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INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. DEC/JAN 1993



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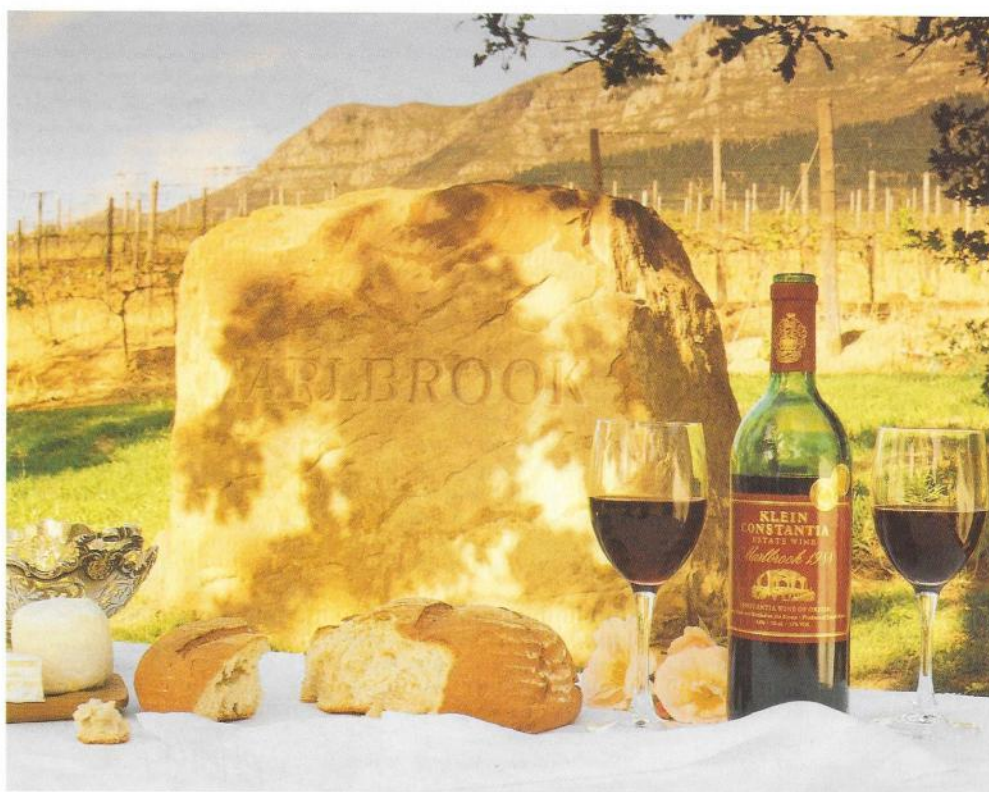
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WINE

Marlbrook Victorious

BY SUE BROWN

After a long fought battle with nature, Klein Constantia Estate celebrated in bucolic fashion when introducing their new 'Bordeaux' style blend.





ABOVE: DRIVEN TO THE MARLBROOK VINEYARD IN STYLE.

OPPOSITE: KLEIN CONSTANTIA ESTATE'S NEW FLAGSHIP WINE.

Marlbrook is the name given to Klein Constantia's blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot red wine. Those in the historical know will immediately recognise this as the name given to the Duke of Marlborough (arguably the greatest military commander in history) by the Europeans. For those of us less versed in such things we can be forgiven for not making the connection.

One has to go back in time and remember that the Duke of Marlborough was also brilliant at political manoeuvres and was part of the group responsible for putting William of Orange on the English throne.

Years later, the Cloete's of the Cape – who despite their German origins – thought of themselves as Dutch, honoured Marlborough by naming a portion of their Constantia farm after him. It is on this portion of the Klein Constantia Estate that the grapes for the blend were grown.

So one balmy Cape day in September, various members of the press, historians and those only there for the fare, were transported to the vineyard in a horse-drawn cart, to the place of this wine's conception.

There is the stone with the word 'Marlbrook' etched into it, and it was here that the wine was introduced. The commemoration was aptly undertaken by Sally Gower, wife of winemaker Ross Gower and of Cloete lineage.

Firmly grasping a bottle of Marlbrook by the neck Sally smashed it against the stone ensuring the wine was well and truly launched.

Certainly the wine was no disappointment after such an introduction. The 1988 vintage is packed full of fruit with minty nuances. It is almost smooth enough to try now but the structure of the wine guarantees it will fill out and 'round' further in the future for a truly complex taste profile. □

First-release Merlot

Fleur du Cap Merlot 1990 has been released.

Fleur du Cap has won 190 medals internationally, for – amongst others – various vintages of the now famous Fleur du Cap Cabernet, Shiraz and Pinotage.

Fleur du Cap Merlot was made to the same high standards.

In true Merlot style, Fleur du Cap Merlot has softer tannins and less astringency with a distinct flavour of overripe berries.

Fleur du Cap Merlot is released early after only two years of maturation – one year in small French oak and a further year in the bottle and is ready to drink immediately

Fleur du Cap wines are available internationally.



FLEUR DU CAP



PRIDE OF THE CAPE NOBLE WINES

FROM 1982

WINE

The 1993 Survivors Guide to Wine

BY SUE BROWN

If you are having this read to you in a designer-quilted cell, you may not have noticed the new look Habitat. The rest of us must strive to keep up appearances.



CHATEAU LIBERTAS, A SIXTY YEAR TRACK RECORD OF HEALTHY IMBIBERS.

Just the other day someone handed me a questionnaire aimed at finding out how close I was to succumbing to the pressures of stress. I am sure you have seen something similar; it was three pages long with ten questions on each page. If you answered 'yes' to over half the questions on page one, then apparently you are on the low road to burnout.

Page two was no more promising. Here the selection of questions harped on irrational moods. Do you kick the dog and yell at your partner; do you sometimes confuse the two? If there is a fifty percent 'yes' ratio on this page, then extra sessions with the shrink are mandatory.

Page three was serious stuff. Even if you were to say 'yes' to the first five questions you would never finish the page. Trust me when I tell you you cannot operate a pencil when wearing a strait jacket.

However, all this made me think where am I going wrong? Why, when I nibble on rice biscuits and swig away on my mineral water, whilst pedalling furiously on my exercise bicycle, am I not feeling the full benefits of a healthy way of life?

I finally realised what was wrong, when returning home one night, I clandestinely slunk into the cellar to pull the cork out of a bottle of Simonsig Tiara. Cork-pulling is only for people of page 1 stress level. Those who reached a high, 'yes' score on page 2 must content themselves with the less stressful screw-top closure. And those who are at page three danger level should be given a five litre cask. The cardboard outer box should be removed so the metal foil 'bag' can double up as a security pillow.

Back to the problem at hand. I was drinking Tiara because the Americans tell me the French have got it right. Apparently the reasons the French do not suffer as many heart attacks as the rest of the Western world is because they imbibe copious amounts of red wine. I pondered on this and after my second glass of vaso dilating liquid I realised something else had to be added to this, and that was lunch.

The French have lunch! No rushing out through snarling traffic to a trendy bar for half a glass of beer. The French take time ▷

BLACK BRUT



(Pronounced Fresh-a-net)

*Freixenet. The brut
in the matt black bottle.*

Imported Méthode Champenoise.



ABOVE: LE PAVILLON, UNCOMPLICATED WINE DRINKING WITH STYLE.

BELOW: SIMONSIG WINE ESTATE, HELPING THE CONSUMER WITH THEIR CHOICES.



with their meals, they relax and enjoy the pleasures of life. These days it's almost 'none you' to admit to a lunch.

I have probably made you choke on your wholewheat roll but it's no good furtively taking a nip from the bottle of your daily dose of anti-coronary mixture. It's time to come out of the closet and flaunt it.

So here goes for the Brown Guide to Less Stress in 1993. Take it stage-by-stage. Firstly choose a restaurant with good food, then choose good company, then choose good wine. Low-key stress people can handle the wine list but for those of us still suffering from recession depressions, decisions about wine selection can cause more tension. If the wines of your preference are not available at the restaurant then just take along your own bottle. Ensure you have a doctors note explaining that choosing wine from pedestrian wine lists is hazardous to your health.

The South African grandfather of lifesaving beverages has to be Chateau Libertas. Celebrating its sixtieth anniversary this year it was the wine which sustained wine lovers during the '30's depression. The blend has changed through the years, but the 1989 vintage has all the firmness of the Cabernet Sauvignon grape variety whilst the addition of Merlot packs in more fruit.

At a recent tasting to celebrate Chateau Libertas' Diamond Jubilee we were able to try six different vintages from 1940 through to 1989. The 1967 was jammy and chocolaty with the fruit slightly drying out on the palate. Whilst the 1959 had wonderful colour with fruit still available on the palate.

The 1940 was amazing; a sort of porty, jam-and-toast nose which continued on the palate. There is little doubt this is the stuff to unclog your arteries. As if to confirm this, the man responsible for the wine was William Charles Winshaw, the founder of Stellenbosch Farmers Wineries. He enjoyed a full life well into his '90s – enough said.

An estate coming to the aid of stressed-out folk is Simonsig, this year celebrating its silver anniversary of the first bottling of their wines. Over the years there has been a plethora of different styles and cultivars available from Simonsig Estate; now there is rationalisation. They have divided the range

into Traditional, Heritage and Premium wines characterised by different labelling.

All the old favourites are still around in the traditional range and still depict the mountain on the label. They are: Adelberg, Rosé, Sonstein and Chenin Blanc.

