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Read Between the Wines Presents Episode 104: Amanda Johnson of Spy Valley, and the Discipline of Turning a Joke Into a Brand

27 October 2026, Luxembourg - Read Between the Wines announces Episode 104, a conversation with Amanda Johnson, Managing Director of Spy Valley, the Marlborough estate her father planted on land everyone else had written off, now one of New Zealand's most decorated wine producers.

In 1993, Amanda Johnson's father planted vines in Marlborough's Waihopai Valley on land most people considered too infertile for anything worth growing. The estate's first vintage followed in 2000. It was Amanda who later named the winery, pitching her father on pairing the GCSB listening post down the road with his own lifelong James Bond fandom, a decision that left decommissioned radar domes on the tasting room lawn and Morse code printed across every label. Amanda now runs Spy Valley as its second generation Managing Director, and her own daughter runs the cellar door.

"We're cup half full, always." - Amanda Johnson

The conversation traces how Spy Valley built one of New Zealand's most awarded portfolios while leaning harder into its own joke than any winery its size usually dares to. It also covers the promotion of Chief Winemaker Emily Gaspard-Clark, New Zealand's Young Winemaker of the Year in 2019, and why Marlborough Pinot Noir deserves more attention than it gets.

An exclusive bonus episode on the spy pranks still retold around the winery and the Pinot Noir question Amanda cannot stop fielding is available exclusively on our website.

About Spy Valley

Spy Valley is a family winery founded in 1993 in Marlborough, New Zealand, when the Johnson family planted vines on land most considered too infertile to farm. Now run by Amanda Johnson as Managing Director, it produces an acclaimed range of Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, Gewürztraminer and Chardonnay, alongside its Echelon Méthode Traditionnelle sparkling wine, and is certified by Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand since 1999.

About Read Between the Wines

Now celebrating its 10th season with over 100 episodes, Read Between the Wines is a leading wine podcast exploring the people, places, and stories behind every bottle. Moving beyond scores and ratings, it champions storytelling, education, and authenticity, reaching a global audience of wine aficionados in search of stories rather than scores. Past guests include Dr. Laura Catena, South African Chenin Blanc legend Ken Forrester, and esteemed estates such as Tuscany's Il Borro, Château Haut-Bailly, and Domaine Faiveley.

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