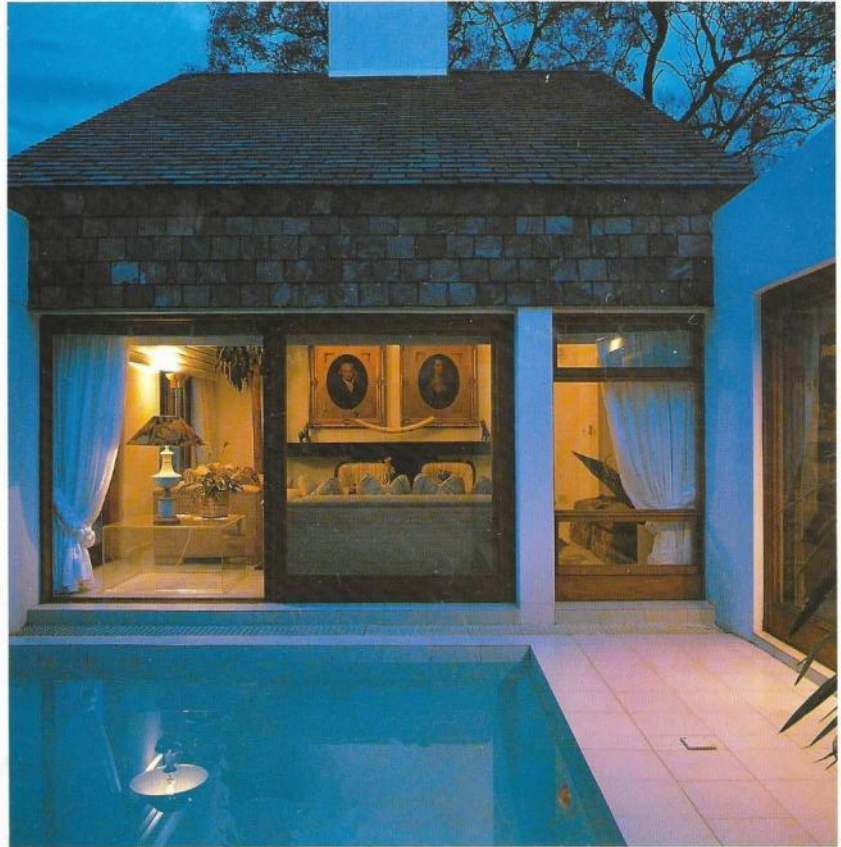


Inhabitant

INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE IN SOUTH AFRICA



Since previous Wine Editor BJ Lankwarden left us in late 1988, our wine section has been a little neglected. Editor Colin Sharp has attended various functions and written the occasional piece but he is the first to admit that he has no in-depth expertise in the happenings within Bacchus's world.



Sue Brown

Finding a suitable Wine Editor to replace the ebullient Lankwarden was no easy task because so many of the local 'names' own or either work for liquor outlets and wholesalers, as indeed does BJ. Others are already contracted to magazines and newspapers but we managed to find a lady who has a fairly uncompromising position in the wine trade.

Sue Brown was born and educated in the UK and came to South Africa on holiday, met her husband, and stayed. She is an enthusiastic wine person who she says 'fell into the wine business whilst looking for a part-time job'. She went on to learn the retail trade with a three-year stint at Benny Goldberg's Liquor Supermarket and for six years managed the Transvaal Cape Wine Academy. She is now Sales Manager for Klein Constantia in Johannesburg.

Sue's first prior-to-Christmas piece provides some excellent advice on Yuletide imbibing. Next year will see more of these across-the-board articles which are an excellent foil for the down-to-earth recipes of our Cookery Editor Isabel Jones.

The trouble with maturing wine in your own cellar is that most of us don't have the patience.

We all start out with good intentions, perusing the aisles of our favourite bottle store, reading up John Platter's and/or Dave Hughes' wine guides.

Once home however, it's as if the wine comes from 'Wonderland' with a 'drink me' label round the neck.

Stellenbosch Farmers Winery has come up with a scheme which will be of great interest to those of us lacking discipline.

Zonnebloem Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinotage and Shiraz of the 1979, 1980 and 1981 vintages have been released into the trade.

These wines from the Reserve Cellar have been kept at optimum storage conditions and are at least three years older than currently available vintages. Hopefully the wines will retail below the R30,00 a bottle mark.

Chateau Libertas is also laid down in the Reserve Cellars and the 1980 and 1981 vintages will be available.

If you are looking for something completely new you may go in search of Bergendal wines.

Reasonably priced and very quaffable, just two white wines are available under this label, the dry Bergen Blanc and the Bergen Late Harvest.

The other newy is Stellenzicht. German financier Hans J. Schrieber acquired a farm in 1981 and an extensive replanting programme has taken place since then.

Wine maker Marinus Bredell, who was the National Champion Wine Maker at the S.A. Wine Show in 1983, has produced the farm's maiden vintage.

The 1989 Rhine Riesling, Heerenblanc and Grand Vin Blanc will be in the bottle store before Christmas. The wood matured Grand Vin Blanc is certainly worth a try.

Latest Italian look-alike to hit the market is Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery's Vino Roma range in rosso (red) and bianco (white).



At least there is no overt pretence to market this as an Italian wine (as with a couple of other local examples). The litre bottle has a screwtop, cleverly concealed by a gold and red/white/green capsule (the Italian colours) but the label states quite clearly 'Product of South Africa'.

Of the two Romas I preferred the white which when chilled has a pleasing fruit on both nose and palate and is probably a blend of Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc. The red was a little thin but an ideal accompaniment to pasta or other spiced food.

This is SFW's marketing direction. Product manager Johan Slabbert says: 'The steady rise in the number of informal continental-style eating establishments, coupled with a growing market for unpretentious but good quality wines prompted the introduction of the Roma range.'

In the late sixties there were two such wines on the market, sold in gallon and half gallon jars. They were Roma Red and Roma White and many a good braai was lubricated with their assistance. I wonder whether Rosso and Bianco are their Italian-styled cousins? Whatever, they are certainly better in the main than the Châteaux Cardboards. □

Now . . . wood matured Blanc Fumé

Fleur du Cap Blanc Fumé 1987 has just been released. This wine, made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes, has been matured for four months in small casks of new French oak.

Previous vintages of the Sauvignon Blanc have won numerous international awards. Among the most noteworthy were the two Gold Medals with Palm Leaves – the top award – captured at the 1985 and 1986 Monde Selection competitions in Brussels.

Fleur du Cap Blanc Fumé 1987 is made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes grown in selected vineyards in the Coastal Region. Dry and elegant, it has excellent potential for further bottle maturation.

Fleur du Cap Blanc Fumé 1987 is available at discerning wine merchants and finer restaurants.

Fleur du Cap wines are also available internationally.



FLEUR DU CAP



PRIDE OF THE CAPE NOBLE WINES



WINEMAKER OF THE YEAR

The recipient of this year's Diners Club Wine Maker of the Year Award comes as no surprise.



Peter Finlayson of Hamilton Russell Vineyards, winner of the 1989 Winemaker of the Year Award with diners club managing director, Hugh Peatling.

Peter Finlayson stepped forward to accept the award from the Diners Club M.D. Hugh Peatling during a sumptuous lunch at the Zoo Lake restaurant.

Winemaker at Hamilton Russell Vineyards since its inception, this was surely the accolade Peter and owner Tim Hamilton-Russell had been waiting for.

The wine, Hamilton Russell Vineyards Pinot Noir 1986, had been chosen by a panel of judges which included Paul Bouchard of the prestigious Burgundy Shippers, Bouchard Aine et Fils. H.R.V. Pinot Noir has long been judged first amongst its peers.

It was recently judged best of all Pinot Noirs entered for the Wine of the Month Club, and is a consistent winner at tastings conducted throughout the country.

This shy variety, which usually chooses to show its greatness in the

soft countryside of the Côte D'Or in France, has been a difficult variety to tame in South Africa.

Peter Finlayson is a regular visitor to Burgundy, to work and learn more about the French way of producing wines from the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes.

Peter's expertise coupled with Tim Hamilton-Russell's determination to ensure that South Africa's most southerly vineyards produce the best, may mean you may balk at the price, but you won't be disappointed with the wine.

Other wines from the H.R.V. released this year are the Chardonnay 1989. For the investment conscious the 1986 vintage sold for an average of R960.00 per case at the Nederburg Auction.

Grand Vin Blanc 1988 is a dry blended white wine, benefiting from oak maturation and the Sauvignon Blanc 1988 can be enjoyed by those of you travelling first class on SAA in January. □

At Laborie
we produce
four truly great
red wines.

Here they are.



At Laborie wine estate in Paarl, we produce four truly great red wines, each a masterpiece in its own right. And then, with the utmost skill and patience, our winemaker combines the finest qualities of each to produce a wine that is indeed greater than the sum of its parts, a multicellar red wine of astounding complexity and smoothness.

Laborie Red. Four truly great red wines - at the price of one.

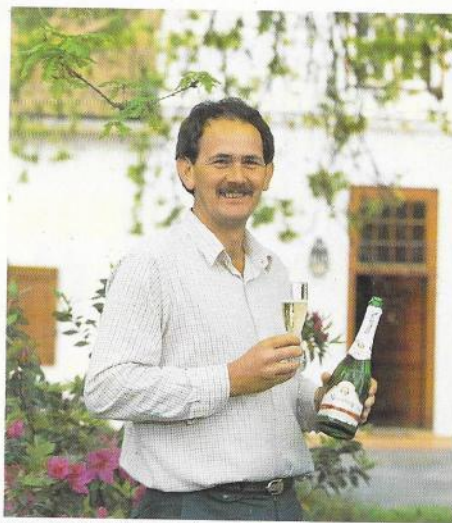
LABORIE

ESTATE WINE. QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY.

WINE UPDATE

CHRISTMAS CHEERS

For Christmas cheer a few wine recommendations to keep you sane. Choice of wine is a Herculean task as relatives of all shapes, sizes and sexes have to be catered for.



Winemaker Newald Marais toasting with *Première Cuvée Doux*.

Bubbly on arrival should mellow the odd scrooge that every family seems to have. Suggest a bottle of Nederburg's new *Cuvée Doux*, now back on your shelves after a few years away. With Nederburg's *Cuvée Brut* on hand for the drier inclined, you will have started well. Next Sauvignon Blanc, a decisive wine to wake up a jaded palate; Klein Constantia 1988 would be a good choice. For Sauvignon lovers there's Van Louveren 1988, a gold medal winner at the Robertson Bottled Wine Show this year.