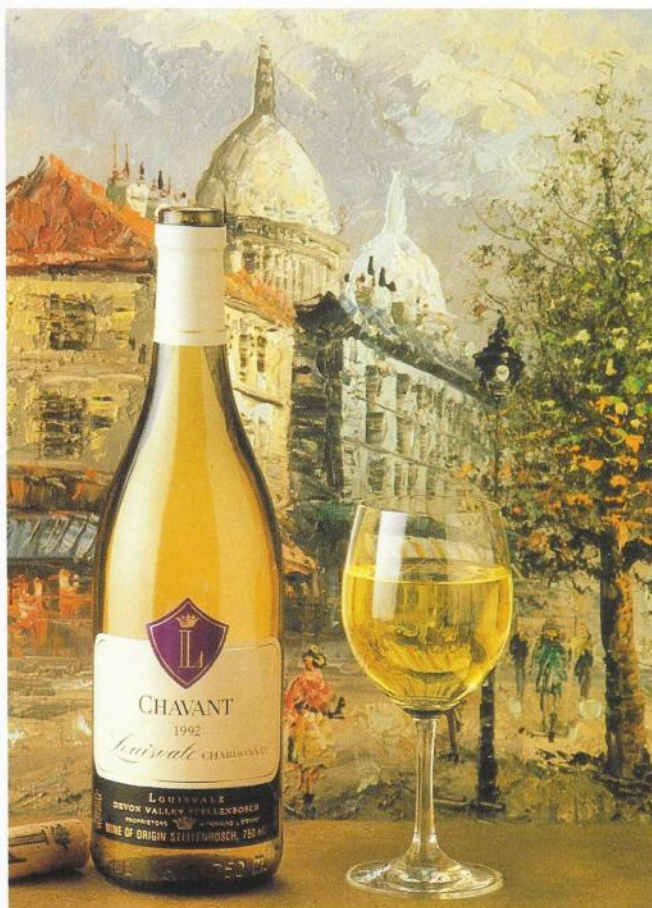
In the premium range first up is a Vin Fumé 1991. Settling in around the 12 % alcohol range it has the austerity of youth with the wood to the fore.

If you are not a lover of oak then the 1992 Sauvignon Blanc may suit you better. With an alcohol content of around 11 % it is more suitable for lunch time imbibing; then there is also the ever-popular Riesling, a dry Weisser Riesling, Blanc de Noir and a Pinotage within this range.

The sweeter toothed, will enjoy the 1992 Mustique; with only 10.3 grams of sugar per litre you should be able to run off the excess calories after lunch. Whilst the Pinotage 1991 will please the cholesterol checkers, don't forget to ensure it is slightly chilled for maximum enjoyment at this time of the year.

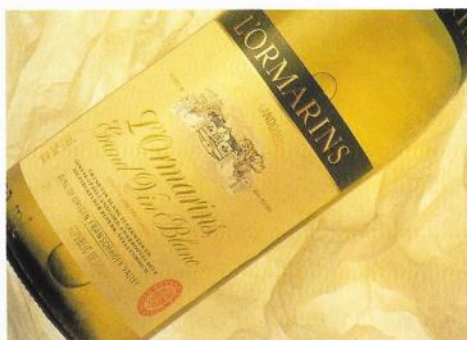
The premier range with its solid colour background label comprises, as the name suggests, the greats. A 1991 Chardonnay, packs a powerful alcohol content of above 13 % and has been matured in French oak for eight months. The 1991 Gewurtztraminer may add some calories sugar-wise but with an alcohol of just over 11 % it should balance out. There are also a 1989 Cabernet Sauvignon and a 1989 Shiraz, both very accessible but the *crème de la crème* – or jewel in the Simonsig Crown – is the new 'Bordeaux' blend. It was this blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon named Tiara and of a 1990 vintage, which inspired me to great thoughts.

Simonsig, over the years, have upgraded their vineyards under the expertise of François Malan, the owner's viticulturist son. François explains it was a three phase operation. Firstly to locate virus-free plant material, then to experiment with different clones of varieties. For example, they have five different Chardonnay clones and six different Cabernet Sauvignon clones on the farm. The final phase of the upgrade is to take into account what French call, *Terroir*, which is the defining of a slope, macro-climate and soil



ABOVE: LOUISVALE CHAVANT IDEAL FOR LUNCH TIME DRINKING.

RIGHT: THOSE LOOKING FOR LIGHT RELIEF SHOULD FIND L'ORMARINS GRAND VIN BLANC TO THEIR TASTE.



Now to help out the severely stressed: Listed below are the Double Gold winners of the Veritas Award. You know they have to be good if you see the gold medallion sticker on the bottle. A total of 103 wine producers and cellars entered 765 wines in this year's competition.

Nederburg won the most medals, sixty three in total whilst Rust en Vrede Estate had nine of its ten entries receiving Double Gold or Gold medals. Winemaker Kevin Arnold should be seriously pleased with that result.

Double Gold Winners

Nederburg Stein 1991
 Nuy Colombar (Semi Sweet) 1992
 Klein Constantia Sauvignon Blanc 1991
 Mulderbosch Blanc Fumé 1991
 Eersterivier Weisser Riesling 1991
 Weltevrede Privé du Bois 1991
 Neethlingshof Gewurtztraminer 1990
 Blaauwklippen Special Late Vintage 1989
 Du Toitskloof Special Late Harvest 1991
 Nederburg Paarl Edelkeur 1990
 Nederburg Paarl Weisser Riesling (Noble Late Harvest) 1990
 Nederburg Paarl Edelkeur 1989
 Neethlingshof Noble Late Harvest 1991
 Buitenverwachting Grand Vin 1989
 Klein Constantia Marlbrook 1988
 Nederburg Paarl Private Bin R103 1985
 Nederburg Paarl Private Bin R103 1984
 Nederburg Baronne 1984
 Nederburg Edelrood 1982
 Rust en Vrede (Blend) 1989
 Rustenburg Gold 1987
 Vergenoegd Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 1989
 Villiera Cru Monro 1990
 Rust en Vrede Shiraz 1987
 Simonsig Shiraz 1989
 Spier Shiraz 1989
 Zonnebloem Shiraz 1982
 Warwick Cabernet Franc 1990
 Bergsig Pinotage 1990
 Goue Vallei Pinotage 1989
 Nederburg Paarl Pinotage 1986
 Zonnebloem Pinotage 1982
 Zonnebloem Merlot 1988
 Groot Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon 1989
 Klein Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon 1987

La Motte Cabernet Sauvignon 1986
 Middlelei Cabernet Sauvignon 1986
 Rust en Vrede Cabernet Sauvignon 1988
 Rust en Vrede Cabernet Sauvignon 1987
 Rustenberg Cabernet Sauvignon 1982
 Simonsig Cabernet Sauvignon 1988
 Zonnebloem Cabernet Sauvignon 1982
 Uitkyk Carlonet 1987

You may find it difficult to get your hands on some of these wines. Nuy for example, must be bought direct from the Cooperative; and the Nederburg Bin wines and the Pinotage are only available at the Nederburg Auction. The next auction will be held on April 3rd, 1993.

Of course that list is for the page three stress sufferers, page one and two 'stress-ees' will hopefully find *John Platter's 1993 Wine Guide* in their Christmas stocking. Take care though as there are 348 new wines listed in the latest edition and 13 new producers. Added to this there are 17 new wine ranges, though nine of these are specifically for export. So on the bright side of things you had best spend the holidays mugging up on the 2 858 wine labels currently available. John Platter named Gyles Webb, the innovative wine maker of Thelema, his 'Wine Man of Year' this year. So anything from the Thelema Estate is a justifiably 'in' wine for 1993.

The other wine book I hope Santa delivers is the new edition of the *Complete Book of South African Wine*. Struik publishers have certainly excelled themselves with this issue.

Authors, Dave Hughes, Phyllis Hands and John Kench have invited contributions from well-versed people in the industry to ensure that the book is even more comprehensive and informative. The rapid changes in the industry has necessitated this update and it's a book no winophile should be without.

So that sums up the reading matter for the festive season and with all the pressures of family and friends at this time of the year I think I'm feeling a vaso constriction coming on. That's it; I'm out to lunch.

All the best of imbibing for the New Year! □

BLACK JACK



(Pronounced Fresh-a-net)

*Freixenet. The brut
in the matt black bottle.*

Imported Methode Champenoise.

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INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. FEB/MARCH 1993



No. 114 R15,50



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WINE

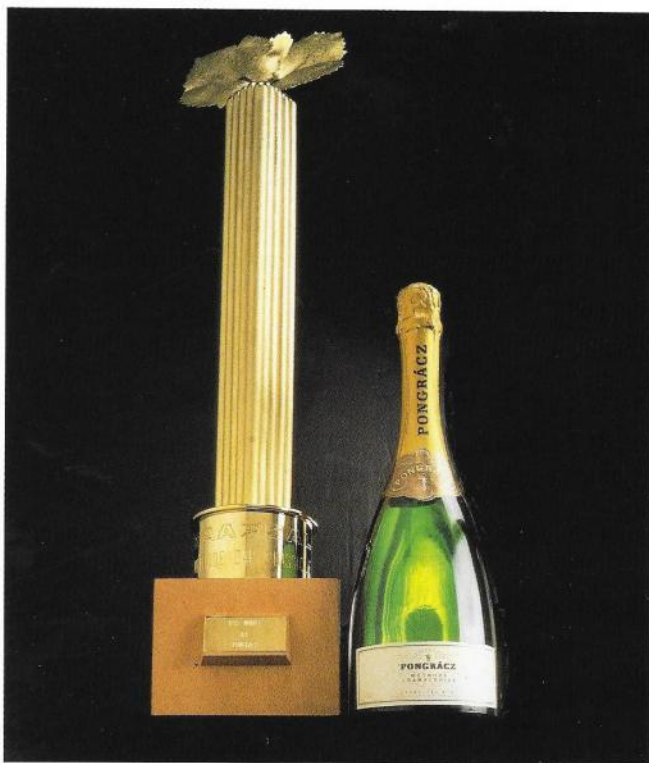


GRAHAM BECK SHOWS THE FORM OF MADERA FARM WITH THE FIRST RELEASE OF THE 1991 CHARDONNAY.

