

NZ HOUSE & GARDEN

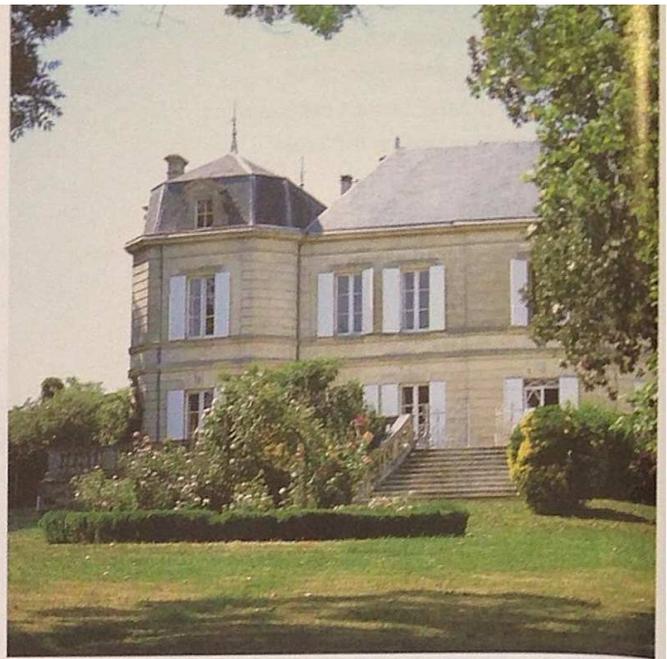
FEBRUARY
2006

furniture with polish roll out the carpet
bonjour Bordeaux lots of love sugared tea
Hastings' lyric revival grill-seeking

\$8.95
INCL. GST



a fresh
ENCOUNTER



The estate produces 80,000 bottles of red wine annually, marketed under the regional brand of Sainte Foy Bordeaux.

During summer the chateau becomes a bed and breakfast. The decoration throughout reveals Jacquié's sure touch, each room a blissful blend of pure cotton, French toiles and clear country colours.

"We want this place to retain the feeling of a family home where visitors can simply relax," says Jacquié.

"I was lucky to be given a free hand. So many of my friends have inherited beautiful properties with mother- and father-in-law in situ!"

The beds at Carbonneau are big and comfortable, the food is delicious and served on the terrace when weather permits. The wine, redolent of blackberry and red fruits, lingers lovingly on the palate.

But for Jacquié relaxation is not a priority. Life is a busy round of caring for guests, helping Wilfrid in the vineyard or on the farm, attending to the children's needs and, on Sundays, playing the harmonium at the local church for the small and ageing Protestant community.

New Zealand remains a strong presence. Jacquié's parents visit each year and the boys, inhabitants of one of France's most enthusiastic rugby regions, are keen All Black supporters.

The wines of Carbonneau are made with due attention to tradition: only good Moroccan cork and no faddish blending. But in their home, the Franc de Ferrières have created a perfect blend, mixing all the pleasures of being in France with a friendly, untroubled Kiwi welcome. ■

The dogs Heidi and Octave escape the summer heat. The house, viewed from the garden. The path leading to the pigeonnier (pigeon house).





“I have discovered that Bastille Day is nearly invariably washed out,” says Jacquie.

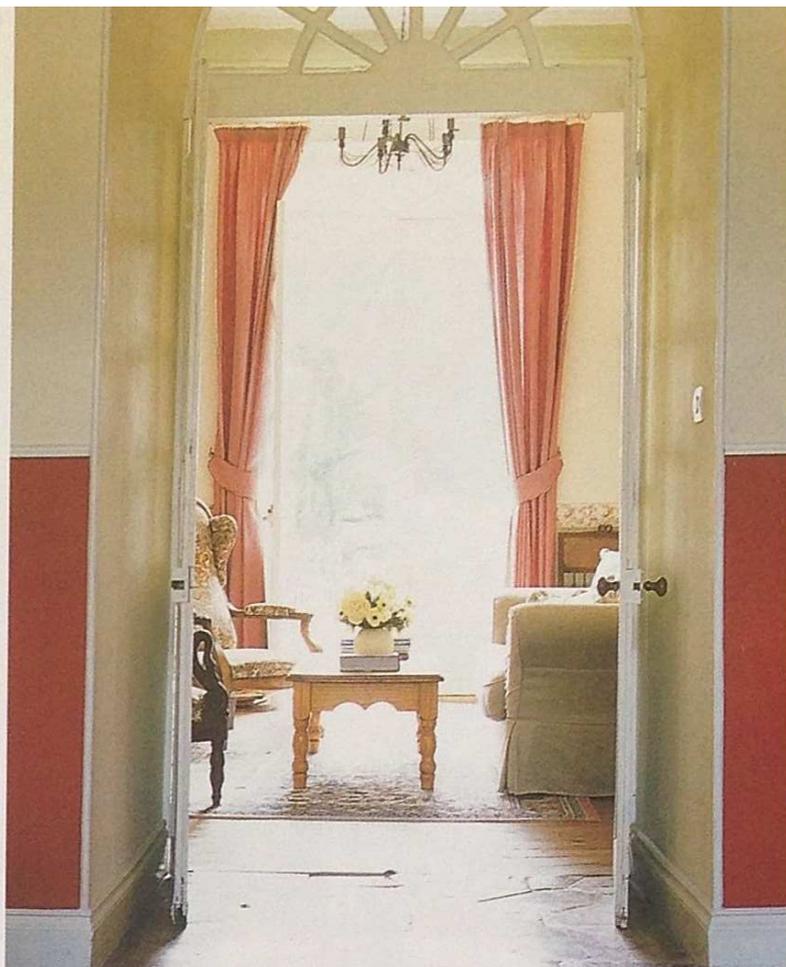
Despite the inauspicious weather – and the equally inauspicious activities that year of “some rather nasty frogmen in a New Zealand port” – love blossomed.

