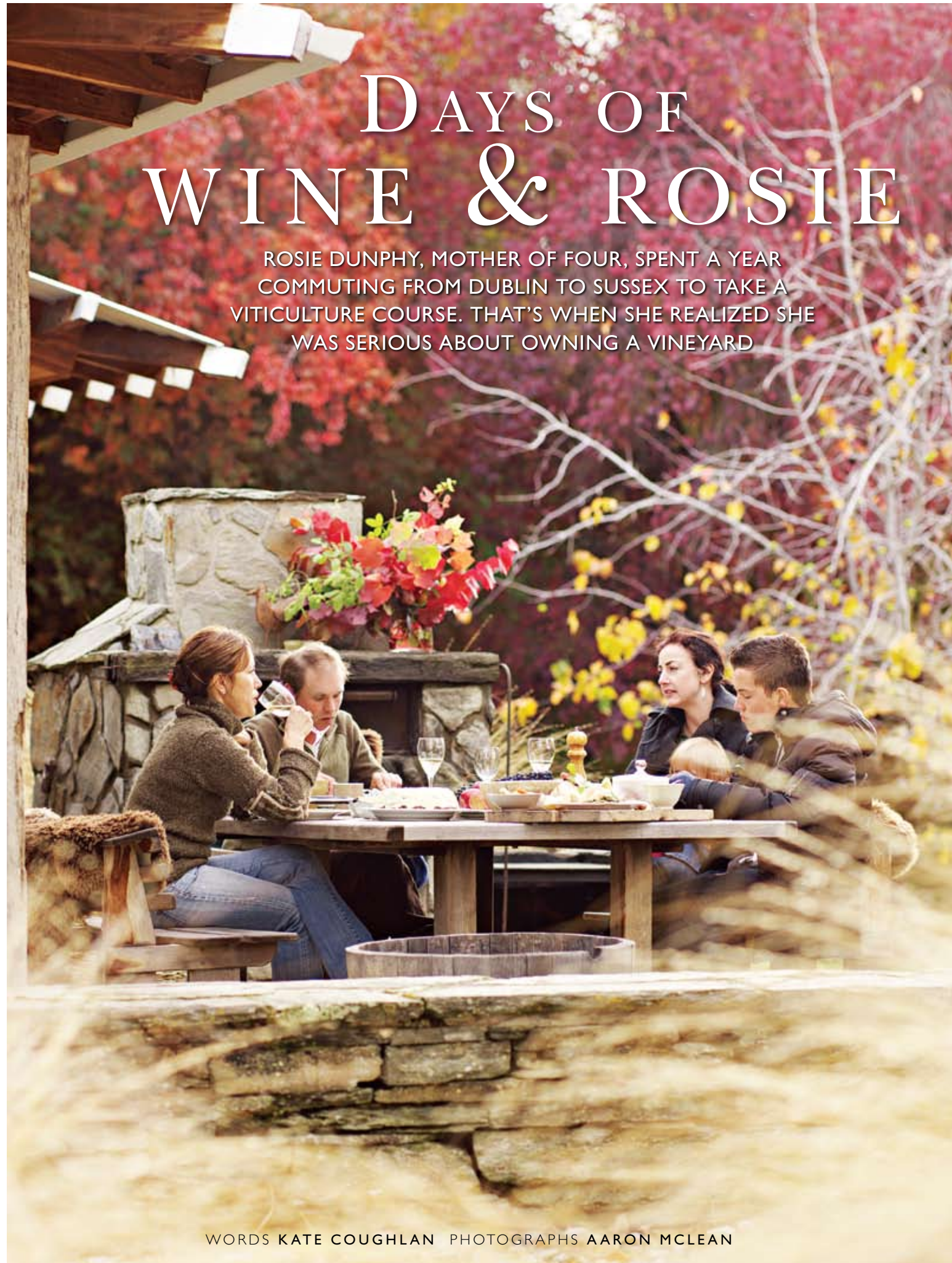


DAYS OF WINE & ROSIE

ROSIE DUNPHY, MOTHER OF FOUR, SPENT A YEAR
COMMUTING FROM DUBLIN TO SUSSEX TO TAKE A
VITICULTURE COURSE. THAT'S WHEN SHE REALIZED SHE
WAS SERIOUS ABOUT OWNING A VINEYARD



WORDS KATE COUGHLAN PHOTOGRAPHS AARON MCLEAN





PAGE 88: "It is so dry we can always sit outside so long as we can be warm enough," says Rosie. She had project manager Mike Gentles build a large outdoor fireplace where she shares lunch with son Hugo, viticulturist Gary Crabbe and winemaker Lynn Horton. THESE PAGES: Rosie and Lynn taste the Coal Pit 2007 pinot noir. The 1860s stone cottage is well-used guest accommodation.