The Few

SUE BROWN REPORTS:

It would appear that many people heaved a sigh of relief as they waved goodbye to 1992. But, for some it was a great year. >



PONGRACZ SHOWS IT'S STYLE BY WINNING THE SAA TROPHY FOR SPARKLING WINES.

RETURNING TO THE SHELVES AFTER A LONG ABSENCE - LANZERAC PINOTAGE, 1989.



Jan Danciel walked off with 1992 Diners Club Winemaker of the year award for his 1991 Merlot from the Buitenverwachting Estate. One suspects he was up against some very stiff opposition, although the convenor of the Competition, Peter Devereux, never lets on who actually enters. Jan Danciel has now left Buitenverwachting and is poised to put the Stellenbosch Estate of Morgenhof well and truly on the wine map.

Merlot is definitely the buzz wine of the early '90s and the Zonnebloem Cellars romped home with prizes for their 1988 vintage. This Double Gold Winner at the S.A. National Wine Show, was awarded 5-star rating in John Platter's latest wine guide and was selected as one of the wines of the month to be served on SAA to first class international passengers.

The hand-crafted care Zonnebloem has aimed to achieve as a result of the upgrading of their cellars is clearly reflected in the new addition to their range of reds. To find out just what I mean, try the 1988 and 1989 Merlots from this cellar side by side.

The 1989 Merlot exhibits dusty wood and that sort of rich Christmas pudding nose, with the wood to fore on the palate. But the more mature 1988 has a wonderful spicy, fruity nose and a soft smooth velvety finish. Both wines were made from grapes harvested in the Devon Valley area of Stellenbosch but the vintage variation is notable, no wholesale uniformity here. The wine clearly illustrates the individuality of the vintage.

The next treat Zonnebloem had up its sleeve to mark 1992 as a good year was the release of the 1988 Zonnebloem Laureat. The first word I thought of was to describe this wine as 'lovely'. Then I checked myself; this is not the sort of word a wine writer uses, yet this is a complex wine with an understated richness on the palate. One of those wines guaranteed to put you in a relaxed mellow mood; enough complexity to make you think and enough softness to relax.

This is Zonnebloem's flagship red wine made from the classic Bordeaux recipe of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. All the grapes are harvested in the Stellenbosch area, each variety being al-



ZONNEBLOEM LAUREAT FLAGSHIP OF THE ZONNEBLOEM RANGE.

lowed to mature individually to gain its personality before blending.

These wines are not one man's work because Zonnebloem have a highly competent team ensuring quality. It is headed up by 'Duimpie' Bayley, a man with strong academic and practical knowledge who – since 1991 – has been the Group Operations Director. The general manager is John Winshaw, the grandson of the father of S.F.W. whilst Wouter Pienaar makes the wine. Also involved is Colin Frith who joins in boots-and-all at blending time whilst egghead Jan Jacobs ensures that quality is kept to the highest level.

But before these people come into the picture, Paul Wallace has been ferreting away in the vineyards exercising his viticultural knowledge to ensure the best fruit.

Each of these men have spent time visiting wine making areas around the world and are well in tune with world trends and consumer needs. These two new additions to the Zonnebloem range reflect their expertise perfectly.

Up next is the re-emergence of Lanzerac Pinotage. Anyone who has ever attended a Cape Wine Academy course will know one of the questions always asked at Preliminary

level is: 'when was the first commercially available Pinotage launched'. Answer: 'Lanzerac Pinotage 1959 in 1961'. Pinotage was something of a stepdaughter of the reds during the '70s and early '80s until S.F.W. started to pull the corks on older vintages and proved just how well these wines matured. Like anyone, or anything, which is highly individual it takes time to be accepted; sadly in this case as it is South Africa's own variety. It was developed by Professor Perold in the '20s from parents, namely the Pinot Noir and Cinsaut (hermitage). Yet, if South Africa was slow in recognising its potential, the rest of the world has cottoned on to it fast.

So after nearly twenty years, save for the odd vintage made exclusively for the Nederburg Auction, Lanzerac Pinotage is back on the shelves in its distinctive bottle. At the moment it is demonstrating the warm berry, candy nose of youth but with the genes of the great Pinot Noir it bodes well for the future.

Also new on the scene and decidedly worth denting your plastic for, is the Graham Beck Chardonnay 1991. Made on his farm Madeba in Robertson, by the highly talented winemaker Pieter Ferreira, it is an elegant wine bound to delight Chardonnay aficionados.

Keep the name Madeba firmly in your mind because to quote the oft said phrase: 'you ain't seen nothing yet'.

So 1992 was not all doom and gloom. Gyles Webb of Thelema Estate is still celebrating his justified position of John Platter's wine Man of the Year. Meanwhile the Bergkelder's great cellar master, Julius Lazlo is enjoying his well earned retirement.

SAA announced its new wine list for 1993 in October. Look out for the 1991 Villiera Blanc Fumé, 1988 Klein Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon, 1988 Boplaas Vintage Port and the non-vintage Pongracz bubbly. These wines were singled out by both local and overseas judges in achieving the highest scores in their category out of 537 wines entered. Each received a SAA gold plated floating trophy.

If you are still fearful that 1993 may emulate the horrible 1992, hop on SAA and sample the wines in-flight, it will make the forthcoming year seem much rosier. □

CABERNET SAUVIGNON EXCELS

Since its maiden vintage,
Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon
has won international gold medals
and authoritative local acclaim.
Recent highlights are:

JUNE 1988

Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon 1982 is chosen out of 240 wines to be on SAA's main wine list.

For the first time such a wine is also selected for its international first-class passengers.

JUNE 1991

The Wine-of-the-Month Club judges Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon 1986 the best wine of the 1986 and older Cabernets.

The innovative 1986 Fleur du Cap Oak Collection is tasted by the International Wine and Food Society, London.

APRIL 1992

Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon 1986 is awarded 5 stars out of a possible five by the Wynboer panel of wine experts.

JUNE 1992

Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon 1987 is judged best-value-for-money at a tasting of the Wine-of-the-Month Club.

OCTOBER 1992

Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon 1989 is chosen by an international tasting panel to be served on SAA's internal flights during 1993.

Fleur du Cap wines are
available internationally.



FLEUR DU CAP



PRIDE

OF THE CAPE NOBLE WINES

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INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. APRIL/MAY 1993



No. 115 R15,95



DRINKS



BARLEY, THE SOURCE OF WHISKY.

To 'E' or not to 'E'

*When you consider that, lost in the mists of time,
the Scots were Irish and the Picts were Scots,
it is perhaps little wonder that there is a
controversy on how to spell 'the water of life'.*

Sue Brown reports: >



HIGHLAND PARK, A TASTE OF THE ISLANDS.

I am talking about whisky and whiskey, it's really quite clear the Canadians spell it 'whisky' but it's not like Scots whisky. The Americans spell it 'whiskey', as do the Irish who claim to have invented the whole idea. The Oxford English dictionary is not taking sides on the issue, unless of course you are talking about a light gig or chaise, then it's definitely without the 'e.'

The Welsh, on the celtic fringe, also

made a whisky referred to as Chwiski, obvious really, but perhaps its brand name of Swyndon was the real reason for it not becoming a world seller. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then the Scots have the edge as the Suntory makers of Japanese grain spirit choose to call their product whisky.

The vast majority of grain spirit, named every which way, is blended in one form or



JAMESON'S WHISKEY, SOUTH AFRICA'S PREFERRED CHOICE?

another and the abundance of labels is mind-boggling. The idea of setting up a tasting, trying to decipher which is best, is for stronger folk than me.

We can blame all this squarely on one man, Irishman Aeneas Coffey who invented the continuous still whereby a standardised, continuous, less-aggressive quality blend could be achieved. The Scots are quick to point out however, that the forerunner of the 'Coffey' still was actually invented by one of their own.

In a recent tasting of blended whiskeys/whiskies organised by the Irish Whiskey distillers, Jameson, there appeared to be a preference for Irish whiskey. A series of tastings under the auspices of the International Wine and Food Society were held around the country. The line up was Jim Beam, the number one selling Bourbon, Bells and Canada's Firstwatch, the two top selling whiskeys of their type in S.A. and of course Jamesons.

The result country-wide showed a 35% preference to Irish, 25% to Scots, with Canadian whisky and Bourbon lagging behind at 21% and 19% respectively.

The Irish lay claim to inventing whiskey,

stating that monks were the first to discover the art of grain distillation, taking their recipe across the sea to Scotland. That may well be but according to archaeological finds on the island of Rhum in the Inner Hebrides, the Scots knew how to distil before the Irish claim of educating their distant brethren.

The Irish are without doubt responsible for taking the recipe to America as bourbon from Kentucky can be traced back to Irish-immigrant expertise.

It is interesting to note that now whiskey from the new world is following the Scots predilection for individualism in reproducing what are referred to as single-barrel bourbons. Two Kentucky offerings to try on your next visit are Blantons and Rockhill Farm but be warned they will make a big dent in your credit card.

I have heard numerous reasons why the Irish lost their niche in world markets but probably the bottom line is that they did not market correctly. The Scots finally succumbed to cursed English laws for legalising distillation after the English had made some serious tactical errors as far as taxes were concerned, and from there on it was an ascending graph all the way. Prior to this, honest Scotsmen were driven up into the highlands to gain their wee dram from an illicit still. (If you believe that statement you will believe anything).

Across the sea in Ireland, it is a matter of conjecture as to whether the little people warned that Irish whiskey was a secret weapon, or whether folk had imbibed too liberally of their product to get out and market it world-wide.