Three years later Jacquie and Wilfrid married in New Zealand and then returned to Carbonneau where Wilfrid was keen to continue the strong tradition of raising cattle while reviving the property’s name as a producer of fine wines. Meanwhile, the chateau itself required some attention.

“It was pretty grim,” says Jacquie. “Orange kitchen, sitting room a colour I called menopausal blue and it rained solidly for six weeks so that everywhere was a sea of mud through which the eleven-month-old twins crawled determinedly. We had leased vineyards but stood to make no real income for twelve months.”

What was required was bucketloads of energy and a bit of Kiwi ingenuity. “I’d learned to smock in New Zealand,” says Jacquie. “So I smocked children’s clothes and sold them at craft fairs.” Delivering the clothes personally led to some lasting friendships in the area.

Today there is nothing grim about Carbonneau. Cattle thrive on the well-watered pasture and thirteen hectares are planted in merlot, cabernet franc and cabernet sauvignon grapes. ▷



They returned to France with their daughter Olga, who had been born in Kaiiua. On their return, Claude was reunited with her girlhood friend Paulette, who had recently married a young engineer named Yann Franc de Ferrière. It was while on a visit to Paulette and her husband in south-western France that Claude and Harold came upon the chateau.

It was for sale, its former owners having died without heirs. The vineyards had been torn up, relegating to history Carbonneau's wine, which had earned a mention in a 19th century *Grand Larousse*. The Rays promptly purchased the property and set about establishing a notable dairy farm.

"Harold may have been blind but he was a great judge of livestock," says Jacquie. "All the local farmers consulted him."

In time, Olga married Paulette's son Jean. Their fifth son, Wilfrid, was in the process of taking over the management of the estate when Jacquie turned up, in typical Kiwi fashion, in a VW Kombi van in July 1985.

"I'd been working as an assistant at a school in Nice and some friends had been invited to spend Bastille Day at this place somewhere inland from Bordeaux," she says, laughing.

"I was keen not to spend another night sleeping in the van and I must admit I also found Wilfrid rather appealing." They spent the evening dancing in the rain. ▷

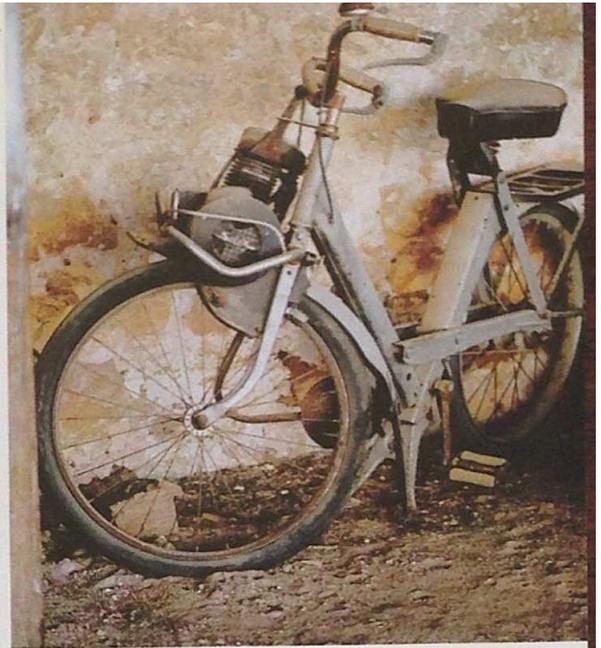


...table, perused by a
photograph of Olga de Massalinitoff,
Wilfrid's great great-aunt. Lucie at
work on her grade one piano pieces.
The living room opening out on
to the terrace. The bronze is of St
George by Emmanuel Fremiet and
stands on a Florentine ebony cabinet
inlaid with ivory.



