

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Zealand is invited to #ComeOverOctoberNZ, a movement to bring people back around the dining table, together

Getting people back around the table, connecting with friends and family, is exactly what a tough year calls for.

21 September 2026 — A coalition of New Zealand wine, retail and hospitality businesses is bringing Come Over October to New Zealand for the first time this October, an explicit invitation to put down the phone, open the door and welcome people back around the table — as humanity has done for centuries, preferably with a bottle of wine to share.

Why now

Headlines are clear: it's a tough time in the booze business with falling sales, tighter margins and more moderation-minded consumers behaviour than ever. But beyond challenges for the drinks and hospitality industry, #ComeOverOctoberNZ is a response to the bigger social implications of people no longer connecting with one another around a table, over a meal - with or without a glass of wine.

Stats NZ's Wellbeing 2023 figures show the number of New Zealanders reporting they feel lonely some of the time rose from 10% to 14% over the last decade. Research from Stevenson University in the US shows people are spending 20 hours per month less in face to face contact than in 2003 (2025). Fewer friends are being invited over for a casual meal, fewer tables are being set. More evenings spent looking at a screen instead of at one another and casual socialisation is in decline due to increasing working hours, increased remote work, the rise of social media and digital connections, changing family structures, increased urbanisation.

In September 2025, the International Wine Academy spoke to the UN, stating wine embodies eight millennia of human history: it is a catalyst for conviviality, joy and sharing; a connection to the land and its landscapes; a universal language linking people – from Georgia to Ancient Greece, from Oregon to Tuscany, from France to New Zealand. But if people are gathering less and less, what happens to that joy, culture and human connection?

The New Zealand story

"Ultimately, if you reduce wine and its role in social connection and community to a commodity or purely a health issue, you end up with an industry, but no healthy wine culture," says Tash McGill, drinks industry strategist and editor of More Good Drinks. "A healthy wine culture is one where what's in the bottle is part of the experience but not the sole focus."

"Just look at Italy, France or Spain and you'll see that what keeps any culture alive is simple: people around a table, sharing stories, ideas and experience in each other's company. Wine is NZ's 6th largest export industry from a value perspective, but the difference between an industry and a culture are the people. What you're drinking is secondary to who is around the table with you. Come Over October NZ is asking people to gather more, without worrying about Michelin-worthy meals, Instagram-perfect settings or matching plates — and trusting that if they do, wine will probably be part of it, as it has been for centuries."

What Is Come Over October?

Come Over October began in the United States in 2024, founded by Karen MacNeil (author of *The Wine Bible*), PR veteran Gino Colangelo and wine communications specialist Kimberly Noelle Charles. It has grown into one of the largest pro-wine grassroots movements in the US: in its second year alone the campaign generated 3.7 billion unique monthly visitor impressions, reached an estimated 7 million consumers, and was activated across more than 1,400 stores in 43 markets, with coverage running from the Associated Press and Forbes to NPR and The Washington Post.

"A chance to stop, share stories, be together, celebrate an occasion or just be in company. Pause, enjoy the moment, reconnect in a world moving fast and furiously" is how the campaign describes its own premise — something that resonates with New Zealanders and our culture of manaakitanga.

"We don't want to run a sales campaign, we want to encourage people to start a habit, or get back to it, of intentionally connecting with one another," says Brent Eddy of Homefields Wine, who is coordinating the New Zealand campaign. "Everyone taking part is doing it their own way, which is exactly the point — this only works if it feels like an invitation from someone you know, not a marketing push from an industry."

For wine brands, writers, retailers and hospitality, that invitation is as simple as sharing the message through social media, instore or in newsletters, using the Toolkit provided or simply participating themselves with a gathering of friends and family.

The organisers and collaborators are deliberate about keeping Year One organic, authentic and invitational, knowing how much pressure industry is already under.

"We're also clear that Come Over October isn't about wine-culture elitism or a straight brand

and sales push. The ask of participants isn't to sell wine harder or only open the best bottles — it's to give people a reason and reminder to gather, with good food, wine and good company," says Tash.

Among the New Zealand businesses getting behind the campaign is Wellington retailer Regional Wines.

"At Regional Wines, we love the simple idea of getting together with friends and family, raising a glass, and sharing a bite," says General Manager John Shearlock. "We're all so busy these days, and refocusing on the simple art of cooking a meal and popping a cork in good company offers a chance to slow down and reconnect. Good drinks are always better shared in company and are typically great accompaniments to food. Come Over October brings this all together."

Getting involved

Participation is open and encouraged for all New Zealanders. Retailers are encouraged toward in-store activation, shelf presence and EDM support carrying the reconnection message of why we gather not simply a discount code; producers toward cellar door and mailing list activity under the campaign umbrella; hospitality toward table talkers, conversation-starter cards and personal participation on days off; and media and content voices toward telling the story in their own way. Campaign assets, toolkits and templates are freely available and built to be adapted to individual brands.

This is year one for New Zealand — a deliberately minimal, opt-in start that organisers expect to build in reach and ambition year on year, in step with a campaign already running at scale in the US and Canada. The aim, longer term, is a cultural moment New Zealanders recognise on sight, in the way they now recognise Dry July or Taco Tuesday: not a promotion, but a standing invitation to come over and spend time together with friends and family.

Come Over October runs through October 2026 in New Zealand. Businesses and individuals interested in taking part can get involved at no cost beyond their own participation.

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Notes to editors

About the New Zealand campaign: Come Over October NZ is an informal, opt-in adaptation of the international campaign for the New Zealand market, coordinated by a group of wine, retail and hospitality participants doing it for the love of what happens around a table. Yes, we're a bunch of optimistic idealists, who want people to find community and connection.

About Come Over October: Come Over October is an international campaign founded in 2024 by Come Together, A Community for Wine Inc., a mission-driven organisation co-founded by

Karen MacNeil (author of *The Wine Bible*), Gino Colangelo (Colangelo & Partners) and Kimberly Noelle Charles (Charles Communications Associates). Now in its third year, the campaign uses October to spark connection through collaborative promotions, events and media that encourage people to invite friends, colleagues, neighbours and family to share wine and friendship. It runs alongside the group's spring campaign, Share & Pair Sundays. More information: comeveroctober.com

Wine is a communal adult beverage. The *Come Over October* campaign asks that you consume wine responsibly and in moderation. www.cheers.org.nz

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