If you have not collared your wines, then you may wish to nip out to buy an accessible red wine. Try Altydgedacht Tintorotto, Fleur du Cap Pinotage, or a Bertrams Zinfandel; Cabernet lovers might try a Lord Neethling's Rouge.

To sweeten everyone up, Drostdyhoof Adelpracht is available again, and Zonnebloem have just launched a superb Sauvignon Blanc Noble Late Harvest. When everyone has left you in peace, settle back with an Oupa Se Wingerd Rooi Muscadelle and you will have no difficulty in realising why it was a double gold medal winner at the Robertson Show.

Stock the fridge up with Tiffanies Bucks Fizz for outside imbibing and the unexpected guest, Esprit for the sweet and youthful and perhaps a KWV Port for the long stayer and you should survive another year. □

This auction will be held on the 19th January 1991 at Vergelegen near Somerset West in the Cape. It will no doubt rival the Nederburg Auction as the wine groupy function of the year. Apart from the glitz however, I am sure the wines are going to dominate the conversation.

Top wine makers from Australia, New Zealand, California, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay will be presenting their wine for auction, as well our local best. All wines put forward for selection for the auction have been assessed by international tasting panels. The whole affair is sure to generate a lot of interest on the home front and, I am sure, we are in for some surprises.

Back to The Cape Independent Wine Makers Guild Auction held in September at Stephan Welz and Co. Prices reflected the faith the buyers had in Cape Wine. The highest price paid was.

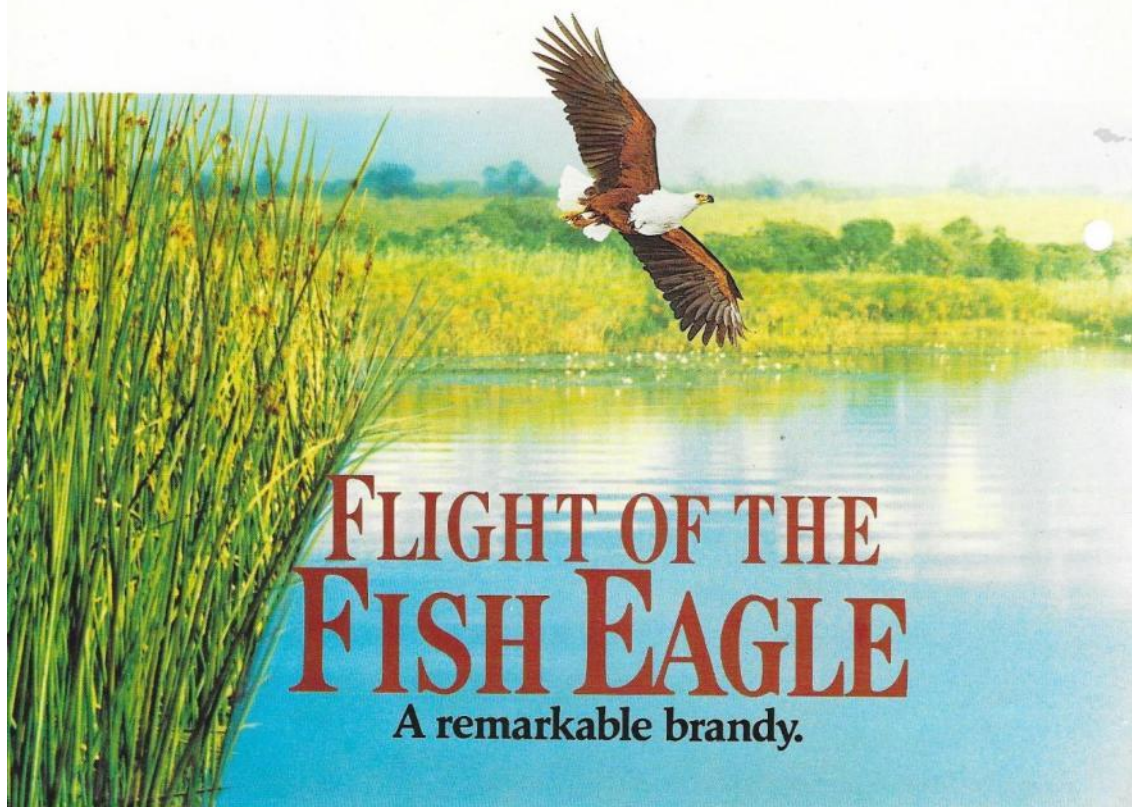


not unexpectedly, for the Rustenburg Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 1984, in the red wine case lots available.

Newcomers to auction were Walter Finlayson with a Chardonnay from his new farm Glen Carlou. Gyles Webb of Thelema Mountain Vineyards also made his debut with a superb gently oaked Blanc Fumé.

One of the special delights of the C.I.W.G. Auction was the Port on the sale. South Africa is finally getting its act together with some more than drinkable port, for those with the patience to let it mature.

The Rustenburg 1984 and Boplaas 1987 are both to be recommended. This was the fifth Auction of Guild wines, and David Molyneux Berry, Master of Wine and head of the Wine Department, Sotheby's U.K. conducted proceedings with his usual aplomb. David travels from the U.K. especially



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In W&GL: Cooking – Start the Year Right ○ Gourmet's Delight ○ Wine – Through the Glass
Lightly ○ New World Wine Auction ○ Restaurants

THROUGH THE GLASS LIGHTLY

by Sue Brown

You may be forgiven when you read, 'Wine of Origin; Elgin', on a label if you think that they are making wine out of apples. But no, it's definitely grapes and the area has recently been demarcated as a ward of the Overberg district. Overberg, incidentally, includes the Walker Bay ward, home of controversial wine man Tim Hamilton Russell's Vineyard.

The new area is all part of the quest for optimum climate in an endeavour to emulate the fine wines of Europe. Wine drinkers worldwide want Chardonnay and the wines from the reticent Pinot Noir cultivar. Apparently way back in 1984 S.F.W.'s charismatic M.D., Ronnie Melck and former Nederburg Wine Master, Gunter Brözel, commissioned wiz viticulturist Ernst le Roux to investigate the potential of Elgin as a wine growing area. De Rust, the family farm of Dr Paul Cluver was found to be best suited to experimental planting.

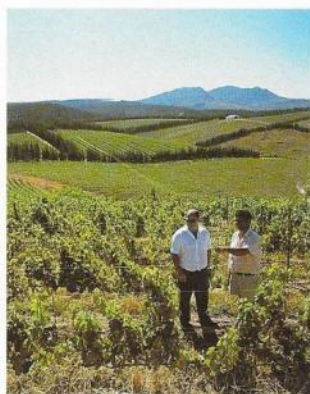
Now Ernst le Roux, recently appointed director of Nederburg, will have the distinction of receiving the first Elgin grapes trucked to the Nederburg cellar. The first pressing will be this year but the wines will not be seen in any large quantity until later vintages.

Information on the new vineyards provided tables comparing temperatures during the growing season of Elgin, Walker Bay and Dijon in France. However, they omitted one area which should have been included: Ruiterbosch, Carel Nel's vineyards near Mossel Bay which is claimed to have the coolest optimum climate for quality grapes in South Africa. Elgin certainly seems to have great promise: to quote from *The Wine Book of SA* published on the eve of the Great Empire Exhibition in 1939:

'Elgin is the heaviest fruit producing valley of the Cape and stands as a striking monument to the creative genius of man who in this case has transformed a rough, bare, hostile country into a veritable valley o' desire'. What more can one say?

Moving the grapes from their areas of origin to pressing cellars much further afield is hardly a new concept. The Californians and Australians have been doing this for some time and the quality of the wines does not suffer

unduly. But grapes used in the production of fine wine in SA are seldom moved such distances. Perhaps some healthy discussion should follow on the merits and pitfalls of not pressing the grapes on site. Certainly it makes economic sense not to invest vast sums of money in more cellar equipment and manpower; still the romance does suffer.



Ernst le Roux, Director, Nederburg;
Tutu van Rensburg, Farm Manager, De Rust

So expect Nederburg Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and maybe a little Rhine Riesling and Gewurztraminer. W.O. Elgin is something to look forward to in this new decade.

For something available in the store sooner, speak to your local wine merchant and secure a case of Rietvallei Chardonnay 1988. I was fortunate enough to taste the 1987 and it proved to be remarkably elegant, I associate the area with rather more robust styles of wine. Robertson after all produces some of SA's best Muscadels.

Climatically the Robertson district seems too hot for white production. However, early morning mists and cooler evenings appear to suit the

versatile Chardonnay vines. The French place soil on the same level of importance as climate and while most soils in the Western Cape are very acid, Robertson's hillsides often contain alkaline lime. This soil component occurs in many of the great vineyards of the world, so take note.

On the subject of Robertson/Bonnievale Chardonnays, DeWetshof Estate Chardonnay 1987 is available and should not disappoint followers of the wine maker Danie De Wet. Danie has a wealth of experience and is especially knowledgeable insofar as the wood maturation techniques of white wine are concerned. Two neighbouring farms, not from the Bergkelder stable, Bon Courage and Van Loveren are also producing Chardonnays of note, both are medal winners at shows.

Price-wise the wines from this region compare very favourably with Chardonnays from other areas. However, like all good bargains they are likely to be snapped up quickly.

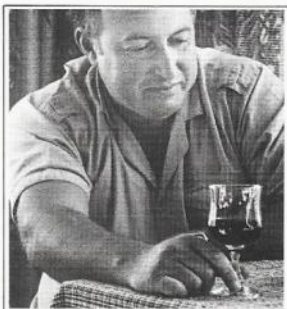
While on the subject of shortages, the annual price hike in February will no doubt have everyone scurrying about for the elusive red wines. Bertrams Robert Fuller Reserve and Shiraz are the ones to look out for in the near future, so is Rustenberg's Cabernet Sauvignon.

Diarise that Rustenberg's 'gold' will be available at the end of the year and Klein Constantia's reds, the Cabernet and Shiraz, will be available mid-year. Douglas Green has released some vintage reds well worth looking out for and the good news is that good old 'tassies', that screw-top, eminently quaffable red is still available for fast drinking whilst you contemplate your cellar investments.

All in all, this decade looks pretty exciting as the wine quality soars and new areas open up to give greater dimensions of taste and style to wine lovers.

continued overleaf ▷

WINE



Jan Momberg of Middelvlei is a man of few words . . .

Everybody knows him as "Stil Jan" – that is quiet Jan Momberg of Middelvlei, on the sunny slopes of the Papegaaiberg. A region known for its fertile, deep red soil – where wines of character are grown. Here, where nature is bountiful, Jan Momberg quietly makes his red wine. But the wines speak for themselves . . .