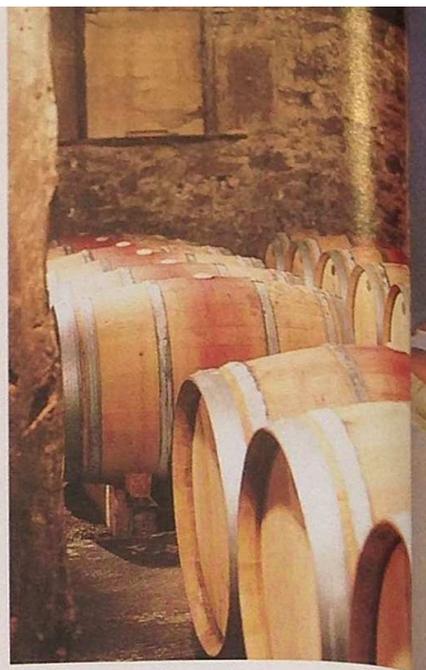
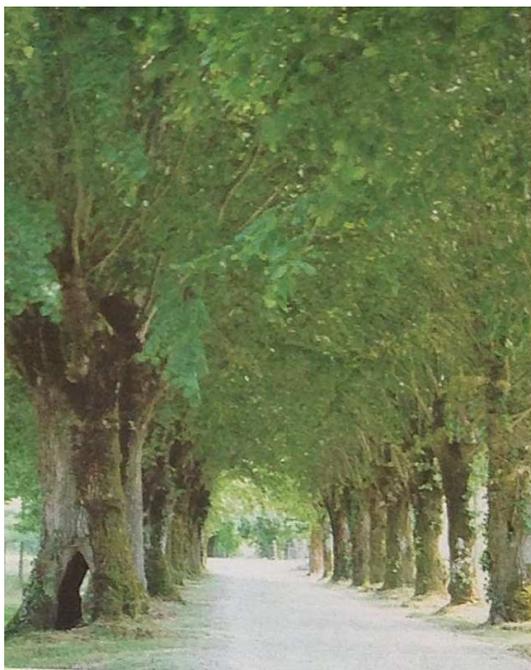
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In the heart of the Bordeaux region, only twenty minutes from St Emilion, there's a corner of France that has been for nearly a century a little bit Kiwi.

The fifty-hectare estate of the Chateau Carbonneau is home to Wilfrid and Jacquie Franc de Ferrière and their children Hugo, sixteen, twins Margot and Pierre, fourteen, and Lucie, ten. Not to mention several gorgeous Bernese mountain dogs and a herd of the Blonde d'Aquitaine cattle characteristic of the region.

Jacquie was born in New Zealand, as were the three older children, but the antipodean link dates back to the time of Wilfrid's grandparents, Harold and Claude Ray.

It is a dramatic story straight from the pages of some sweeping historical romance and Jacquie tells it well as we drink coffee on the sunny terrace in the shelter of a Second Empire conservatory with requisite soaring banana palm.

Claude, Wilfrid's grandmother, the daughter of a French general and a Russian aristocrat, emigrated with her husband to New Zealand in 1924 to set up a dairy farm. The adventure ended after twelve years when Harold lost his sight. ▶

