areas of the winery including financial management and marketing.

Marijana credits much of the winery's early success to her father's pervasive presence within the industry. "Kumeu River Wines always has been, and always will be, a welcoming place where good wine and great hospitality come together in a family atmosphere of history and tradition."



### Nigel Tibbits, Cellar Master

Cellar master Nigel Tibbits joined Kumeu River Wines in 1974 when he was just 16 years old. As a student, Nigel had been working at Cooks Wines during school holidays when the opportunity for a full-time job became available at Kumeu River (then San Marino Vineyards).

Over the past three decades, Nigel has enjoyed being part of an industry where technology and technique continually evolve. Most of the winery's current vineyards originate from the nursery vines that Nigel tended during Kumeu River's formative years when Maté Brajkovich was at the helm.

Today, there is very little that Nigel doesn't do in his day-to-day role; from working in the laboratory to meeting with customers, Nigel's wealth of practical experience and knowledge is invaluable in the on-going evolution of the Kumeu River style.