Middelvlei Pinotage

A dry red wine, matured to a mellowness that lies gently on the palate, with an intensely fruity bouquet and recognisable character.

Middelvlei Cabernet Sauvignon

A crystal clear red wine with a soft bouquet. Matured to perfection in small casks of French oak. This special Cabernet Sauvignon can be enjoyed now, but has the potential to mature for many years to come.

Middelvlei



Wine of Origin Stellenbosch
Made on the wine estate
and marketed by The Bergkelder.

MVV 002E

NEW WORLD WINE AUCTION

I hope the ghost of Willem Adriaan Van der Stel was at the New World Wine Auction held at his old home Vergelegen.



left to right: Hugh Peatling — MD of Diners Club, Sue Brown of Habitat and Gunter Brozel — Cellar master of Neethlingshof.

Anglo-American have worked wonders in restoring the homestead and gardens to their original splendour. It was difficult to leave viewing the antiques on display, the Pietermeef exhibition and the books loaned by the Brenthurst library, to get down to the business of the day.

David Molyneux Berry of Sotheby's Auctioneers sold various lots from nine different countries. Top seller was a Dunn Vineyards, Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon from the Napa Valley, California. At R4 400 a case it's not for everyday drinking but Wine Spectator Magazine had rated this wine along with the likes of Pichon Lalande and Ch. Mouton Rothschild. Another Californian wine, Simi, Reserve Chardonnay 1985 were late entrants to the Auction. The wine reached just under a thousand rand a case. Simi's highly respected winemaker-cum-President, Zelma Long, came out for the auction and conducted a couple of seminars in the winelands.

Among the Australian wine on offer not surprisingly Chateau Reynell Vintage Port 1977 reached the highest price. This winery, located near Adelaide, has long been known for producing top quality wines. New Zealand

came forth to prove it justified its reputation in producing great white wines, with a Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc from the Kumeu River. On the local front the K.W.V. Muscadel 1930 reached a very respectable price along with wines from Alto and L'Ormarins.

Rustenburg lovers may have been disappointed when the first bidder snaffled up all the lot in one fell swoop. Of the total of 5 845 cases, an estimated 16% of all purchases were by overseas buyers.

The rest of the wine stayed home, so some will appear in specialist wine shops and select restaurants. They will obviously be expensive, the prices quoted for the overseas wines do not include costs such as freight, handling and payment of duty.

The New World Wine Auction will be held in London next year. It is doubtful if it will upstage the splendour of a 300- year-old Cape farm. Even the heavy rain which fell on the day did nothing to spoil the occasion.

Willem Adriaan left the Cape in disgrace. I hope his spirit, perhaps perched on the great gnarled roots of the huge old camphor trees, can be at peace. □

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THROUGH THE GLASS LIGHTLY

No sooner had I returned to the Transvaal after the New World Wine Auction than I found myself back on a plane to the Cape; this time to taste wines on offer from the Bergkelder Tender Scheme.

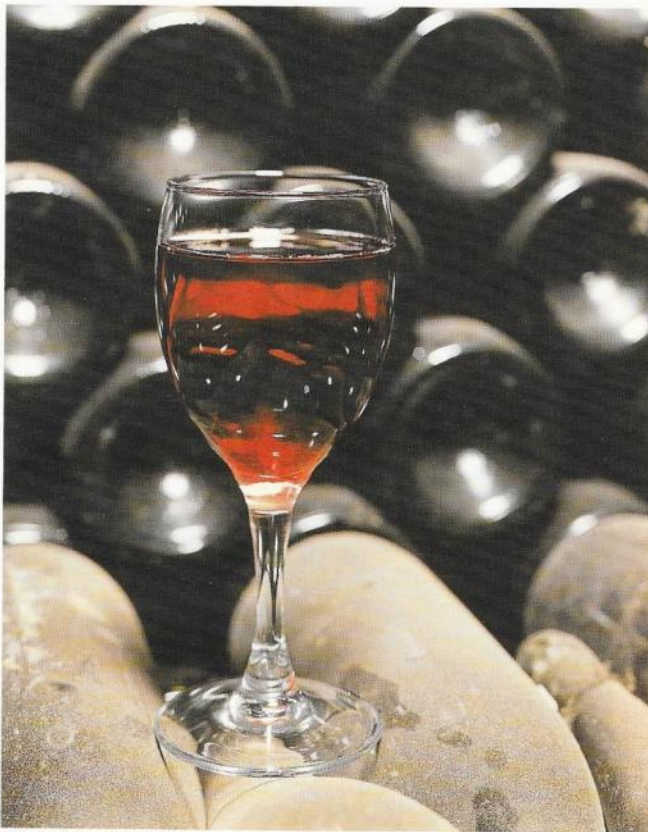
Amongst the usual milieu of wine writers from around South Africa there were also a couple of overseas wine buffs left over from the Auction. One of them was Roger Voss, more famous for the controversial article he wrote in Britain's national newspaper, the Daily Telegraph. He wrote on the winelands commitment, the group comprising Simon Barlow of Rustenberg, Tim Hamilton Russell of H.R. Vineyards and John Platter of Clos de Cie, who are all dedicated to improving the wineland workers' lot.

Not everyone agreed with what he had to say but he seemed to have withstood the slings and arrows of outraged wine farmers. At least this guy was no closet critic; he came to see for himself. Perhaps now he has visited our shores he can improve on his Fortified and Dessert wines; pocket book edition, published by Mitchell Beazly; which is an excellent reference for those Port lovers and Madeira aficionados but lacks in-depth knowledge on some of the New World stickies. He does have another book also available in South Africa in the same series on French regional wines, which is excellent.

Back to the Bergkelder tasting; no long flowery words or over-keen sales jargon accompanied the wines, they were left to speak for themselves. Cellarmaster, Dr. Julius Lazlo was on hand to answer any queries and to ensure that we were all aware that as in 1988 many of the wines on tender will be sold from the cask and bottled at the wine maker's discretion.

Certainly Rubicon 1989 only enhanced its already enviable reputation. Lovely dusty fruit on the nose, well balanced with youthful astringency and great potential. This wine was blended prior to wood maturation. Previously the Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot were matured separately and blended before bottling.

The Middelvlei Pinotage was a fine example of the heights this often ma-



Collectors' red wines from Bergkelder

ligned grape variety can reach, the 1988 vintage at present in the barrel will be bottled this year whilst those wines of the 1989 vintage will be bottled in 1991. Le Bonheur was surprisingly accessible for its youth and it should be interesting to see how this wine develops.

However, the one which one will have to lay down for a while is the Alto Rouge 1987. With a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and Cabernet

Franc this mixture of old style with new style has produced lots of fruit, with a dominant tannin present on the palate.

Certainly any wines with the high alcohols and low pH values that most of these wines have, augur well for long maturation potential. If you have not asked your wine merchant to select for you on their scheme, rest assured there are many stores who are buying for their customers; with over 17 000 cases on offer there should be enough to go

continued overleaf >

Pour it for overseas wine connoisseurs and watch their surprise...

"All Woodhead's wines have incredible complexity of flavour, an impressively broad spectrum of taste that you find in hardly any other South African white. In fact, you really feel you are in France when you drink Le Bonheur".

John Platter

LE BONHEUR
Blanc Fume
SAUVIGNON BLANC

"Grassy and refreshing, it's superb with seafood. And it's one of the first South African dry whites to warrant serious comparison with its French counterpart Pouilly Fume. Pour it for overseas visitors and watch their surprise!"

Peter Devereux

Also from the Wine Estate
Cabernet Sauvignon
and Chardonnay

Estate Wines
of Origin -
Stellenbosch

Made by Michael J. Woodhead
of Le Bonheur Wine Estate
and marketed under the
Seal of The Bergkelder.

THE WINE CONNOISSEUR'S WINE



LBW 009E

WINE UPDATE



Comparative tasting of Chardonnays.

round.

At the end of the tasting I asked Roger Voss what his impressions of South African wines were in general. He felt in some cases South Africa still lagged behind its New World counterparts but he did have encouraging things to say about some of the new style wines he tasted.

The Nederburg Auction for this year has sixty-four different red wines on offer, amongst them some of South Africa's best loved wines, Delheim Grand Reserve, vintages 1983 and 1984, Kanonkop Cabernet Sauvignon from 1973 and Lanzeracs from the late sixties in very small quantities. Then there are the luscious numbers such as Eminence. It will be interesting to see what prices they fetch, expect to see them in the stores in May.

If all these auctions are causing you sleepless nights while you worry if you are spending the right amount of money on the right wine, help is at hand. Round the country there are wine courses; the Cape Wine Academy holds various courses to the level of your needs. Clive Torr in Johannesburg on (011) 783-4585 or Stellenbosch (022) 317-3400 will be able to give you more information.

Likewise the KWV offers courses, contact the Johannesburg office on (011) 880-1025 or Lou Anne Broughton on (02211) 63-1001 in Paarl. If you are really keen you can continue to Cape



Cape Wine Masters Institute. (L to R) Tony Mossop CWM, Christine Rudman CWM, Dave Hughes, Phyllis Hands and Benny Howard CWM.

Wine Masters level — these 'top' people are very thin on the ground, not surprising when there are four three-hour long theory papers to write and three different blind tastings. Once this status is achieved then the successful become members of the Institute of Cape Wine Masters. This august group recently honoured Dave Hughes and Phyllis Hands at a dinner in Stellenbosch for their contribution to wine education.

If you are not into formalised education of wine or you have achieved the level you wish to, there is nothing like setting up a comparative blind tasting to sharpen your wits.

Recently at two long tastings on Chardonnay's, four wines came out in a similar order even with different panels.

Alphabetically they were Delaire, Hamilton Russell Vineyards, Van Loveren and Vriesenhof. Overgaauw and Thelema were also ranked high and Avontuur showed itself as a force to be reckoned with. In the one tasting where only South African wines were tasted, the outcome did seem to prove that the price you paid for the wine was not always a reflection of quality.

In the tasting which included overseas wines, the Rosemount Chardonnay 1988 from the Hunter Valley, Australia was in first position, four places ahead of its first French rival, a Bouchard Père et Fils 1985 Mersault. Although this vintage in some instances did lack concentration in white wine terms it is by no means a poor year.

If you are looking to find out more about this grape lovers', 'groupy' wine variety then you cannot go far wrong by attending the Wild Coast Sun Wine Symposium at the end of June. Some of the Cape's leading wine growers of the variety will be on hand to explain the intricacies of the grape; why for example it is one of the few white varieties that actually produces much more complexity in the bottle.