Whilst the industry declined, the locals continued to favour illicit stills and poteen was plentiful, provided you knew where the still had moved to. It was the Irish immigrants who, missing their poteen, ended up making Moonshine in the States. This sometime dubious concoction was popular during the prohibition era and did little to help the image of genuine Irish whiskey.

By the time prohibition had ended, Irish whiskey sales had declined. The four hundred different brands previously available in the States were no longer, as Ireland had been embroiled in civil war and subsequent trading problems. Scotch was the real

McCoy thanks to Captain Bill McCoy whose illegal grog ship off the American coast had the reputation for only supplying the genuine hooch.

The Irish woke up and followed the American marketing thoughts left over from prohibition by thinking of mixers. They had to disguise the taste of some of the base spirits in those days; anyone with a knowledge of American literature knows what a mint julep is. The Irish answer was of course Irish coffee. According to one Scotsman I know, he thought they promoted it this way to disguise the taste of the whiskey. Another leftover from prohibition was the swing to lighter drinks, the Americans having survived a decade of watered-down drinks to boost the profits of the bootleggers.

Lighter style whiskey, with less-pungent overtones, caught the fancy of the Americans and over the years products like J & B with its light, slightly sweet taste, became the vogue. It should have been a perfect time for the less pungent Irish whiskeys to make a comeback but there were practically no distilleries left in Ireland.

Now that we have a generation plus well-trained in whisky imbibing, it must be time to return to the stuff of our forefathers; in this case I mean single malt whiskies.

Before waving goodbye to the Irish it is pertinent to mention the one single malt they do make, Bushmills Malt, made at the oldest-licensed whiskey distillery in the world.

The all-important copper still shape is just like the Scots equivalent and there is nothing wrong with the water from the Emerald Isle. The real difference is the Scots use of peat, utilized for kiln-drying the malt, which imparts the special flavour.

Recently, all eyes have been centred on Speyside arguably the most appealing tourist area of Scotland and of course the area responsible for the magical waters of the river Spey.

It is here that the famous The Glenlivet, The Dufftown Glenlivet, The Glenburgie – Glenlivet and Tomintoul Glenlivet exist; all named after a tributary of the Spey, the Livet.

Many other 'Glens' are found such as Glenfiddich, Glen Rothes and Glen Spey, plus a few really unpronounceable ones which are for the very keen; try practising



BUNNAHABHAIN, THE SMOOTH AFTER DINNER MALT FROM ISLAY.

Strathisla and Tamnavulin as you read.

There are however, other Highland producers around Inverness, Fort William down to Oban and across the Perth right up to Aberdeen. More than thirty different styles of malts come from these areas, take for example Edradour from the gateway of the Highlands and Pitlochry. This is Scotland's smallest distillery and therefore worth a visit to see the closest thing to illicit Highland distilling still in existence. An interesting malt this, in that it has a fruity sweet nose.

The only lowland malt you might get your hands on in this country is Auchentoshan; it's a must to visit if you are *en route* to the bonny banks of Loch Lomond. This is one of the two lowland malts which utilize the triple-distillation technique, the other one being Rosebank situated near the town of Falkirk.

I dare not say much about the town of Falkirk as it was where my husband was born, which is the reason I know it so well. The only memory jog you may have of it, is the name on the old potjie pots which these days seem to hold sand for spent butts in apartment blocks – this is predominantly foundry country. >

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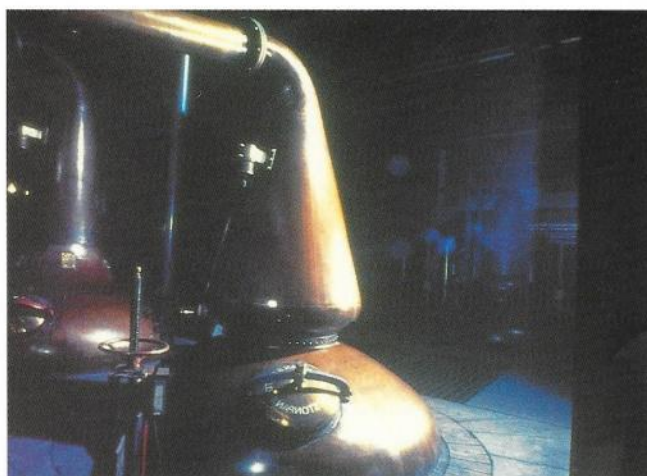


FLEUR DU CAP



FDM 834E

PRIDE OF THE CAPE NOBLE WINES



THE ALL IMPORTANT COPPER STILL KILN DRYING THE MALT WITH PEAT FIRES.

Those who enjoy humming Mull of Kintyre will find a kindred spirit with the Cambeltown malts, Springbank being without doubt the finest.

To move to the equally romantic island of Islay, I find the malts here are some of the most exciting. As I come from a medical background it probably has something to do with the emanation of strong wafts of iodine that makes me feel so at home with them. They are also quite frankly the easiest to recognise on a blind tasting.

Islay should be among the best as it's a very fertile island in the Hebrides, grows lots of barley, has a plentiful fresh water supply and masses of peat.

The proximity of the sea has an influence on the peat which, when used to fuel the kilns, imparts a special flavour. Bowmore is probably the best known Islay malt, though a lighter style than that of La Phroaig, which probably suffers from the fact that half its potential customers cannot pronounce it. La Phroaig is a big malt with just a hint of sweetness not found in the Bowmore.

Bunnahabhain is probably the odd man out style-wise. Of the Islay malts it has an almost flowery aroma and less aggression. The Caol Ila along with Port Ellen are the only two from Islay that are pre-dinner drinks, the others are definitely relegated to post-prandial pastimes.

Right up north, the Isle of Jura has a malt of the same name; you can get to the distillery via boat from Port Askaig on Islay. Yet Scotland's most northerly distillery is Highland Park on the Orkneys; this is one of the most popular malts with its smokey nose and well-integrated flavours finishing very dry. It's a good malt to begin malt-training with as it's very elegant and smooth.

So as you sip your way round Scotland let me leave you with one thought. Did the Irish include peat as an important dimension to the process when they took the recipe across the sea? Did they later forget the appealing pungent flavours the peat imparts, or is it a solely Scots creation? We shall never know.□



LA MOTTE, MAKERS OF OPTIMA, 'BORDEAUX STYLE' BLEND.

Tasting Tiffs

BY SUE BROWN

Enough of politics round the dinner table, argue the merits of wine instead.

Three of the tastings I attended recently were aimed at different markets. There were those who wanted mature wines, those prepared to put their money down on futures and a group who wished to find which was their favourite readily available Chardonnay. It brought forth quite lively discussion.

First was the Nederburg pre-auction tasting, just a sample of the wines available on offer this April. Needless to say this 'licensees-only' auction will have all the razzmatazz of previous years. No doubt there will be increasing curiosity from overseas buyers as South African wines become a source of interest to our global brothers. It is now nearly two decades that the Auction has

existed and, despite its detractors over the years, it remains the key social event on the wine calendar.

In keeping with the recession, the number of wines on offer is more constrained; only 89 different wines, totalling 9 324 cases, are on offer as opposed to last year's 10 489 cases of 121 wines. Newcomers on the scene, worth a second glance, are Rhebokskloof's first vintage of Chardonnay and Danie deWet's Chardonnay, also a 1991.

Although Boschendal has been represented on the Auction before, this will be the first time their Chardonnay Auction Reserve 1991 has been on offer at a reserve price of R99 per case (N.B. 6 x 750 ml). This wine has a powerful nose full of lemon

and oak nuances and the promised richness follows through on the palate although the aftertaste has not reached full maturity at this stage. Nederburg's 1989 Chardonnay is more elegant and reticent with no hint of ageing; it possesses subtle citrus and oak characteristics with a firm acidity.

Of the Nederburg Private Bin wines made especially for the auction – as is the Chardonnay, by the way – the D218, a blend of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Sauvignon Blanc, has a most unusual coconut nose and a powerful weight on the palate. This wine was the forerunner of the commercial blend of Prelude which is the same blend in reverse, ie: 40% Chardonnay and 60% Sauvignon Blanc. Try them together and >



ABOVE: AUCTION TIME AGAIN.



LEFT: HANS FROELING AND LEON STEMMET OF LOUISVALE.

CENTRE: NEIL ELLIS, MAKER OF STUNNING CHARDONNAY.



spot the obvious difference. Whites only make up a small percentage of the wines on offer this year, but before we look at the reds I was pleased to see my favourite sweet wine in the line-up.

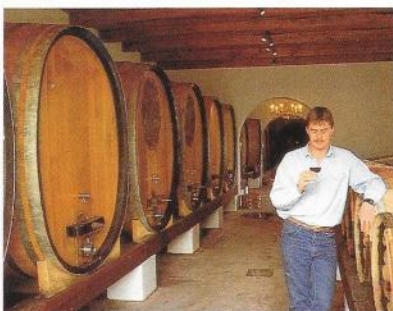
Nederburg Sauvignon Blanc in the new category, natural sweet, is offered for purchase. It has this wonderful Rose's lime marmalade nose with floral undertones, full and sweet on the palate. It finishes delicate and clean; definite seduction wine, this.

Heated debate as to the merits of greater botrytis characteristics occurred and for those of you following that *could* then the Edelkeur 1989 is up to expectations.

This may be your last chance to buy a Nederburg Chardonnay Noble Late Harvest 1987, and for Eminence lovers, the 1989 and 1990 vintages are available.

If the sweet wines caused their usual conundrum then the Nederburg R161, 1985 provoked much discussion. Light in colour, made from a 100% Cabernet, I found it too weightless and paling into insignificance. But 'not so' said others who enjoyed the easier drinkability of the wine.

An old favourite on order is Private Bin



BOTTOM: L'OMARINS MATURATION CELLARS.