THE BLACK LABRADORS Guinness and Stella are lolloping about among the vines, wickedly scoffing low-hanging bunches of pinot noir grapes behind Rosie's back. Grapes are dynamite for dogs apparently, something to do with their kidneys, so she calls them away. The fermented product of Rosie's pinot noir and sauvignon blanc vines, however, has been pronounced delicious for humans by experts at recent awards including the Air New Zealand Wine Awards and the New Zealand International Wine Awards (silver for the pinot noir on both occasions).

Around the big stone outdoor fireplace she had built for such occasions, Rosie is serving plates of lasagne to her grape pickers. The platter is huge and luckily so as the chilled pickers are

hungry. There are 10 of them and though based in Riverton, near Invercargill, they are almost all from various parts of Asia. It's a cracking Central Otago morning with a frost in the valley but not on the vine-covered hillside 20km inland from Queenstown where Rosie's Coal Pit Vineyard is to be found. The trees are sloughing off their golden leaves in gentle drifts.

Feeding the grape pickers is a lovely vineyard custom and one that Rosie – who is accomplished in her Auckland life as a hands-on mother – fulfils without turning a hair. The harvest finished this morning and the pickers are happily sampling the 2007 Coal Pit sauvignon blanc and pinot noir and speculating what the fruits of their labours will taste like in a year's time. ▶



"I KNEW THAT GROWING SOMETHING WOULD BE SO MUCH MORE SATISFYING THAN JUST CONSUMING IT"



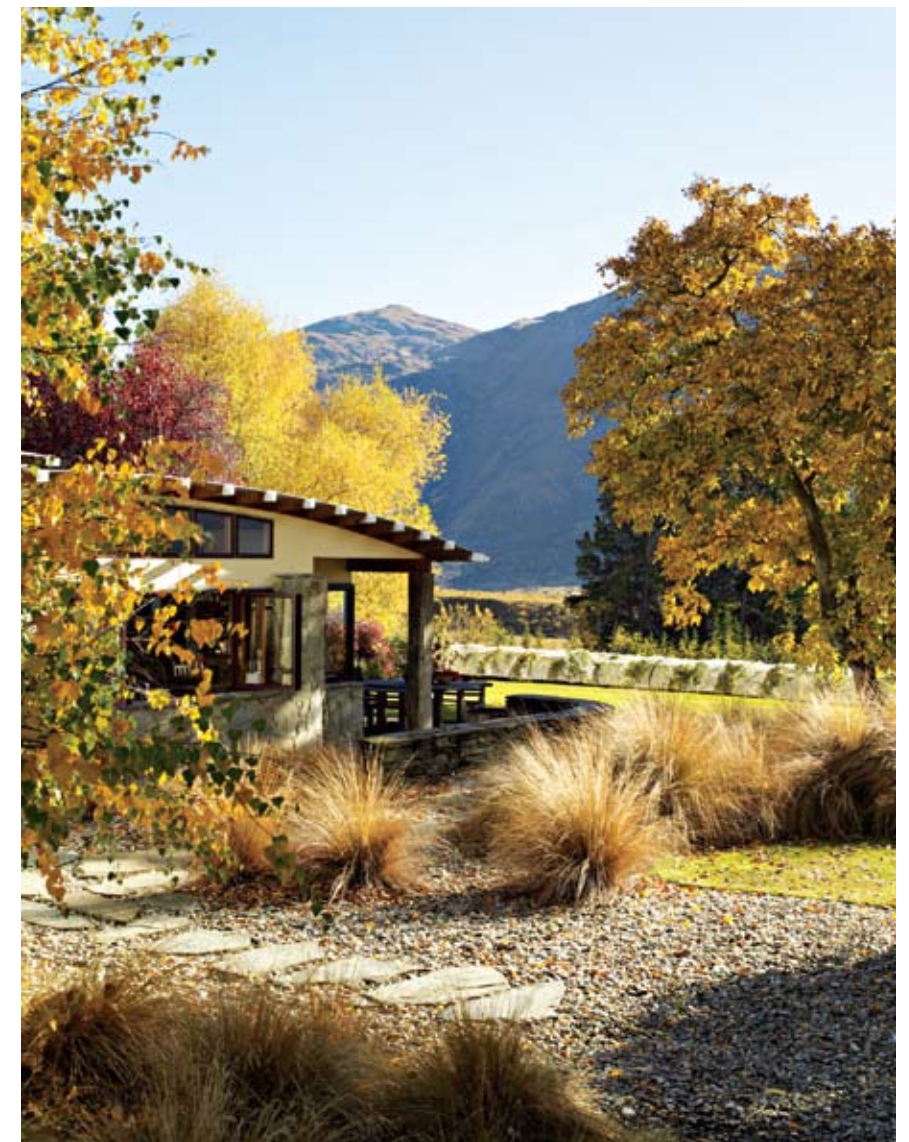
Rosie and husband-and-wife team of viticulturalist Gary Crabbe and winemaker Lynn Horton have the highest hopes for this vintage. They've picked good tonnage of clean, flavoursome fruit. "And," says an excited Rosie, "with the new winery it is straight into the vats within half an hour of picking. This is how to control the quality levels of the wine. Clean fruit with good flavour and minimal handling can make great wine."