In the meantime don't forget to celebrate Easter with a glass of bubbly; try Simonsig's Kaapse Vonkel which has been around a long time but the blend is much improved. A Villa Rossina, both rosso and bianco style could come in useful round the pool for quenching the thirst of family and friends. No wine opener required and the litre bottle is a handy size. □

"At
Meerendal
our vineyards
can hear the
cool sea breeze
blow"

Meerendal



Meerendal on the Tygerberg Hills of Durbanville, lies so close to the Atlantic, you can smell it on the breeze. The unique pattern of the cool summer winds that blow through these hills, ensures grapes of great character. Koosie Starke, owner and winemaker of Meerendal, hails the closeness of the cold Atlantic and the texture of the red Tygerberg soil among the secrets of his Durbanville reds. Heavy dewfalls and fresh South Easterns during the pressing season, and the skill of the family cellar, have turned the Pinotage and the shy-bearing Shiraz grapes into rich and robust wines. These reds are so expressive in character, you'll remember them with deep pleasure.

Meerendal

Estate Wine of Origin
Durbanville

PINOTAGE
SHIRAZ



Born and bred on the estate. Marketed by The Bengelkeder.



100040010

WINE UPDATE

by Sue Brown

POST-PRANDIAL PASTIME

Port remains for many the last bastion of male chauvinism in drinking circles.

It is really that people perpetuate only the old way of thinking. When a local style port was launched recently all-male dinners were held to promote the product whilst the wives/girlfriends were expected to wait at home – hardly likely to enhance sales in these days of equality for all. I acknowledge that a hundred years ago, in another world, men were left to themselves to pass the port and also swap *risqué* jokes and the latest gossip from the city. The ladies meanwhile withdrew, partook of brandy for digestive or medicinal purposes and swapped *risqué* stories and gossip from the village. Once home, any together couple would obviously compare notes. In these gay nineties, assuming Nostradamus' predictions are as inaccurate as my 'stars' usually are, then this decade should finally short-circuit the post-prandial gossip into round table harmony.

I should hate to see some of the amusing customs associated with Port disappear once it becomes a truly plural-sex ritual.

The Port decanter must, as we all know, be passed clockwise round the table but quite why appears to have never been satisfactorily answered. Some say it is easier to pass a heavy decanter with one's right hand and most people are right handed. Then there are those who believe it originates with the Navy, Port (side) as in left.

I rather like Warner Allen's explanation that it's from the old Celtic superstition that all circular movements should be deisil, i.e. that a person going in a circle should have his right hand to the centre. The right hand was thought to be lucky, the left 'ill omened'. One assumes this was connected to the path of the sun.

Then of course there is the Port hogger, not a modern innovation but one known from way back. The most famous of these was a gentleman, the Bishop of Norwich; thus the traditional phrase for making someone pass on the port in polite circles is to enquire if he 'knows the Bishop'.

Port has for many years been used for the royal toast. The Royal Navy departs from tradition by remaining seated during the toast. This habit was insisted upon by King George II after he stood up for the toast aboard ship and hit his head on the low ceiling.

There are some super Ports to be found if you search, try Norman Goodfellow's in Illovo. It's a perfect present for the man with everything, especially if you include a pair of Port tongs. Port tongs, for those of you who may not have indulged in this ceremony, negate the use of a bottle opener. They are long handled implements with a bit at the end which will ring the neck of a bottle. This end is placed in the fire until it is red hot, then put round the neck of the bottle. Then you take a feather dipped in water, remove the tongs and gently pass the damp feather along where the heated tongs have been. *Voilà*, the neck breaks clean and, without disturbing the sediment in the bottle, you can pour your vintage port for an amazed audience.



The reason for this palaver is that vintage Port matures in the bottle for a great length of time. The corks in the old days had to seal the contents extremely well, thus the corks were heavily waxed, making it nigh on impossible to get the cork out of the bottle.

So let's wage war on the chauvinists but keep the tradition. Bear in mind Professor Saintsbury's advice – in his Notes on a Cellar Book he wrote of Port: 'it strengthens while it gladdens as no other wine can do'. – to your health. □

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NEDERBURG AUCTION PROVES MATURATION POTENTIAL

I nearly did not make 'the' Auction this year. By 'The' Auction I mean the Nederburg Auction. Now in its sixteenth year, it is without doubt the premier annual event for the wine industry.



Successful bidder Lynne Reid.

Over 1 600 licencees, guests and media arrived at the Nederburg farm on the last day of March. The grey morning was to reflect the mood of the bidders as the internationally renowned auctioneer, Patrick Grubb, coaxed over R1,8 million worth of sales. For the first time this year, an auction truly reflected the state of the market. Over the first three months of 1990, R2 million was spent at the New World Wine Auction and R2,96 million was invested in the Bergkelder Vinot  que pre-release scheme.

So, to be realistic, there were unlikely to be any mad spending sprees pushing up the prices beyond market value. The older and truly rare wines found their expected prices, but the less rare did not; Bellingham Shiraz 1981, for example, failed to reach its reserve price. There were also the single case lots bought for publicity purposes rather than investment potential which stimulate a lot of interest.

Amongst these was a case of Lanzerac Pinotage 1965 which reached R5 200. Nearly a thousand rand more than for a Lanzerac Pinotage 1969 sold at last year's auction, the '67 reached the same price. Kanonkop maintained its high-priced profile with one case of their 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon fetching R3 600. The top price was paid for a

Rustenberg 1974, at a price of R7 100 messrs Barlow, Le Riche and Withington should be well pleased.

The co-ops battled in some cases to edge above the reserve price, which leads one to ask the question: can a serious wine auction really be a platform for bulk producers to sell their wares? One is tempted to ask if this is not a way that 'father' company S.F.W. can repay its key suppliers for loyalty.

Cultivar wines which perhaps did not reach the high prices producers may have wished for were Weisser (Rhine) Riesling and Shiraz. The slow rise in popularity of the Rieslings I think can be attributed to their arrival on the market with Sauvignon Blanc. The Sauvignon Blanc, either wooded or unwooded with its sharp acid, immediately gained popularity after the decline and fall of the rasping premier grand cru's. As the love affair with



S.F.W.'s executive chairman Dave Marlow; guest speaker Paul Pontallier of Chateau Margaux; Nederburg director Ernst Le Roux.

anything French dies down and 'palates' cry out for change as they drown in a deluge of chardonnay, I am sure Rhine Riesling will gain in market share. The Groot Constantia Weisser Riesling 1985 struggled to find bidders, but then so did the Groot Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon 1973, an obvious sign this farm must 'pull up its socks' if it is to measure up against its neighbours Klein Constantia and Buitenver-

wachting. Certainly the slow trend towards Shiraz is a more interesting one.

For a long time when one thought of Shiraz, only Zandvliet, Bellingham and Zonnebloem came to mind. Lack of good plant material was a reason for this small group. Now, with improvements, winemakers are becoming increasingly enthusiastic about the grape, not yet though, it would seem are the investors. Hartenberg Shiraz 1978, full and interesting, averaged R337,50 a case. Rust en Vrede Shiraz 1979, Jannie Engelbrecht's maiden vintage, averaged R270 a case (packed 6 x 750 ml a case), the '82 of the same pack size averaged R194. Nederburg Shiraz, only available on the auction, is of consistently high quality and at an average price of R305,61 a case for the 1982 vintage this was the bargain of the category.

Hamilton Russell Vineyards, Overgaauw and Nederburg all offered a Chardonnay which performed well price-wise. The sweet wines such as Eminence found their niche and sensible prices were paid for these quality wines which take such care and expertise to make. The only Sauvignon Blancs were to be found lurking in the Private Bins of Nederburg.

Too early to comment on Pinot Noirs as an investment, Simonsig's average price for this cultivar was R155,40; I feel the price reached more for its oddity value. Likewise the Hartenberg Zinfandel 1982, with an average price of R262 a case. Last year there were 11 189 cases on offer; this year the numbers dropped to 7 992 cases. The reason given: stricter selection. It is worth noting though, that the New World Wine Auction must have made an impact.

Of party and personalities, the Nederburg Auction has always led the field. The party part of the Auction did >

Pour it for overseas wine connoisseurs and watch their surprise...

"All Woodhead's wines have incredible complexity of flavour, an impressively broad spectrum of taste that you find in hardly any other South African white. In fact, you really feel you are in France when you drink Le Bonheur".

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THE WINE CONNOISSEUR'S WINE

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Hans J. Schrieber of Neethlingshof and Terry Helps of the distributing company Constantia Negotiants.

seem to sum up the rather gauche stage its age suggests. The fashion show proved to be more titillating than tantalizing as one model's décolleté failed to measure up to the plimsoll line. The famous lunch took a new direction with the indefatigable Bill Gallagher of Southern Sun creating, with his team, an unforgettable spread.

From a pot pourri of Cape seafoods, to a fillet of Karoo lamb topped by a pastry fashioned in the shape of a vine leaf. The finale of the meal, and I quote, was: 'a fantasy in chocolate, its focal point a miniature brightly coloured hot air balloon'. These balloons proved to be much sought after as souvenirs to take home to uninvited children. Those of us who tried to do justice to the confectionery in situ were left to suffer a Lilliputian dilemma.

Of personalities, my personal best-bidder award must go to Hans J. Schrieber of Neethlingshof Estate who coolly and with great dignity and charm injected the excitement into the auction. He also made a generous donation to the Hospice Association by acquiring a 1970 Johann Graue Cabernet Sauvignon and a 1966 Château Margaux which had been donated by the guest speaker at the auction, Paul Pontallier. The Hospice Association benefited to the tune of R28 050 as a result of the charity auction held after the main auction.

Of the guest speaker Paul Pontallier, director of Château Margaux, one of the first growth wine estates of the Medoc, France. He delivered a safe speech, commenting on how 'blessed' the Cape area was with such a diversity of soils and climates. He issued a word of warning that the advantages and disadvantages of these diversities had not been properly realised. He emphasized the importance of the right vine in the right plant, his message being that you plant vines for generations.

On the plus side, he felt South Africa together with Chile offered the best value-for-money wines on the international market.

When I asked Tony Lord, controversial publisher of British wine magazine *Decanter*, if he agreed with this statement, he was a little more guarded in his reply. Pointing out that the British market is considered the window of the international wine market and feature buyers of quality. The Americans were more price-conscious and large quantity buyers. The Japanese, at present, he did not view as influential in global terms. He felt S.A. had competition from not only Chile but also from Bulgaria and from an as yet unknown Eastern Bloc.