R103, from the very good vintage year of 1984. These wines, of course, are still Gunther Brozel's reds, made before his move to Neethlingshof Estate. One of Gunther's wines showing its age is the Nederburg Cabernet Sauvignon 1980; lots of bottle-maturity evident here but the fruit is still there. This is no longer a question of 'pay and lay' - drink it now.

The wine that caused the biggest debate was the Klein Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon 1986. Bluntly, if you are into dusty, minty wines full of extract and made in the French style, this is your wine but you will have to decant it. As the wine has matured it has thrown quite a sediment so it is a question of getting rid of the chewy bits. However, I like a bit of sediment, it is nearly always found in hand-crafted wines which allow nature to take its course. Each to his own, no doubt!

Kanonkop Pinotage 1986 has to be a good investment and Pinotage is the buzz-word on the overseas markets. The American wine publication, *The Wine Spectator*, has reported on a tasting of 21 Pinotages from the Cape and the highest score on this tasting was achieved by Fleur du Cap Pinotage. This is a wine you will not be seeing on the Nederburg Auction, as sadly owner company, the Bergkelder, do not submit their wines for this event. But phone Yvonne Haas on (011) 827-3401 to find out where you may obtain this year's Auction wines.

More of South Africa's best were demonstrated in the Bergkelder pre-release wines. Converse to the Nederburg Auction offerings, which were all matured wines, these wines are fresh from the barrel. More fun is added to this year's selection by the inclusion of the J.C. le Roux Pinot Noir 1989, made in the Cap-Classique style. The wine is being sold 'on the lees', the gubbins from the second fermentation in the bottle which adds extra flavour and dimension to wine.

Customers can request at what stage the wines should be removed from the lees any time from 1994 up until 1999, when it will be disgorged ready to welcome in the turn of the century. (I like a company with long-term strategy.)

The group I tasted with, produced some very diverse scoring so we knocked out the wines which showed too much diversity and

centred on those where there was overall agreement. Heading the list was the Meerlust Merlot 1991. Very young, it had none of the Christmas cake nose developing as of yet. It was green, stalky and tight, a well made wine which is expected to be released in January 1996. With a sound pH of 3.4 and an alcohol of 13.3% by volume, I think it will be well worth waiting for.

Next up was the Stellenryck Cabernet, also to be released in January 1996. Lower in alcohol, this wine mirrors the expertise of then cellar-master, Julius Lazlo. A wonderful marriage of fruit and wood with lots of extract. And Alto's Cabernet 1991 is a wine for the 21st century; with a release date of 1998, it already shows its pedigree but time is needed to fill out the palate.

While sitting with an array of Bergkelder's finest estates it was a surprise to find yet another of their own wines with no estate status: Fleur du Cap, although it received a unanimous seal of approval. Its performance is proof that if you have the right cellar-master, who can select his grapes well, you are on a recipe to success.

The 1989 Cabernet from this label exhibited the old-fashioned style of cabernet. This is something overseas critics feel is a style we should not be in too much of a hurry to disregard.

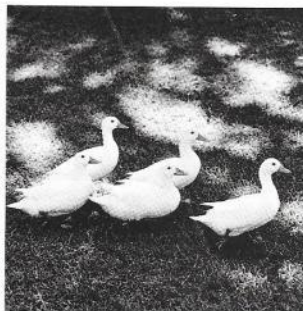
One of the wines which did show great diversity of scoring was the L'Omarins Optima 1989. Personally, I loved the perfumed, oaky wood and berry fruit, but perhaps some might have felt it too obvious after such an austere line-up of wines. It is, after all, older than some of the wines on offer and is due for release in December 1993.

Should you wish to know more about these wines and the Bergkelder Vinoteque pre-release wines, contact Jacques Vandervalle at The Bergkelder, (022231) 72440.

The above tastings were, of course, work. Yes, that's what I do for a living. But the last tasting I went to was for fun, organised by a group of Durban wine lovers to find out which Chardonnays they should buy to lay down for the coming year.

A quick slurp of 17 wines, this. And in this case, it was very obvious, since their hands were in their pockets, a subjective as well as objective tasting exercise. You could >

AT BREAK OF EACH DAY,
A DEDICATED TEAM SETS OUT
TO INSPECT OUR VINEYARDS.



ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF
OUR HANDS-ON APPROACH
TO GROWING WINE?

Boschendal's vineyards are carefully tended to produce quality rather than quantity. (One of the reasons our wines are often in short supply.)

Our own practices aside, there are other creatures who, drawn to our healthy vines, could limit an already precious crop. Fortunately, they are no match for our ever vigilant brood of ducks.

It's one of the ways we work hand in hand with Nature to grow wines of finesse and delicacy and elegance.

And, why our wines are so often, the natural selection.



BOSCHENDAL

WHERE THE FRENCH HUGUENOTS FIRST GREW WINE.

CREAM 6262/E

*"We're
carrying on the
tradition..."*



"The making of excellent wines has become a way of life at Simonsig. My brothers and I endeavour to continue and to build on this tradition..."

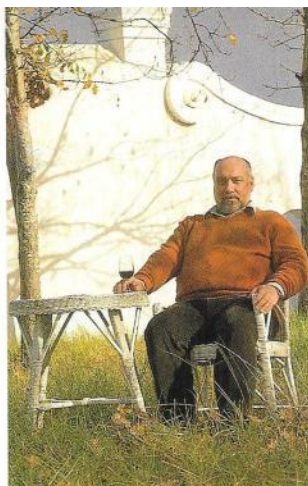
Johan Malan
Johan Malan
Winemaker



SIMONSIG
*Where superior wine
is a family tradition*

Best South African Red Wine and
White Wine at International Wine
and Spirit Competition, London, 1990.

PRONAM (CAPE) SIM031/E/R



GEORGIO DALLA CIA, THE MAKER OF MEERLUST.



JULIUS LAZLO, MAGICAL CELLARMASTER OF THE BERCKELDER WHO RETIRED LAST YEAR.

really summarise the wines by putting them into categories, ie: 'Elle McPherson' wines – those which everyone thought were stunning – 'Madonna' wines – you either loved or hated – or 'Julie Andrews' wines – nice but unexciting.

The Elle McPherson wines included Neil Ellis 1991, surprise-surprise, the Pick and Pay own label Chardonnay 1990 – actually less of a surprise, when you find it's made by Backsberg – and a bargain on R15.99 a bottle.

Thelema Chardonnay 1991 (not John Platter's Man of the Year for nothing) and Bouchard Finlayson 1991 Chardonnay were also in this section. I must point out at this time that the wines were tasted and scored blind, the label only being exposed when the assessments had been made. It's nice to know our group were in agreement with the International Wine Spirit judges in London on the wine from Bouchard Finlayson. The judges gave this wine a gold medal, a good start for a first vintage from this South African/French venture. The 1993 vintage is worth taking note of as it will be the first wine from their own plantings. It was one of the most expensive wines of the tasting, costing the organiser R30.99 a bottle.

The Julie Andrews wines included Louisvale Chardonnay, a surprising position I felt, except to say it was the first wine of the tasting which sometimes has its drawbacks when evaluating.

Boschendal Chardonnay crept into this category, as did Fleur du Cap which, at a retail price locally of R13.05, made it one of

the bargains in this group. Interestingly, the Chavant from Louisvale, at a price of R10.99 ex-farm, performed well in this heavier style of Chardonnay category.

The Madonna wines were the really controversial wines, those whose average scores do not reflect that some thought they were great whilst others almost bombed them. The Groot Constantia Chardonnay 1990 fitted into this category, a little disappointing at R35 a bottle, whilst Delaire, the most expensive wine of the tasting at R40 a bottle, failed to entice the majority.

Rustenburg, with its unique style scored low down, it is simply a style you like or don't like, so rather find out for yourself. Eikendal was probably the most controversial wine, many of the group thought it great. I liked it as a wine but had a few problems coming to terms with it as a Chardonnay.

The Simonsig 1990 was not showing its best either and the Zonnebloem may have lost marks because it was the youngest on the line-up, being a 1992.

So that's how a group in Durban assessed Chardonnays. The wines came off the shelves or from individual's cellars and were collected before the annual price hike.

Chardonnay is going to be back in the limelight this year as it is the Diner's Club Wine Maker of the Year Award category. The judges are in for a tough time because one thing became obvious from the tasting, there is no quintessential style of South African Chardonnay. So place your illegal bets as to which style will shine forth in years to come. □

habitat

INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. JUNE/JULY 1993



No. 116 R15,95



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The Last Outpost of the Roman Empire

BY SUE BROWN

This area is very different from the rest of Italy; no one pinched my backside, and I did not acquire arthritic fingers holding onto my bag fearing a 'snatch'. Mind you, I did have to run the gauntlet of tourist Venice before setting out into the winelands.

As this is not meant to be a travelogue I shall gloss over the fact that March is not the best travelling month in Italy owing to the in-

Recently, wine writers from all over the world met for a congress in Friuli, Italy. Sue Brown who went along reports :

clement weather; even the pigeons in St Mark's square are slow starters. On the bright side though, you can actually see the square without looking through/over millions of other visitors.

I do have to mention the superb Hotel Brauer where we stayed, just around the corner from St Mark's square and overlooking the water. The owners of the hotel also own a wine farm, the Tenuta Villanova situated at ▷

WINE

Farra d'Isonzo in Friuli. Wines have been made here since 1499; rather at odds this with the idea that it is a new wine region. From Venice we travelled to Udine, the centre of Friuli, an area in north eastern Italy bordered by Austria and Yugoslavia. Friuli is sort of flat in the centre and frilled up in the north by the Alps.

It has D.O.C. (demoninazione di origine controllata) wine areas but no D.G.C.B. areas, the 'G', to all intents and purposes, stands for good wines with special attributes. This area does produce some very good wines but, as with world wine trends, they are presently following the fashion wine scene rather than promoting their heritage wines.

