



Media Release

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Sir George Fistonich appoints new CEO at Villa Maria Estate

Villa Maria Estate is pleased to announce the appointment of Abe Salt as Chief Executive Officer, who will take over from Sir George Fistonich after over 55 years at the helm. Sir George will continue to have a hands-on role in the company as Founder & President. Abe will report to Sir George and will commence as CEO on March 5, 2018.

“Due to Villa Maria’s success as a major player globally, my ambassador role has become extremely time consuming”, said Sir George Fistonich. “As the CEO, Abe will be able to manage the important day to day operations and strategic priorities for the company. This will allow me to concentrate on my global brand ambassadorial role and drive other large projects such as the development of our new winery and retail centre in Hawkes Bay.”

Abe Salt is an avid wine enthusiast and is passionate about the wine industry. He has undertaken wine education courses with the Wine & Spirits Education Trust and University of Adelaide and has also participated in a wide range of social wine education programs such as International Chardonnay and Pinot Masterclasses.

Abe joins Villa Maria with 15 years’ experience across the wine industry, investment banking and strategic advisory. Most recently, Abe was Principal at Iron Gate Consulting where he focused on providing strategic advice to the wine industry.

Prior to Iron Gate Consulting, Abe spent more than five years at Treasury Wine Estates (TWE) where he was Global Head of Strategy. During his time at TWE, Abe led significant transactions and implemented key strategic changes for the business. He served on the Steering Committee for TWE’s global supply chain optimisation program, driving route to market changes in key regions. Abe was also responsible for delivering TWE’s annual five year plan, including sales and marketing plans by brand and region. In New Zealand, Abe led TWE’s acquisition of its Matua Marlborough winery.



Abe has experience in each of Villa Maria's key export markets including the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Asia and Australia. He also has experience working with luxury brands, such as Penfolds.

Abe holds degrees in Law and Commerce and post-graduate qualifications in finance. He is married with two children and will relocate from Melbourne to Auckland for the role.

"I am delighted that we have found someone with such a passion for wine together with a wealth of experience in FMCG global strategy", said Sir George Fistonich. "We are thrilled to have Abe join us for Villa Maria's next chapter and help us build on our successes to date."

Villa Maria exports to over 60 countries globally and in 2017 it was ranked fourth most admired wine brand in the world by *Drinks International*, the only New Zealand winery to make the top 5 list.

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