Certainly there is much to be learned from Australia in their approach to capture the overseas market, especially as it is still in a growth phase. Certainly Mandela's release will not herald the opening of an export market for S.A. wines alone.

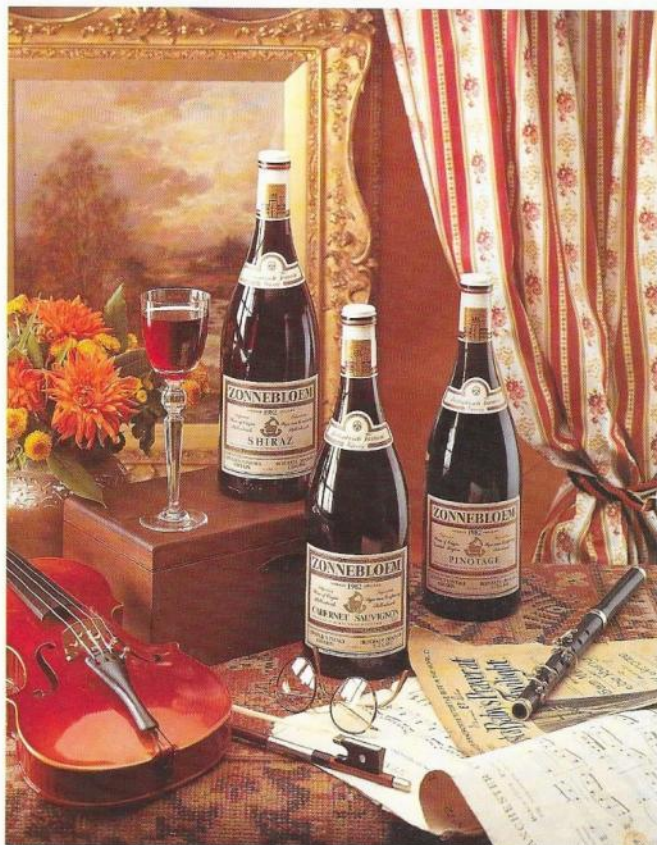


Yvonne Haas, PRO of S.F.W. with Karl Schutte, product manager S.F.W.

I suppose the success of an auction must be viewed in monetary terms, which means this year's event cannot be judged a winner. However, if measured in P.R. terms, as a showcase for S.A. wines and an indicator of wine investments, then quite simply Netherburg have been getting it right for 16 years and appears set on keeping it that way. □

THROUGH THE GLASS LIGHTLY

It's been quite a busy couple of months keeping up with the new wines on offer.



The first of the good news is that one can finally put the 'bar' back in mitzvahs as a result of the introduction of a new range of Kosher wines. A more than palatable selection from the Paarl wine estate of Zandwijk was launched just before Passover.

Choice of winemaker for this venture may come as a surprise. If I mention the name Leon Mostert, you will immediately conjure up visions of an Afrikaner with a calvinist or protestant background – and you would be right.

The entire wine-making operation has to go through the guidance of the Beth Din which has obviously caused many headaches and frustrations for Leon. The laws governing the production of wine are particularly stringent because of the religious and spiritual significance of the use of wine for benedictions, religious rituals and ceremonies. Out of this unusual alliance a team has been forged, obviously respectful of each other and with a great sense of humour. The wines available are: Zandwijk Sauvignon Blanc, a

Weisser Riesling, and a Chardonnay which is well worth a try by all lovers of this variety.

Next on the list which you must try quickly to catch at their best, are the Nouveau wines: Woolworths 'Jeunesse', made by Jeff Grier of Villiera Estate, from the Gamay grape, it's light, easy quaffing wine. Gamay is the grape variety used in Beaujolais where this style of wine originates. Nederburg and Fairview also have attractive wines made from this variety. Drakenstein Co-op and Rhebokskloof make their nouveau style from the Pinotage grapes which produce a very fruity style. My favourite this year was the Simonsvlei offering made from the Pinot Noir grape. The traditionalist may fall back in horror, but I liked the taste, the style and the price.

Whilst round the shelves of Woolworths wine section, keep your eyes open for the 'blue label'. Aimed at attracting the health conscious to wine, no additional sulphur has been added to the wine as a preservative. Interestingly, this country has a very low level of sulphur dioxide legally allowed, when compared to other wine-making countries. As wine chemistry becomes better understood, then less and less of the preservative is used, but there is no such thing as a sulphur-free wine. Sulphur dioxide is naturally produced during fermentation. This new wine is going to test those who blame morning-after headaches on sulphur, rather than excessive intake of alcohol.

Buitenverwachting launched a Pinot Noir 1986 recently, a controversial wine judging by the comments of the tasters present. Light in colour, with nose displaying lots of fruit and subtle wood, it knitted together well on the palate. It has been selected by SAA's international panel for the 1990 Blue Diamond Class list. Also available are their two styles of Sauvignon Blanc – wooded and unwooded. The classic 'fig' nose commonly found in wines from the Constantia region was evident in the unwooded variety.

The Bergkelder launched their two >

Challenge for world's Chardonnays

"The Fleur du Cap Chardonnay is far better than most of the New World Chardonnays and will hold its own against French counterparts."

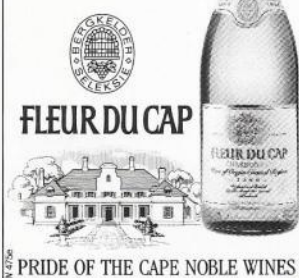
— Nicholas Clarke, U.K. Master of Wine and past Chairman of The Institute of Masters of Wine — London, March 1989.

When the first Fleur du Cap Chardonnay was launched, it was sold out within two weeks. The 1989 vintage is now available in limited quantities at discerning wine merchants and the better restaurants.

Fleur du Cap Chardonnay 1989 was made from grapes grown in the cool Coastal Region and harvested in February. The wine was barrel-fermented and matured in small casks of new French oak for a short period to produce a dry, classic Chardonnay.

"Although the wine has been created for early enjoyment, the delicate Chardonnay character and complexity will intensify with further bottle maturation," predicts Dr Julius Laszlo, Cellar Master of Fleur du Cap.

Fleur du Cap wines are available internationally.



raz and Pinotage available now in the 1982 vintage. They do make ideal gifts for wine lovers and a magnum is considered by many to be a perfect size for maturation.

Lemberg is back on track after wine-maker, Janey's accident. Such a small production will mean you must move fast, the 1989 vintages showed just what potential this farm has. Hamilton Russell Chardonnay 1989 and his Pinot



Wine maker Leon Moser of Zandwijk wine farm.

new 'flagship' wines from white cultivars. Aan de Wagenweg Blanc Fumé 1989 and Aan de Wagenweg Chardonnay 1988. Julius Laszlo, the Bergkelder's cellarmaster, has an enviable record of quality. These wines show well now and promise more if matured. The packaging, which has more than a passing similarity to that of a well known champagne house, is excellent. Where's the rub? — in the price — truly a label drinking wine.

Nederburg, who recently presented their Opera Award for 1989 in the Transvaal to Wicus Slabbert, also served their new wine during the ceremony. Prelude is a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. This unusual combination of varieties marries well. The often very overt acid of a Sauvignon Blanc is tempered by the fatness of the Chardonnay. Whilst at the award dinner Nederburg announced its intention of adding a ballet award to their sponsorship of the arts. Although much was made of the arts' role in breaking down apartheid during the speeches at this function, it was sad to see a lack of black faces in the crowd.

As a quick update on what to look out for in your local store: Zonnebloem magnums of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shi-

Noir 1987 have become available. The 1987 Pinot Noir came within a few points of last year's winner of Diners Club winemaker of the year award. The winner of that award was the Pinot Noir from H.R.V. 1986, what more can I say.

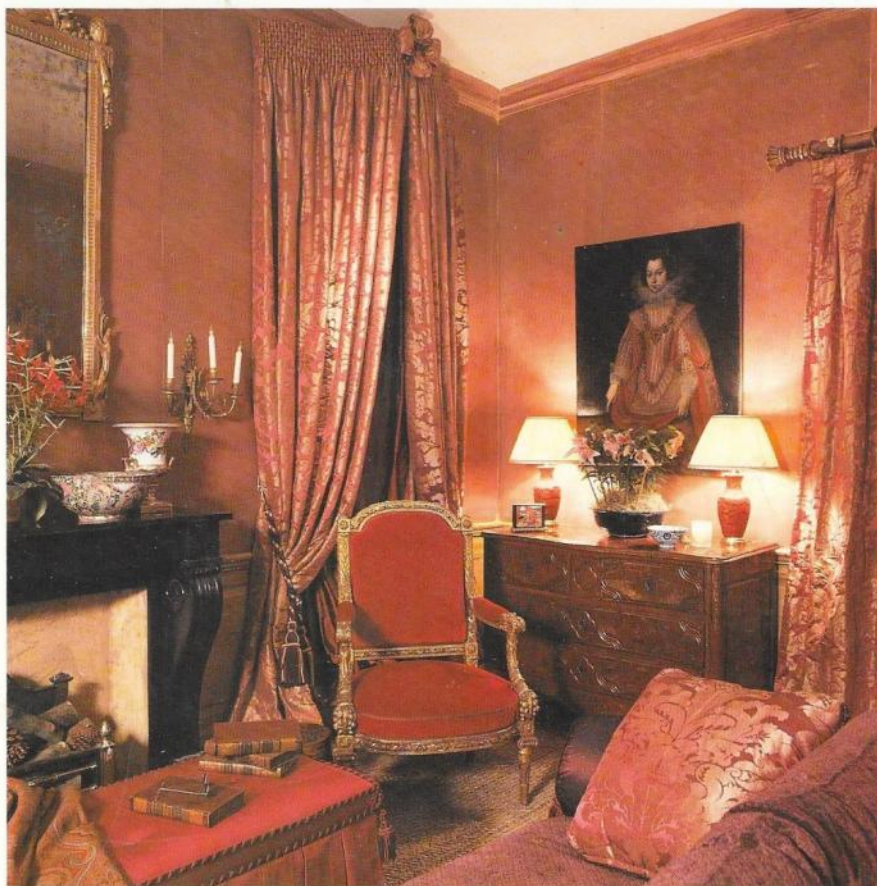
Last but by no means least, the long awaited wines from Glen Carlou have been tasted. No one doubted Walter Finlayson would come up trumps on his new farm, following his successes at Blaauwklippen. I think he has surpassed himself by producing a Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Merlot of outstanding quality. The packaging of this product is quite superb, but where to find it is a problem. Very small amounts are available at present, read your 'John Platter' and get on the mailing list at the farm as soon as possible.