We tasted lots of well-made 'buzz' Chardonnays but nothing to really make you sit up and take note. What was most interesting were the wines made from local grapes, for example the Pinot Grigio complimented

the cuisine of the area perfectly. However, the locals treat this grape with a certain amount of contempt; the old 'familiarity breeds' attitude no doubt.

What the locals do rave about is their long-term winner - the luscious Picolit - Italy's fabled dessert wine. They have every reason to be justifiably proud of the small quantities produced from this variety. The largest quantity of wine from a white variety is made from the Tocai grape which can produce classy wines but suffers by being confused with the Hungarian Tokays on the labelling front internationally.

Although the area is famous for its white wine production it actually grows more red varieties. It was at the farm of the Dorigo family that I tasted my best reds.

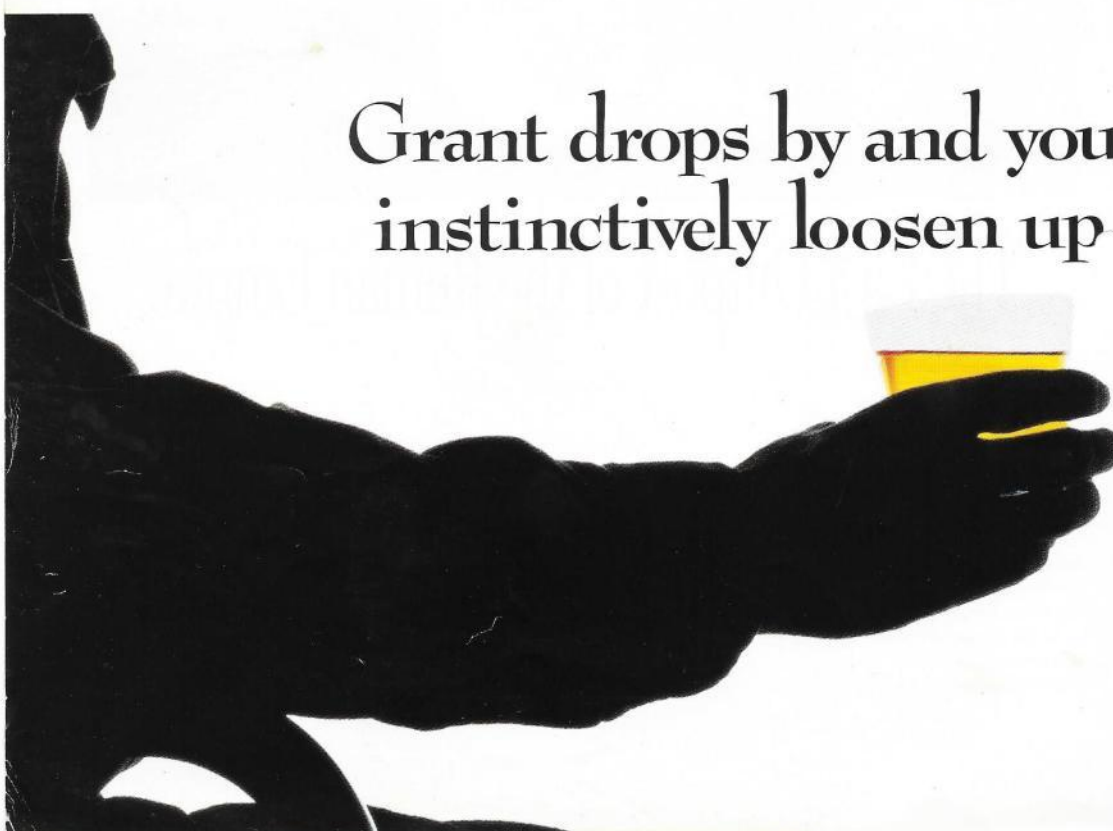
Rosetta and Girolamo Dorigo are people whose warmth and personality transcends the language barrier. I sat down to yet another

meal of local fare with some misgivings, one can only handle so much polenta or risotto in a week. We were on day three and about to embark on our sixth eight-course meal and I was distinctly feeling like a goose being fattened up for *foie gras*.

However, this memorable meal was superbly cooked by Leda di Rovere of Romea Restaurant fame and the wines complimented the food splendidly.

The Dorigo's were accountants by profession but in 1966 they abandoned their careers and settled in the Colli Orientali area of Friuli. It is interesting to note that this area, as late as the 1950's, was still feeling the effects of Phylloxera scourge and the decimation of land following the war.

During the '60s and '70s German wine making expertise was borrowed and the wineries took on a 20th century look. And what happened of course, during all this in-



Grant drops by and you
instinctively loosen up

WINE

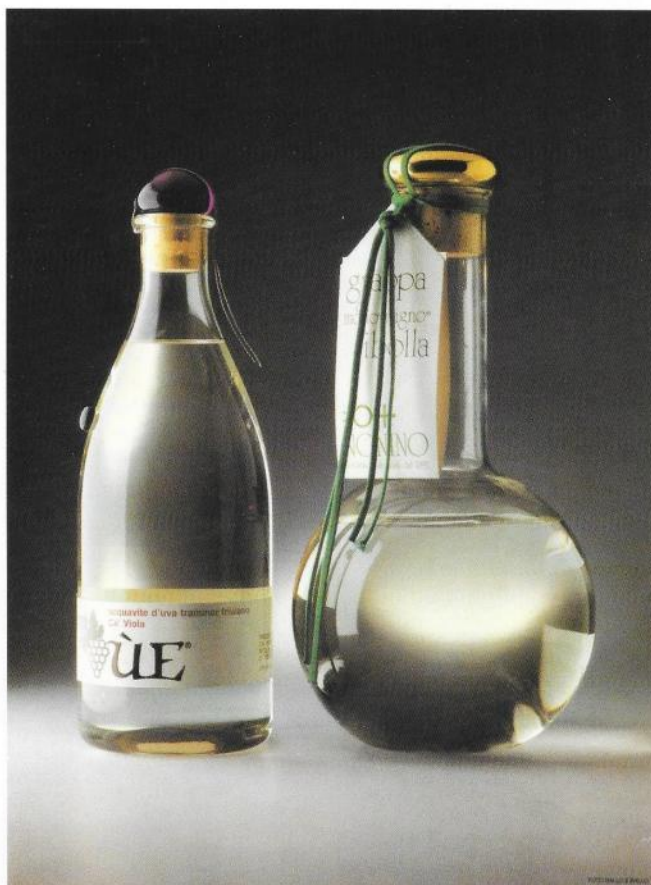


TOP: WINE WRITERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD ON A NON-STOP GOURMET EXPERIENCE.

ABOVE: GIROLAMO DORICO EXPOUNDS THE VIRTUES OF HIS WINES.

Equally, after a hard days eating, a digestive was necessary. After considerable late-night research by representatives from South Africa, Australia, Austria, Hong Kong - plus the help of a New Yorker - we found Nonino. Nonino is the ultimate Grappa.

Let me take you back to 1886 when Luigi Orazio Nonino introduced his first still on wheels to Merlana, a small Friulan village. He moved around the area distilling the farmer's grape skins and for his troubles he received part of the Grappa spirit which he in turn sold.



As he distilled, vineyard by vineyard, he began to get a feel for different varietals and their relationship to the final quality and taste of the Grappa. Ten years later he established his own permanent distillery and the business remained in the family. In 1962, Benito Nonino married Giannola Bulfoni and : 'Together they commenced a passionate research, striving to turn Grappa from a Cinderella into a noble Aqua Vitae' (sic).

In keeping with the pursuit of excellence, Benito followed the example of distillers in

Cognac and installed single-batch stills and, by 1973, the couple created their first varietal Grappa using the rare variety of Picolit. And so the story progresses with the introduction of other fruit distillation along with the grape varietal Grappas. The packaging of these products is simply outstanding, as indeed are their contents.

So if you are planning a trip to Italy this year don't miss out on this area with its unique cuisine, and pursuit of excellence in all things epicurean. □



WINE

novation, was that the native grapes were forgotten and were in danger of extinction.

In 1979 the Dorigo's were awarded the *Nonino Risit D'Aur* (Gold Cutting) prize for the promotion of traditional Friulan vines, ie. : saving the Pignola grape from extinction.

It is thought only twenty Pignola vines were left in existence, growing in an Abbey vineyard. Giralomo and Rosetta grafted these vines and now have 1 122 vines producing 800 bottles a year. This sort of dedication is reflected in the rest of their wines. Refosco is another wine made on the farm, a variety not seen in South Africa although it is found in other parts of Europe disguised by a variety of different names. It produces a deeply coloured wine though not as strong in tannin as the colour may suggest. They also grow the white variety Ribolla Gialla, a grape es-

timated to have grown in Friuli since the 12th century.

And yet, the Dorigo family do not deal solely with tastes from the past. There was some interesting Pinot Noir - called Pinot Nero in Italy - they also produced the best Chardonnay I tasted and some seriously good bubbly. Girolamo Dorigo is particularly proud of the Montsclapade, a wine blended from the Merlot and Cabernet Franc grapes - and justifiably so.

Having been wined and dined so well, coffee became mandatory and the congress organisers had included Ricardo Illy of Illy Coffee, in the group. Well, this is espresso coffee and it is the ultimate. One visit to the company in Trieste and you know why; the amount of research that goes into a cuppa is amazing. Fortunately, they have now appointed an agent in Johannesburg for distribution of this life-sustaining liquid. ▷

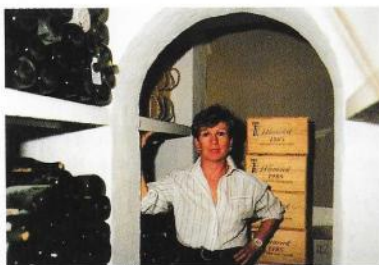


WINE

Independents Show Their Best

BY SUE BROWN

The Cape Independent Winemakers Guild will be auctioning their premium wines on the 4th September in Cape Town



ABOVE: BOSCHENDAL CONTINUING THEIR GOOD TRACK RECORD.