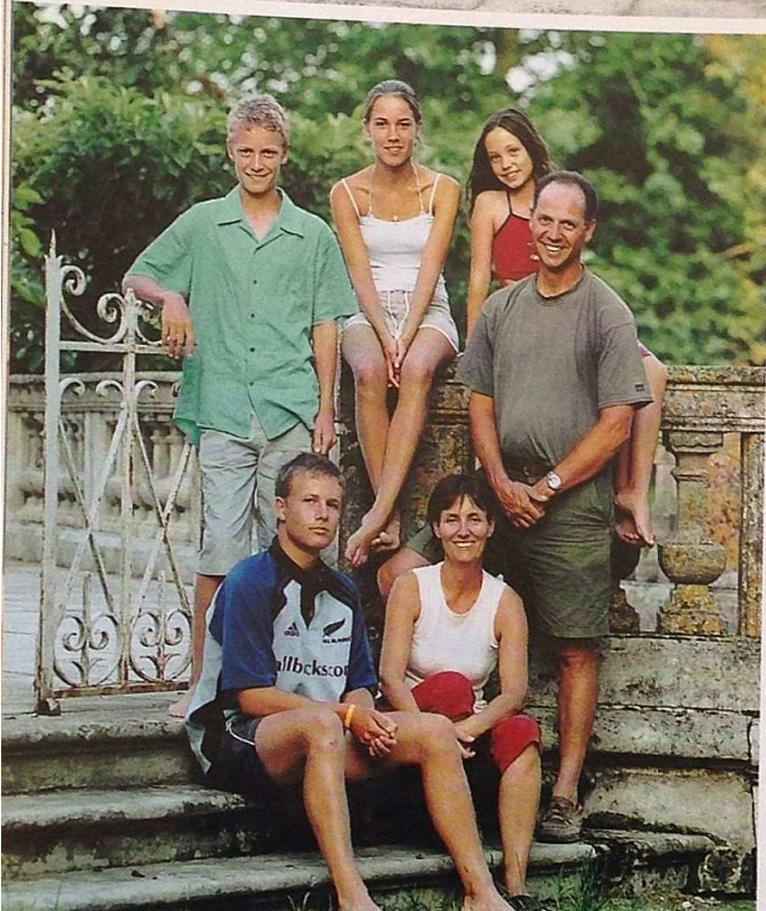
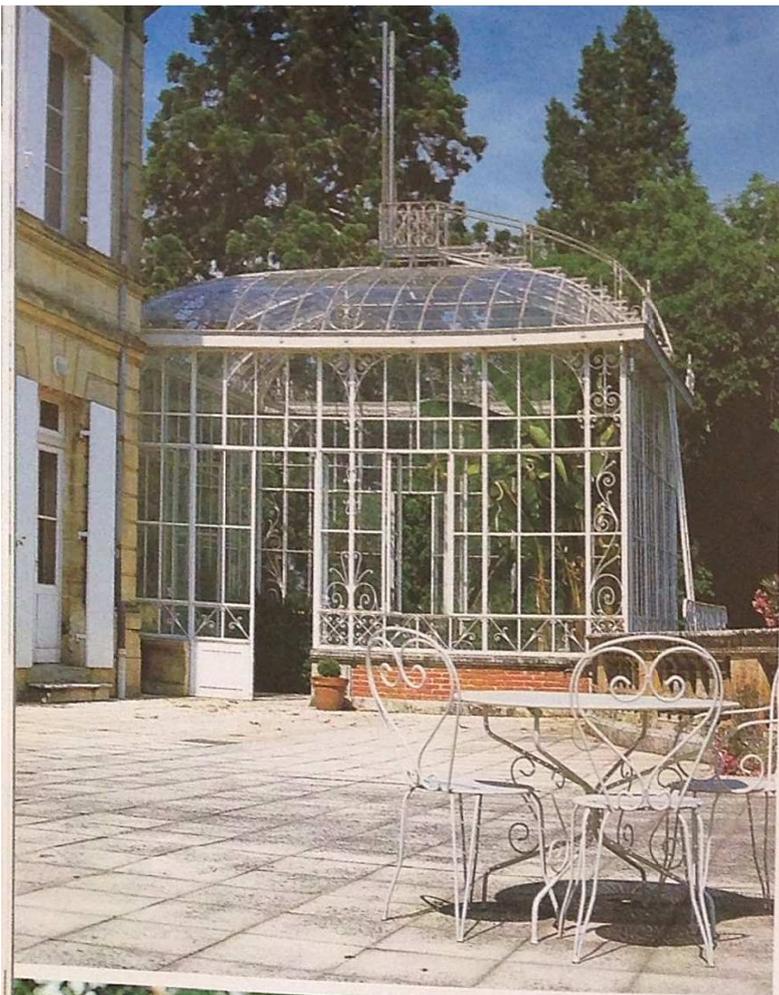
THIS PAGE: The avenue leading to the house. The doors open on to the terrace. Traditional wine barrels. Jacquie sets the table on the main terrace.

FACING PAGE: Family and friends from New Zealand on the terrace. The typically French Solex bike can still be coaxed into life with a little patience. Carbonneau viewed from the vineyard.



French polish

Fiona Farrell discovers a sweeping French epic with a Kiwi chapter or two PHOTOGRAPHS: BRENT DARBY



The terrace
are Margot (standing), visiting Kiwi Mark Taylor and
Lucie. The family, clockwise from top left, Pierre,
Margot, Lucie, Wilfrid, Jacquie and Hugo.