Since we are now into warm fires and warm drinks, a good slurp of mulled wine does wonders for the soul. Never mind the recipe. Begin with a litre of red wine heated (never boiled) with cinnamon, lemon and sugar to taste. Then allow your natural expertise to add other spices such as nutmeg, cloves and do not forget the brandy. Perfect! — Your health. □

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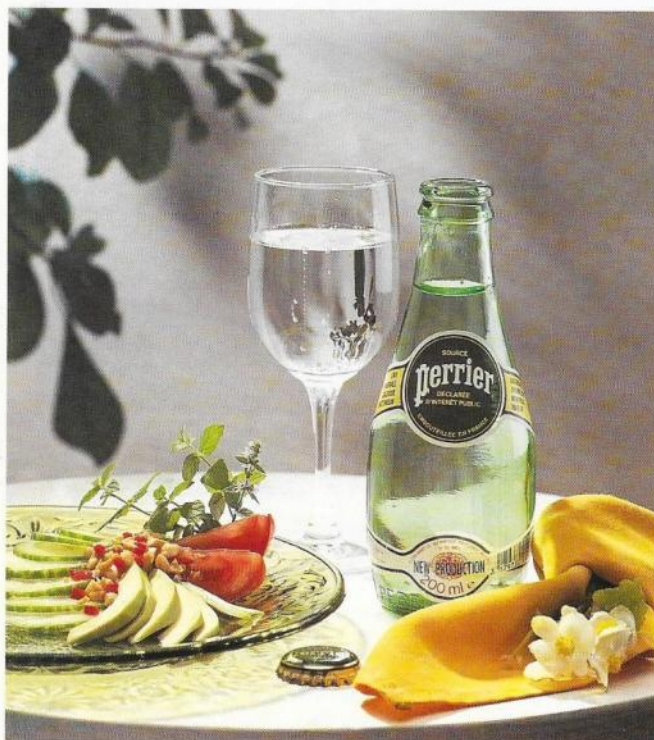


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SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

The wine routes are always a great attraction, armed with a map obtainable from any of the local tourist offices you can set off on your journey of discovery. If, however, you find map reading tiresome and wish for luxury, there is help at hand. Helen Frith of Vineyard Ventures is there to meet your needs.



I deal indeed for up-country and overseas visitors. You can ask Helen, for example, to introduce you to a couple of wine estates specialising in Cabernet. She will arrange for you to meet the owner/winemaker, taste wines not only bottled, but those still nurturing in the barrel; plus answer any questions you may have on anything to do with wine. There are no queues, you will be picked up and

taken round in an air-conditioned bus. There is a French and German interpreter on request. Lunch is included and served at a private estate which boasts a magnificent view of False Bay. Tempting your fancy? – contact Helen at Vineyard Ventures on (024) 551620 or fax on (024) 551658. If you wish to be on your own it will cost you around R350, but if you are in a group of about five to six then you could expect to pay

about R150 per person.

Helen Frith may not be known to some of you as she has been Cape based for some time. Initially with K.W.V., she joined Stellenbosch Farmers Wineries to play a key role in setting up the 'wine plan'. After much management experience she left S.F.W. to start her own business. She is the initiator of the successful *Dégustation Anonyme*, and member of the 'Wine of the month' tasting panel.

A new, 'old' place you must visit in Dorp Street, Stellenbosch, is Oom Samie's fine wine library. This is a wine shop with a difference. Superfit Comrades runner, Sue Wardrop started a collection of wines seldom found in other retail outlets. She will endeavour to find you that special bottle of wine you want for that poignant occasion. Contact her on (02231) 72612.

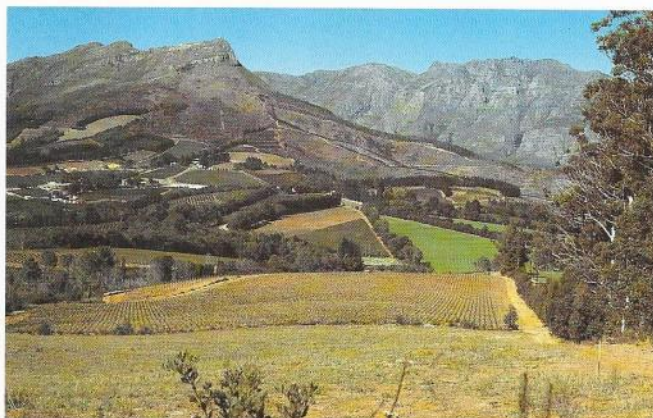
Still with running shoes on, a visit to new farm, Thelema, must be on your agenda. Owned by Gyles and his marathon-running wife, Barbara Webb, their fitness could be partly attributed to their steep vineyards on the Hells-hoogte pass.

They live in a highly individualistic Victorian house, recently renovated by Jennifer de Tolly, a refreshing change from Cape Dutch architecture. If I tell you Gyles is into playing classical music at high volume, imagine yourself sitting on his lawn, looking on to a magnificent valley with the high Groot Drakenstein mountains forming a backdrop as the sun sets on a late Cape evening. Perfection? – well it can't be far off. Still that's today; it took quite a lot of sweat and toil to get there.

First, 18 ha. of mountainside had to be stripped of vegetation. The best plant material obtained, vineyards trellised and trained to gain optimum quality. Canopy management is the buzz word, the art of training your vines to maximise advantages of leaf cover. As the vineyards mature, Gyles is expecting an annual harvest of approximately 400 tons of grapes.

The sweat really began even before all that. Gyles Webb must be the only farm owner with a degree in Accountancy and in winemaking. He joined Stellenbosch Farmers Wineries as an experimental winemaker and I remember trying a botrytis wine he made from red grapes one year; he did a good deal of playing around with wood in▷

WINE UPDATE



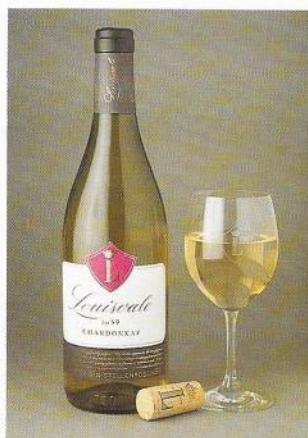
those early days too.

He and Barbara then went off to the States where Gyles was fortunate enough to work with Joe Heitz, legendary winemaker of the Nappa Valley, California. Heitz is the owner of Martha's Vineyard, arguably one of the greatest vineyards on the so-called 'Rutherford Bench'. Recently I was lucky enough to sample a 1984 Cabernet from these vineyards. Intense colour, wonderful oaky overtones and a stunning fresh 'spearmint' aroma. Needless to say the follow through on the palate was in balance with the anticipation the nose and eyes had promised.

The Americans certainly have come a long way from the bootlegging '20s and '30s days, when grape juice was sold with a warning. Customers were told should they add yeast and sugar to this juice, fermentation would occur. The Surgeon General did not add that this could be hazardous to your health!

So, armed with the best of California's experiences, the Webbs went in search of a farm.

Helshoogte Pass is not historically known for grape growing. I turned to guru, Dave Hughes, to ask why. One reason was the inaccessibility of the area. Thelema's vineyards are on an elevation between 370–1 000 m. He reminded me that none of the valley where the Boschendal homestead nestles had been thought of as a wine growing area for many decades. When the dreaded vine disease, Phylloxera, laid to waste so many vines, the industry had little hope of getting back



top: Thelema and Delaire vineyards on the Helshoogte Pass.

on a sound economic footing. At this time Rhodes bought up masses of land and turned to fruit farming. So, had you travelled from Boschendal towards Stellenbosch over the pass, twenty years ago, you would have seen more pears growing than vines. Very good pears they were too.

You would also have travelled through the small village of Pniel, thought to be named after the Peniel mentioned in Genesis. Those of you well versed in the Old Testament will remember this was the name of the place where Jacob saw God face to face. It bodes well for the area.

After all this, the only problem you

may have is obtaining Thelema's wines. If you want some of the best, try bidding for the special Blanc Fumé 1989 at the Cape Independent Winemakers Guild Auction. Judging from the previous vintage I have, it should age well and the '89 should be even better as the vines reach maturity. The other wine on offer at the auction is the Chardonnay 1989, you will probably have to curb the natural inclination to swig it immediately, as waiting two to three years will bring greater rewards.

Otherwise, look out for the unwooded Sauvignon Blanc, Rhine Riesling and the non-auction Blanc Fumé and Chardonnay, all of the 1989 vintage. Before I leave this topic, I must mention that Thelema wines will not necessitate your mortgaging the house to acquire them.

A change of location within Stellenbosch brings me to the new farm Louisvale. Their new wine, recently launched, belongs to the ever-growing list of not to be missed. I am beginning to wonder how much more Chardonnay I can go into raptures over but just when I say 'no more', I'm enticed into tasting another. Two reasons for the enticement: one the label; I have not quite made up my mind yet whether I really like it or not but one will have no difficulty finding the wine on a shelf. The second reason is that I cannot remember when I have not enjoyed a wine under the label of Neil Ellis selection and the winemaker at the farm is the selfsame man. He didn't let me down; this is an elegant classic style chardonnay with great potential. You can expect to pay around R24 per bottle.

To give your mental palate a short rest from wine, thank heavens now that spring is here, it's safe to go back into the water. Not J'eauburg water – I mean the real thing from the ground, Perrier. The same time-proven packaging of course, but it carries a discreet sentence on the label stating 'new production'. Perrier risked massive losses in market share after withdrawing their water from the market due to unacceptably high (but not health threatening) levels of benzene.

No shilly shally statements were made in trying to justify why this could have happened, or even claims against the testing equipment. No, the company, Source Perrier, withdrew stocks

"At Meerendal our vineyards can hear the cool sea breeze blow"

Meerendal



Meerendal on the Tygerberg Hills of Durbanville, lies so close to the Atlantic, you can smell it on the breeze. The unique pattern of the cool summer winds that blow through these hills, ensures grapes of great character. Koosie Starke, owner and winemaker of Meerendal, hails the closeness of the cold Atlantic and the texture of the red Tygerberg soil among the secrets of his Durbanville reds. Heavy dewfalls and fresh South Easterns during the pressing season, and the skill of the family cellar, have turned the Pinotage and the shy-bearing Shiraz grapes into rich and robust wines. These reds are so expressive in character, you'll remember them with deep pleasure.

Meerendal

Estate Wine of Origin
Durbanville

PINOTAGE
SHIRAZ



Born and bred on the estate. Marketed by The Bergkelder.



2000 1000

THROUGH THE GLASS LIGHTLY

Two very interesting tastings I went to in the last month were both organised by Cape Wine Master, Rowena Bregman.