RIGHT: NORMA RATCLIFF FROM WARWICK ESTATE.

We do seem to have an abnormal amount of auctions in this country, taking into account the size of the wine-drinking population. However, no serious wine collector can miss out on this one. To quote this year's Chairman of the Guild, Norma Ratcliff, 'The final benchmark for acceptability (on the auction) is high and considerably rigid. It extends beyond technical merit to individuality'.

WINE

There are only 31 different wines on offer (of the 67 submitted), which shows how rigorously the wines were selected. Of these, 18 are white wines, 47 red wines and 2 are ports. And the majority of the wines originate from the Stellenbosch area, although Paarl and Constantia show off their best. It is the winemakers who are members of the Guild, not the wine farms themselves. So it is expertise of the man rather than the land that counts, which some people might have a problem with.

Sauvignon Blanc lovers might find the Zevenwacht Blanc Fumé to their liking, aged for six months in oak, it has a clean if short finish.

The Bouchard Finlayson Oak Valley Chardonnay 1992 shows all the promise we expected from Peter Finlayson when he started his new venture. A lovely oak citrus fruit marriage on the nose and, although the oak dominates the palate at present, patience will be rewarded.

The Kanonkop Pinotage 1992 once again demonstrated that old vines and outstanding wine-making produces a unique product. Slightly different from previous offerings via a pronounced varietal aroma, it is also lighter on the palate than previous vintages. Still, lovers of this style of wine won't be disappointed.

Boschendal Merlot 1992 was a real winner; a lovely Christmas pudding nose and good wood integration boding well for long-term maturation. For the traditionalists, Overgaauw D.C. Classic 1990 has a wonderfully rich, warm, nose developing a complexity of tastes on the palate.

But I was a little disappointed in the Rust en Vrede 1990, and the Groot Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon 1991 which was extremely 'closed' at present.

The two wines that did make one sit up were Thelema's Cabernet Sauvignon 1990 and the Klein Constantia Auction Reserve 1990. The Thelema is a powerful wine packed with new clone aromas definitely spearheading South Africa's entry into the new world wine arena. The Klein Constantia meanwhile, is a blend of 50% Cabernet



Sauvignon and 50% Merlot; a big wine this with subtle undertones. Both wines will see you well into the 21st century.

The Neil Ellis Cabernet Sauvignon 1991 was another favourite, less obvious than the previous two mentioned but full of different flavours to delight the senses.

All in all this is a great line-up of wines from some of South Africa's best winemakers and they mirror just how good South African wines can be. □

TOP: RUST EN VREDE'S KEVIN ARNOLD SHOWS HIS BEST.

ABOVE: C.I.W.G. SPECIAL LABEL BOTTLES FOR THE AUCTION.

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INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. SEPT/OCT 1993



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Chardonnay - Recent Obsession

BY SUE BROWN

South Africa's winemakers are coming of age in demonstrating the amazing versatility of this great grape variety.

The Chardonnay grape variety has always been the source of many of the world's greatest white wines. South Africa was a slow starter in the world's increasing love affair with this variety due to the lack of availability of good plant material. From such a slow beginning tremendous strides have been taken viticulturally and oenologically over the past decade; the result has been that our Chardonnays are now among the world's best.

Some years ago, whilst I was hosting a tasting for consumers, one participant had the guts to announce that although she knew it was 'non-u' to admit it, she actually had not found a Chardonnay she liked. Those were the days when many South African Chardonnays were emulating the big, fat style of their New World colleagues. The winemakers could hardly be faulted, however, in following this road for who could deny them the chance to produce full-flavoured, textured white wines after decades of making wines from grape varieties with lesser individual characteristics.

After this initial enthusiasm was tempered by experimentation, the realisation of the full potential of the grape's versatility became apparent. As new vineyards matured, and different clones of Chardonnay were grown, the wines became more complex and subtle.

The winemakers', fervent in their quest for new taste experiences, experimented with different uses of wood and styles of wood to further enhance this variety's potential. They continued to research different ways of harvesting techniques, fermentation procedures, and length of maturation. Today, truly unique styles are emerging mirroring

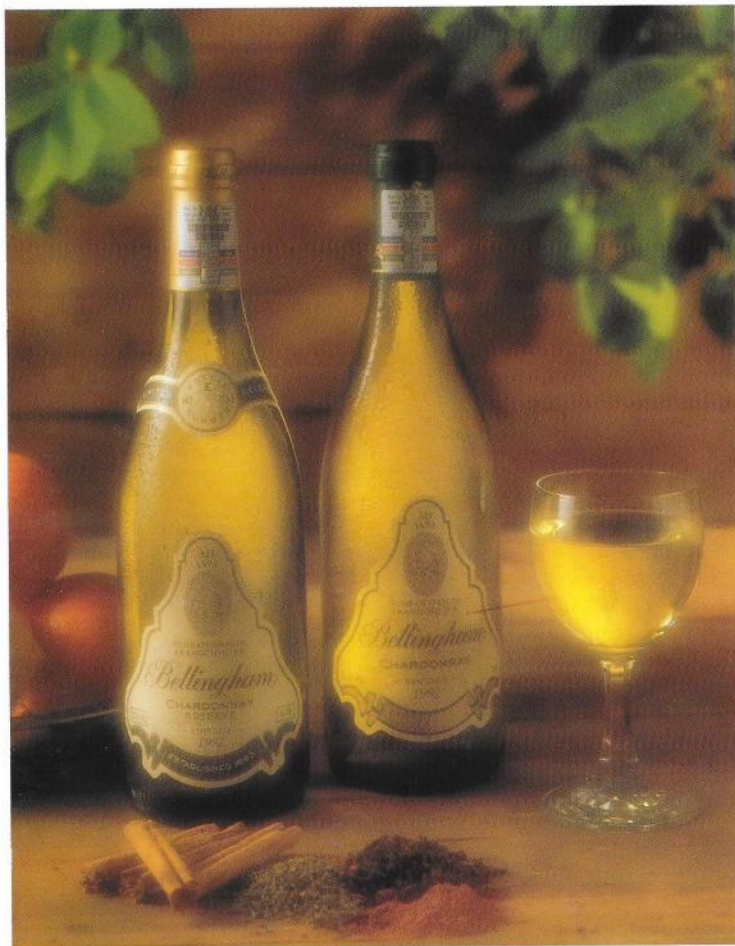


GLASSWARE FROM SPILHAUS PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIFFORD

the individual environment of the grapes and the personality of the winemaker.

We can find a myriad of different styles of Chardonnay from light, elegant and accessible through to a generous, ample, rich style of wine.

There is a Chardonnay out there which will always appeal to the discerning palate. The following pages review some of South Africa's leading wines made from the Chardonnay grape, outlining their pedigree and their quality results. ▷



Bellingham Chardonnay 1992 and Chardonnay Reserve 1992

The Bellingham farm is home to the Bellingham Premier French Collection. There is no estate more French than Bellingham and its location in the Franschoek Valley emphasises its long French associations. The launch of the first Bellingham Premier French Collection in

1991 endorsed Bellingham's dedication to French-style wines and celebrates its tradition of originality and innovation in South Africa.

Each wine in the 1992 Bellingham collection is an improvement on the 1991 vintage and has set its own high standard of quality, thereby firmly establishing Bellingham as a serious wine-house.

The 1992 Bellingham Chardonnay's rich citrus flavours enhance the fruitiness of this fine Chardonnay and imbue the wine with elegant appeal. Ageing in small casks adds a subtle oak overlay to the taste and nuances of wood to the soft, floral bouquet. It looks jewel-like in the glass and has a medium-straw colour.

This Chardonnay has a rich toasty smell from charred oak barrels although enticing woodspice fragrances dominate. Its taste is faintly citric with an appetising finish crisply laced with bracing grape acidity. Overall this is a clean, heartwarming wine with a bigish structure.

The 1992 Bellingham Chardonnay Reserve is a stylish New World Chardonnay fermented and matured for 140 days in new small wood. Pressing with whole clusters and using two clones has produced a complex, balanced Chardonnay of classic proportions. This limited release Chardonnay is an oily wine with fat, transparent, viscous 'legs' creeping reluctantly down the insides of the glass. Its nose is spicy and citric with hints of dried orange and lemon peel typical of some Chardonnays. This bigish rich wine has a supple texture and firm underlying fruit with a very long aftertaste, and creamy oak tones from the casks.

For further information on Bellingham Wines contact Douglas Green Bellingham on (011) 836-8290.

WINE

To Pastures New

BY SUE BROWN

For some folk, even when the grass is lush, it is still worth looking for greener pastures.

BELLINGHAM PREMIER FRENCH WINE COLLECTION.



Julius Lazlo officially retired last year after 42 years in the wine industry. For twenty of those years Hungarian-born Lazlo worked in Rumania, but whilst attending an O.I.V. conference in Paris he was offered and accepted a three year contract with the South African Viticultural and Oenological Research Institute.

From there he was snapped up by the Bergkelder and became a leading light in the formation of their new cellars. After such an illustrious career a lesser man might have been tempted to call it a day, but wine still flowed in Lazlo's veins and the dreams were still there.

L'Ormarins Estate were quick to offer

Lazlo a consultancy position after his official retirement. How nice, one might think, for one of the cellars of the Bergkelder group to give Lazlo an opportunity to retain an interest in the wine industry. There is little doubt though, that this was not an altruistic offer but a sound business decision to employ the man's energy and expertise to everyone's ad-

vantage.