The new winery, under construction literally around and above the fruits of this year's harvest, was designed by Wellington architect Chris Kelly. It is, says Rosie, a luxury on a vineyard of this size but her dream of creating very good wine for a select local and export market is easier to fulfil with her own winery. She spent three full-time years studying advanced urban horticulture at the Ryde School of Horticulture in Sydney while she, her husband and their four (then young) children lived in Australia. Then the family moved to Ireland and opportunities to study horticulture locally were not available. So for a year she commuted each week, all the way from Dublin to Sussex, to complete her studies at the Plumpton School of Viticulture.

Rosie says it wasn't always clear that it was grapes and winemaking she'd end up being involved in, but she knew she wanted to be producing or growing something. She really wanted to establish a business that her children would be interested in and be able to contribute to. So determined was she that she managed to fit this study into an already hectic life raising her four children, Georgia (21), Freddie (19), Rob (17) and Hugo (14) and keeping up with her husband's busy life. "I knew that growing something would be so much more satisfying than just consuming it. We were with a group of friends in the Hunter Valley one day having lunch at a vineyard and I thought, 'Wouldn't it be fantastic to sit down to lunch or dinner and serve your own wine. It would be such a sense of satisfaction.'"

It is now more than four years since Rosie – still living in Ireland at the time – purchased the property on Coal Pit Road found for her by her brother-in-law, Auckland project manager Peter Walker. The Gibbston Valley is a renowned grape-growing area and includes wineries such as Peregrine, Chard Farm and the Gibbston Valley label. The vineyard was a perfect spot with north-facing terraces above the frost line of the valley, already planted in seven hectares of grapes and with established shelter trees and plenty of water. This property is one of the first settled in the Gibbston Valley and a well-preserved stone cottage dates back to 1865, as do the beautiful trees. Rosie bought the 12.5-hectare property from Alan and Clare Perry who built the modern home on it and developed the vineyard.

It is more than a sense of satisfaction Rosie is feeling on the day NZ Life & Leisure visits. She is fizzing with excitement as the brand-new winery takes shape over stainless steel tanks filled with already-fermenting grapes. She loves the activity, the sense of buzz about a vineyard and winery at harvest time. Builders are whistling cheerfully in the winter sun above winemaker Lynn as she plunges the tanks. Rosie's son Hugo, home from school, is helping with de-stemming and getting the grapes into the tanks. He also adds the sulphur to the freshly picked grapes – the only chemical added to Coal Pit wines. ▶



The modern house on the property was designed by architect Murray Cockburn. New Zealand artist Chris Heaphy is a favourite of Rosie's and she has two of his recent works in her dining/sitting-room. He also designed the label for Coal Pit Wines. The painting above the fireplace is called *Coal Pit*.



Rosie and Lynn check the brix levels in the pinot noir grapes. There are seven hectares of vines on the north-facing 12.5-hectare property which has views across the Gibbston Valley to the mighty Crown Range. Coal Pit wines are available in Auckland at Maison Vauron.

Rosie says they are using sustainability principles to grow the vines and make the wine. She'd like to be biodynamic in the near future. Vineyards and wineries are not easy to get to profit, as she well knows. "They say it takes seven years to profit and 12 years to make back your investment. And that," she explains with humour, "is presuming that every year is a good season. How often does that happen?" Last year's season was a tough one, for example. It was cold, the fruit looked terrible and there wasn't much of it. Curiously, and thankfully, the wine is excellent.

Rosie's next plan, once the winery, a cellar door, tasting room and facilities are completed, is to plant a chestnut and oak orchard around a small stream adjacent to the vineyards. There she hopes to establish truffles. She is also working on a marketing strategy for the export drive, an activity that regularly takes her to Europe. In the meantime, it is the grapes and the wine that bring Rosie all the way from her Auckland home for at least a few days every month. "The whole family, including the dogs, comes during the holidays. You should see us with all our gear. We come in the winter to ski and for the summer holidays."

Rosie says for families such as hers who have spent a lot of time away from their home country, holidays become extremely important. "A lot of living goes on during those holidays." She is delighted that every member of the family has fallen under Central Otago's spell. Initially daughter Georgia couldn't understand what attracted her mother to the Gibbston Valley but now she too loves it.

"A lot of things have come to fruition here. It's all falling into place. My dream is to grow the best grapes possible and make fabulous wine. It is a fantastic thing for all the family to be involved in. And I am really loving setting up something for future generations. I hope it will become a passion for my children as well."