We spat our way through ten chardonnays to decide if we could detect sulphur levels and identify malolactic fermentation and maturity of the vine. Like most of these tastings, they promote healthy discussion but only show us how difficult these sort of factors are to pick up.

Vriesenhof 1989 again took the honours as the wine which 'scored' the highest, closely followed by Delaire, Klein Constantia and Hamilton Russell Vineyards. In truth there was a percentage of a mark between all three. The interesting similarity between them all was they had all gone through some malolactic fermentation, all had very low sulphur levels. Malolactic fermentation, for those of you who just enjoy wine and don't worry about the ins and outs, is merely a natural process which softens available acids present in the wine. Sulphur, as we discussed in last month's issue, is a natural product of fermentation but additional sulphur may be legally used as a preservative. Mike Dobrovic from Delaire estate tells me that in America they are maintaining that wines which register under 100 parts per million should be considered sulphur-free. The legal maximum in this country is 200 parts per million for table wines.

The other similarity between the wines at the top were the very low yields the vines produced. Again Delaire's winemaker, Dubrovic comments that we spend far too much time trying to define a noble cultivar; 'Rather worry about yields,' he says. He uses France as an example where production levels of 18 tons per hectare, (a common occurrence in S.A.) would not even be



Nederburg Prelude – a Chardonnay/Sauvignon Blanc blend.

thought of as quality wine, no matter what the grape variety was.

The next tasting, still on Chardonnay, was a vertical tasting of Hamilton-Russell Vineyards. It's always fun to get to grips with the vintage variations of one farm and is equally difficult to choose your favourite; but let me put it this way: if you have any 1983 or 1985 vintage you are in for a real treat. Both vintages were good white wine vintages to start with, but they do show exceptional weight and complexity.

What I have not done yet is to introduce Nederburg's Prelude into a blind tasting of chardonnays. Prelude is in fact a blend of chardonnay and sauvignon blanc. Certainly when you know what you are tasting, the sauvignon blanc dominates the nose but the taste is so smooth. I think I must try that next. Cheers. □

Challenge for world's Chardonnays

"The Fleur du Cap Chardonnay is far better than most of the New World Chardonnays and will hold its own against French counterparts."

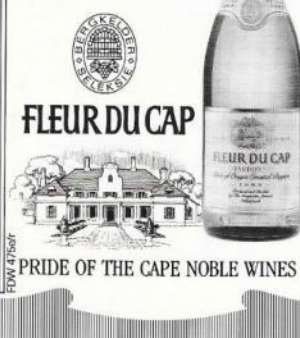
— Nicholas Clarke, U.K. Master of Wine and past Chairman of The Institute of Masters of Wine — London, March 1989.

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Fleur du Cap wines are available internationally.



BEST RESTAURANT WINE LIST

It was earlier this year that restaurants were asked by Diners Club to submit their wine lists to compete in a competition to find the most varied and interesting wine lists in the Republic. An independent panel of judges, country-wide, were given the task of assessing each list. The results of the competition were announced in Johannesburg recently.

Hugh Peatling, Diners Club M.D. commented at this year's presentation: 'If our restaurants did for wine what Cape Winemakers do for wine, this country could be a mecca for food and wine lovers from all over the world'.

Certainly the chefs are doing their best for the restaurant trade. At the FABSSA exhibition recently held in Johannesburg, the best South African and international chefs displayed their art. Aided by a closed circuit television and compered by *Habitat's* Isabel Jones with Leslie Richfield, they turned the art of cooking into a spectator sport.

So whilst our winemakers reach for ever higher goals and chefs do expert dishes with a Kalahari truffle, are restaurants keeping up with the food and wine revolution? The top ones, if the wine lists submitted to Diners Club are to be taken as examples, most certainly are. One would have expected the Cape to sweep the board, but of the 11 awards presented in four different categories the Transvaal took six.

The best Club winelist was the Durban Country Club, with the Johannesburg Country Club in second slot. This is the second time that Durban has taken the honours with 272 different local wines, 11 different sparklers, to say nothing of 22 vintage and non-vintage champagnes. And that, before you get to four pages of French wines and turn over to more pages of German, Italian and Portuguese wines. This is a wine list to be taken leisurely; there is a vintage chart at the back to guide your choice.

In the full liquor licence category, Val and Alan Stricke of Fisherman's Grotto, wiped the board. Assisted in selection of wine by Peter Fridjhon, they have produced what they unash-

medly refer to as a unique wine cellar.

The wine list runs to 26 pages of local and imported wines. Of the imported, they include wines from the new world as well as some very unusual wines from Israel and Bulgaria.

The front page of the Fisherman's Grotto wine list exhorts you to remember this is only part of the cellar. 'You are at liberty', says host Stricke, 'to browse through our cellar for a more comprehensive selection and select your wine. All the wines in the cellar have prices marked on them and are in vintage order.'

Port by the glass, both local and imported, and a superlative cognac list would make this particular restaurant difficult to beat.

Winner of the Wine and Malt category was Gatrile's restaurant in Sandown. Owner Ken Forrester's wine list starts with the legend: 'Due to the diversity and complexity of this list we've added notes throughout for your help and guidance. However, many of the staff are graduates of the Cape Wine Academy and would willingly help out if requested'. Then follows 12 pages of local wines, listed in an easy to follow format.

The best hotel winelist of the country was from the Garden Terrace, Lord Charles Hotel, in the Cape. The wine list again was very comprehensive, and, I am sure, presented with a smile. My lasting memory of that hotel was of staff who always smiled.

Obviously it takes time to build up wine cellars like these and a lot of capital investment. Chief organiser Peter Devereux does check that the stock is genuine and the list a true reflection of the restaurant's cellar at all times. Given this background, it is difficult to see who will be able to beat these top venues. □

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SHOW OFF

by Sue Brown

The wine shows organised by the Natal Mercury in Durban and the Business Day in Johannesburg afford local wine imbibers a kind of peripatetic wine experience.



above: Thalia D'Oliviera toasts Villiera Estate's three newly released vintage wines: the 1989 Rhine Riesling, 1990 Sauvignon Blanc and award-winning 1988 Cabernet Sauvignon.

left: Visitors to Fairview Estate are often intrigued by the sight of goats frolicking in the 'tower'. Cheeses from the milk of these Swiss Saanen goats are produced on the estate.

These shows are the 'Prohep' specials of the year. Not that I am advocating that the excessive use of alcohol can be counteracted by doses of liver 'pepper uppers' – anything but! The reason why a detoxifier is needed is the fact that neither show looks after the sniffer and spitter. Sniff you may but there is always a lack of spittoons and it is difficult to get away from a winemaker who 'stoppeeth one with a glittering eye.'

This bright eyed chap is intent on divulging screeds of fascinating information you are longing to record. You fail to take any of this information in as you have a mouth full of wine and nowhere to spit it out; the result is you swallow it, and so on and so forth. Eventually you arrive armed with pen,

paper and plastic bucket.

There were over 350 different wines to try in Durban and more still in Johannesburg, so peak health condition and a chauffeur are vital when tackling wine shows. In Natal I decided to concentrate on some of the more reasonably priced wines available on the market for summer slurping.

Many of these wines are made by co-operative wineries and, as they do not have sophisticated marketing and sales departments, they are often difficult to locate. Check your John Platter's guide to South African wines for telephone numbers, you can often order direct and then send up via S.A.R. or the wine express. But there is seldom a price advantage in ordering directly from the farm, so nag your bottle store

owner if you find a winner.

Swartland Co-op has a long track record for reliability. The Riesling 1990 was well structured and with a dry, pleasant finish. The Sauvignon Blanc 1989 was a little shy on the nose but surprised me by producing a full grassy flavour on the palate. Both wines are available at well under R4 a bottle. The bubbly, Cuvée Brut was full of mousse and tantalisingly tart on the palate; it definitely had my vote as one of the best value for money sparklers on the market. Price ex co-op is R50 a case.

Robertson Co-op produced a bubbly, named Santino; it has an intriguing nose, is well structured, full of flavour and the semi-sweet bubbles from this part of the winelands should also prove very popular. Price ex co-op will be under R50 a case. Robertson Co-op is the oldest in the area and its reputation was established by Pon van Zyl who was the first winemaker to appreciate the value of the grape variety, Colombard.

Previously this variety had been only imported for its uses in brandy making and is one of the grapes used for making Cognac. As more and more took root in the Cape it was by lucky accident that Colombard came to the attention of Van Zyl. Its naturally high acids are well suited to the Robertson area, and produce fresh, fruity, white wine styles. The Co-op honoured Van Zyl by first producing a magnum, under the label Baron du Pon of Colombar. More recently a 1988 red muscadell has been made under this label and in the same size; the cost is around R25.

I was attracted to Du Toitskloof Co-op as a result of seeing some stunning labels. The dry Sauvignon Blanc and the off-dry Weisser Riesling are well worth a try. I note John Platter gave a three star rating to the Colombard from this co-op, unfortunately however, it was not available for tasting on the night I visited. The retail price of this wine from the Goudini area is under R50 a case.

On to what is considered 'prime wine growing country', the Eersterivier Valise Co-op produces a good everyday Riesling at R30 a case if you buy it on site. And if you are very quick you might get hold of their Chardonnay at R70 a case. The Chardonnay is not showing much complexity at present but there is lots of promising flavour on the palate. >

WINE UPDATE



Jan Momberg of Middelvlei is a man of few words...

Everybody knows him as "Stil Jan" – that is quiet Jan Momberg of Middelvlei, on the sunny slopes of the Papegaaiberg. A region known for its fertile, deep red soil – where wines of character are grown. Here, where nature is bountiful, Jan Momberg quietly makes his red wine. But the wines speak for themselves...

Middelvlei Pinotage

A dry red wine, matured to a mellowness that lies gently on the palate, with an intensely fruity bouquet and recognisable character.

Middelvlei Cabernet Sauvignon

A crystal clear red wine with a soft bouquet. Matured to perfection in small casks of French oak. This special Cabernet Sauvignon can be enjoyed now, but has the potential to mature for many years to come.

Middelvlei



Wine of Origin Stellenbosch
Made on the wine estate
and marketed by The Bergkelder.

MVV 002E

If you are not hooked on going to the trouble of experimentation and a wine hunt, then try Woolworths. Their wines were selected by Eve Jell over the years and judging by their popularity, she chooses wisely. Eve left recently to start a restaurant in the Eastern Cape and Cape Wine Master Allan Mullins has stepped in to fill her shoes. It will be interesting to note whether Woolworths' wine cognoscenti recognise the sex change.

In the UK, many stores employ experts to choose quality wines they can bottle under their own label. Thus many British fridges are stocked with the likes of Marks and Spencers' Liebfraumilch, or Waitrose Chablis. Gradually South Africa is getting into the act with their own house brands especially at the lower end of the market. Regrettably, some wines are indistinguishable from a bottle of cleaning fluid on the shelves but Vaughan Johnson has managed to capture quality, both inside the bottle and on the label, with his pleasantly packaged 'Good Everyday Drinking Wine'. Available at his Illovo store it is certainly one of my favourite tipplers.

Back to Woolworths, the Chardonnay is excellent, the Rhine Riesling always of good quality. Their reds are also reasonably priced, accessible and won't let you down.

On the Estate side of things, the wine shows have a lot on offer. Cathy Grier, sister of winemaker Jeff Grier, recently came to Johannesburg to present Villiera's latest releases. If you belong to the Wine of the Month Club or the Oaks Wine Club then you will be aware the Sauvignon Blanc topped both categories. These clubs, if you have not come across them, offer a case of wine a month at a competitive price. The twelve different bottles have been chosen by a panel and each club has its own, made up of Cape Wine Masters and other wine buffs, who choose 'blind' which wine they think best out of a selection. The mail order forms are then sent out with the panel's selection on offer and the wine can be sent to your door for your own assessment.

Villiera's Rhine Riesling has always been rated highly both here and overseas and the 1989 vintage has not disappointed us. The new 1988 Cabernet Sauvignon was champion at the Paarl wine show and its breeding is

apparent.

Fairview's is a stand that is always worth a visit as it often has the cheese they produce to complement the wine. If you have not found Fairview cheese in your local cheese shop, demand it. On the wine side, Fairview are just about to launch their Merlot 1989. This wine has spent time in five different types of French oak vats during its maturation. The vats were imported from the regions of Allier, Nevers, Limosin, Tronçais, Vosge and Jupilles and are all 225 litres size. The little bit of blending with Cabernet Franc should make this wine a winner. Also new from the Estate is Bouquet Fair 1990, a Gewürztraminer and Chenin Blanc blend in a dry style, another good refreshing summer drink.

Bertrams were very evident at the Business Day Wine Show with their new releases of red wine. This estate, with a long standing reputation for quality, chose well when they appointed Martin van der Merwe to follow Dr Schicklerling as winemaker.

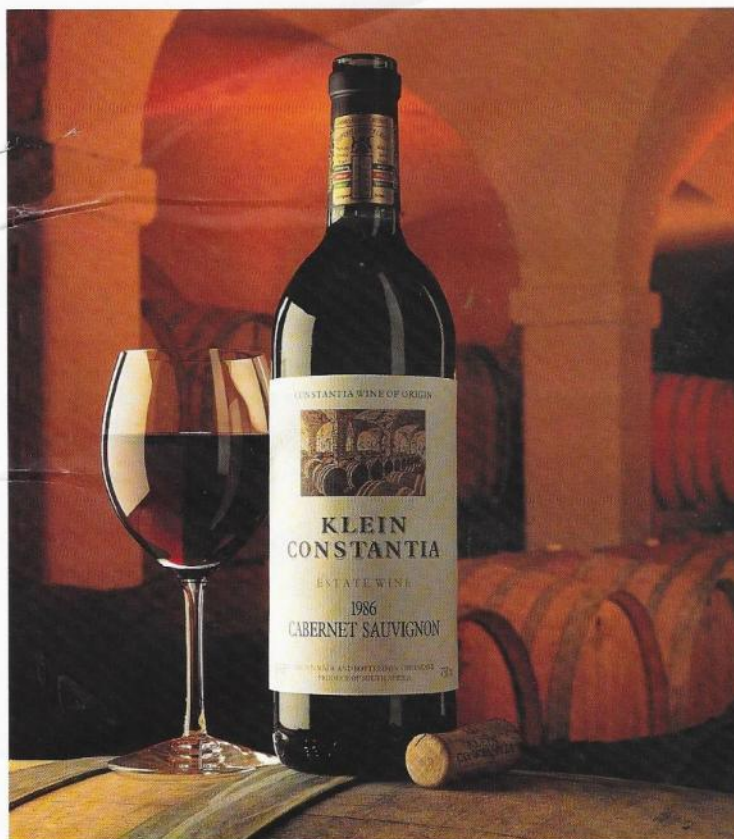
Two years ago at the Business Day Wine Show the maiden vintage of Robert Fuller Reserve was voted best blended red of the show by an independent consumer panel. The 1985 vintage has only improved on the first. A little lighter than the previous years, its two and a half years in wood has added complexity.

The Shiraz 1985 and the Cabernet Sauvignon 1985 vintage have also been released so make space for them in your cellar, they will retail around the R20-R25 mark. If you are feeling adventurous then the Bertrams Zinfandel 1987 might appeal. Few farms bottle this grape variety but its fruitier, lighter style may appeal as the weather warms up.

The point of wine shows is to taste the wines, but added attractions are the personalities. Achim von Arnim's exuberant style of promoting guarantees that no one forgets how good Clos Cabriere Estate *méthode champenoise* bubblys are. Swiss master chefs, Heinz Brunner and George Germann were there to give us a sneak preview of the new book *Cuisine Actuelle*. Brilliantly displayed, and with outstanding photography, each recipe has a wine suggestion along with it. A Swiss choir also gave a different entertainment angle.

Wine shows may be hard on the constitution but they certainly widen your horizons. □

THROUGH THE GLASS LIGHTLY



This is obviously the time for celebrating: Habitat's one hundredth issue, no less. It was also the tenth birthday of Klein Constantia so I flew down to the Cape during the 'green season' to join the party.

During the birthday celebrations the long awaited 1986 red wines were launched and the 1986 Cabernet Sauvignon took many folk by surprise. Intense in colour it has a pronounced berry nose with hints of mint woven into it. The palate is full with lots of fruits and tannin already showing complexity and is well integrated, all of which is a good

sign for those wishing to cellar the wine for some time. The nose on the wine is a change from the 'hot' and often herbaceous noses found on some South African Cabernets. One reason for the change is the plant material available at Klein Constantia.

When Douggie Jooste bought the farm in 1980, only 35 ha of the farm was under vines. Douggie's determina-

tion to make Klein Constantia produce the best possible quality wine from the area led him to ask advice from expert viticulturist Ernst Le Roux.

The new vineyards were planted taking into account the two different climatic conditions occurring on the farm. The cooler south-facing slopes were best suited for Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Rhine Riesling whilst ▷

Challenge for world's Chardonnays

"The Fleur du Cap Chardonnay is far better than most of the New World Chardonnays and will hold its own against French counterparts."

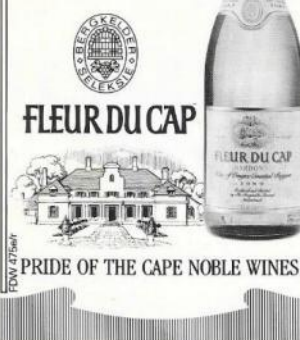
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Fleur du Cap wines are available internationally.



the warmer north-facing slopes were planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Shiraz.

Tempered with expertise, Klein Constantia also had a piece of luck with their choice of winemaker. Ross Gower had already been in search of high quality plant material because existing Cabernet Sauvignon was badly infected with a virus which had spread throughout the Cape vineyards and which affected the ripening of the grapes. Like so many other winemakers, Ross kept his eye open for better plant material on his travels around the world's wine-lands. It was whilst he was studying at Weinsburg that he visited the South Tyrol and found a Cabernet Clone to his liking. The clone was subsequently imported into South Africa, so it is particularly gratifying for Ross to make wine from grapes produced in part from plants he found.

The 1986 Shiraz was also launched, as the fashion swings back to this variety, those of you partial to spicy, somewhat peppery wines are in for a treat. Again the plant material is of the highest quality and this does show through to the eventual wine. Both wines have new labels designed by Duggie Jooste.

Duggie Jooste was justifiably proud when he stood up at the birthday dinner to thank all those involved with the farm's success to date. He looked forward to the challenge of upholding the tradition of quality already achieved. The dinner was held in the manor house of the Estate. Some people find Klein Constantia's departure in places from traditional architecture a little startling, for few homes of this age allow for a minstrels gallery and chapel.

These somewhat amusing additions were made by Clara Hussy, an American steel millionairess who acquired the Estate earlier this century. Quite how she met her husband, Lochner de Villiers, who had owned a ladies hat shop in Paarl, is a mystery, but they were obviously well in step as to colonial lifestyle. Their lavish style of entertainment included inviting passengers and officers from the visiting cruise liners to huge garden parties.

I think perhaps Clara may have been disappointed in the new winery which is a highly sophisticated streamlined building which won an award for its designer. The old cellar, dating back to

Cloete's time, is still in existence and is used as Linda Jooste's studio.

With Clara's flamboyance and extrovert tendencies she would probably be thoroughly fed up with the extension to the cellar which is hidden from view by careful landscaping. It is actually sited underground to ensure optimum maturation conditions at an economic running cost. The necessity for building the cellar is as a result of the estate's policy of not releasing red wines for at least four years.

Not that Klein Constantia is only a red wine farm; their reputation was established with their release of a 1986 Sauvignon Blanc which elicited rave reviews from wine fundis. The 1989 Chardonnay is now ready for release and is well worth a try.

Back to the subject of red wines, Rust en Vrede also launched their latest vintage reds. We have had to wait a long time to enjoy Kevin Arnold's special magic as a winemaker, but this is the man who put Delheim Grand Reserve on the map and did so much to add innovation within the red wine scene in the Cape.

Kevin moved to Rust en Vrede in 1987, and as the farm is exclusively a red wine farm we have had to be patient. A wine simply called Rust en Vrede, 1988 was on auction at the Cape Independent Winemakers Auction. It is a Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon blend which is quite simply superb. To quote the pamphlet Rust en Vrede give out, on the subject of Kevin Arnold, 'His appointment does, however, not mean a deviation from the established style of winemaking but rather an intense extension thereof.'

I am not sure I quite agree with this statement, there is quite a change in style and in my opinion it's all for the best.

The other bit of news from this estate, which has for some time marketed its wines in different shaped bottles, is the reintroduction of the 'fillette'. In this case a 'fillette' is the name the French give to a 375ml bottle of claret. Such a sensible size this, a standard 750ml often being too much and the modern screw-top 250ml bottle too small. The Cabernet Sauvignon 1987 and the Shiraz 1986 are available in these sizes.

So if you are wondering what to get for Christmas this year, I would add both these estate wines to Santa's list. □