Not content to tick over with one job, Lazlo also consults to Boland Co-operative and has recently started exporting wine under the label of Montestell. Export is his current passion, and putting quality wine at an affordable price on the overseas shelves is his aim.

Sure, he acknowledges the problem that many countries throughout the world are overproducing in recessionary times. Equally he accepts that any wine-producing country with the technological know-how has the ability to produce faultless wines and all these factors lead to a highly competitive overseas market.

One way he feels we can impact on the lucrative standard-price U.K. market without sacrificing quality, is to cut out production and packaging costs.

Wine farm production costs are often inflated due to the fact that the capital outlay for equipment cannot be fully exploited owing to the current laws. If a wine estate goes to the expense of putting in a bottling line to ensure they have full control of their wine from ground level to final product, they can end up with the equipment being under-utilised. Unless they have a very large wine grape production. Why? - Because an estate cannot bottle anyone else's wine.

On the face of it this may seem a good piece of legislation to safeguard the consumer from any hanky-panky in the cellar. But the argument against this is that it does not work the other way round. For example the KWV Estate Laborie would not be able to bottle KWV's other wines, but the KWV may bottle Laborie Estate wines as well as their own. This is just another area that needs attention to help bring the wine price down to consumer acceptance.

Another route to cut costs is packaging. Today many wine producers in South Africa spend as much on packaging as on the contents in the bottle. Not the case in other wine-producing countries; France for example spends approximately half of the cost on wine packaging. A reason why our costs are so high can be attributed to the lack of competition in the packaging market. When that weak Rand turns into a strong Rand we are basically going to shoot ourselves in the foot

if we don't look at the problem now. Should you as the consumer really worry about this? Never fear, Julius Lazlo is searching for the answers on your behalf.

The high packaging costs at present keenly influence the local market and this is an area most producers are looking into. Can the South African public handle a naked bottle of wine? More to the point, will legislators allow a wine on shelf undressed?

The answer is no, but the Picardi group decided they would go for a striptease act as near as the law allows. Not in form of stars but in the shape of a small round label mere-

Chenin Blanc grape retailing around the R6.50 mark, and a dry red and a red muscadell which are competitively priced. There is no point in waxing lyrical about them, they are sit-back-and-enjoy type wines and you can try before you buy in any of the Picardi liquor stores.

The more you pay for a wine the better it should be. Louisvale does not produce your everyday slug, it produces wine for 'savouring moments' and times when you want to be in tune with your palate. This being so, the 1992 Chardonnay should give you a transcendental experience.

Because of the small size of the farm, the

NAKED WINE, IS SOUTH AFRICA READY FOR IT?



ly stating what the wine is, the amount of liquid in the bottle and the alcohol content. Hence they have introduced a range called the 'Naked Truth'. The line-up is a white wine made from a blend mainly of Sauvignon Blanc which retails for under R5.00 a bottle.

There is a Special Late Harvest from the

vintage variations are mirrored in the wine. This is not a question of tasting the same wine each year; rather more it is a case of tasting the best quality of the style each year produces. This vintage was still made by Neil Ellis but from now Marinus Bredell takes over the nurturing of the wines. No doubt he will add his own dimensions to the▷



LEFT: LOUISVALE, THE CONNOISSEURS WINE.

BELOW: CLOS MALVERNE, GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PARCELS.

forthcoming vintages.

Although the home market remains important to Hans Froehling and Leon Stemmet, owners of Louisvale, they have gone forth and found niche markets overseas. Therefore, it is worth remembering that with a production of only 4 000 cases of this wine it is a question of paraphrasing the old adage: 'He who hesitates has lost'.

Louisvale neighbours, Clos Malverne, are

also small in production and size. This farm has introduced two new wines to their range under the Les Monts Malverne label: a 1993 Sauvignon Blanc and a 1993 Blanc de Noir. These wines are a frivolous departure from their big gun the Auret, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinotage.

It was the first vintage of 1988 Auret that really put this farm on the serious wine drinker's map; the maiden vintage was made by Jeremy Walker. Now the wine is made by Guy Webber who has kept up the high quality tradition. It is rather a case of 'knowing about this wine' for there are no high-powered sales teams aiding in the distribution. So if you do need to get your hands on some, it will be best to deal direct with the farm.

Still with the smaller estates, Glen Carlou is persisting in the quest for the ultimate wine experience. The Pinot Noir 1991 remains shy on the nose, but there are some wonderful raspberry undertones beginning to emerge. Lots of flavour of berry fruit on the palate, but not so robust as to become overpowering. The Les Trois 1991, The Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petite Verdot blend had a wonderfully soft, warm nose, very accessible on the palate with lots of pleasing fruit in the aftertaste.

The Merlot 1990 is shrugging off the edges of youth and developing an attractive spiciness on the nose; it presents with a well balanced palate and lingering aftertaste. I hesitate to call Grand Classique the top of the range as there are no second stringers on this farm, but this is an austere powerful blend presently up-tight, with a spicy peppery nose, and with all the stamina of a great wine destined for longevity. The blend of 20% Merlot, 72% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot and 5% Cabernet Franc is presently harmonising positively to produce a great wine of the future.



Also available for the collector's market is the Bellingham range of wines. The top of the range from this old-established wine farm is referred to as the Premier French Collection and, as you might expect, this is the cream of the crop. This year's releases are the Chardonnay, Chardonnay reserve, Blanc Fumé and Noble Late Harvest - all are of the 1992 vintages. They are definitely worth a try.

It would appear that whatever price category your current wine tastes might fall into, there is something for the individual's taste on the shelves of most supermarkets or wine merchants. Where the downfall still exists is in the restaurant cellars.

No one could accuse Diners Club, who - whilst they might use their annual Diner's Club Wine List of the Year award as a promotional tool for their card - of not giving seriously good spin-off to the consumer.

Last year all sorts of angst was caused by Diners Club MD Hugh Peatling having a few things to say about the price of wine in restaurants. Much was made of his com-

ments which provoked hurt feelings from the SA Restaurant Guild who were already out there reviewing the problems.

This year the two groups have joined forces to help improve the judging system and to encourage more participation from restaurants. The result - a very high standard of restaurant, hotel and club wine lists. There is a new addition to the awards this year, that of the Recommended Winelist Certificate; this was given to all those restaurants whose entries rated a score of over 65%; 51 of the 114 entries received this accolade.

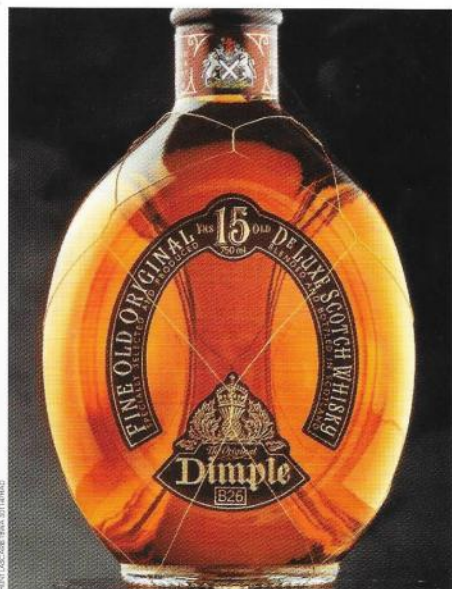
National Winners were Gatrile's of Sandown in the wine and malt category. The top hotel was the Grande Roche in Paarl and in the full license category Johannesburg's Fisherman's Grotto once again romped home with the prize. As this is the fourth time this restaurant has won, they will now receive the Champion of Champions gold-plated tastevin.

It is not only Peatling and Diners Club who have forced changes, the major whole-

salers have recently added their bit to shake up the restaurants by levying a charge on the delivery of orders under five cases. Fair enough you might feel, the restaurant should order systematically, but it is not always that easy when suddenly a huge party arrives unexpectedly and seems to be on a mission to drink dry the establishment.

Some restaurants resented having restrictions placed on their ordering, and changed their wine list. Two restaurants in our area opted for change, and now there is a more appealing wine list which incorporates old favourites as well as some very reasonably priced wines supplied by hungry merchants representing Co-op's and smaller Estate wines.

It will be fascinating to see if those restaurants who took a new tack will find the grass greener on the other side, or whether the big merchants will win out in the end. However, if this buying pattern continues what will the big merchants do to counteract the change? Like it or not, we live in interesting times. □



*Some works of art
should not only be admired
from afar.*

*Dimple 15 year old. From the oldest distillers of Scotch Whisky.
So fine a taste, every day becomes an excuse to indulge.*



Little Name - Big Wine

BY SUE BROWN

Klein Constantia has risen like a phoenix from the ashes in just over a decade. Owner Duggie Jooste saw the potential of this run-down farm in the early '80s, and gathered around him leading experts to set up a model wine estate.

Ernst le Roux, one of the country's leading viticulturists, headed up the team in the layout of the vineyards. Ross Gower, a wine maker with an enviable track record both here and overseas, was instrumental in the farm's planning since its inception.

Everything to do with the creation of Klein Constantia was achieved with meticulous attention to detail. The wine cellar, completed in 1986, won the Eskom Energy Effect award in 1990, and in 1987 the Institute of South African Architects awarded a merit prize for the design.

The first sign of the farm's true potential was the results at the South African Young Wine show. In 1986 the Sauvignon Blanc

was honoured as the Champion white wine of the show. At the 1987 show, the Cabernet Sauvignon became the champion. By 1988 the Cabernet Sauvignon was Grand Champion wine of the show, and in 1989 the Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend was again voted champion wine of the year.

Klein Constantia red wines are unique due to the excellence of plant material, the location and the expertise of the winemaker. Their Cabernet Sauvignon received a trophy for the best red wine of all the competitors in the annual SAA wine awards and was served in SAA's blue diamond class. A splendid wine, it is carefully integrated with the nuances of oak and fruit well pronounced; it promises long maturation

capability.

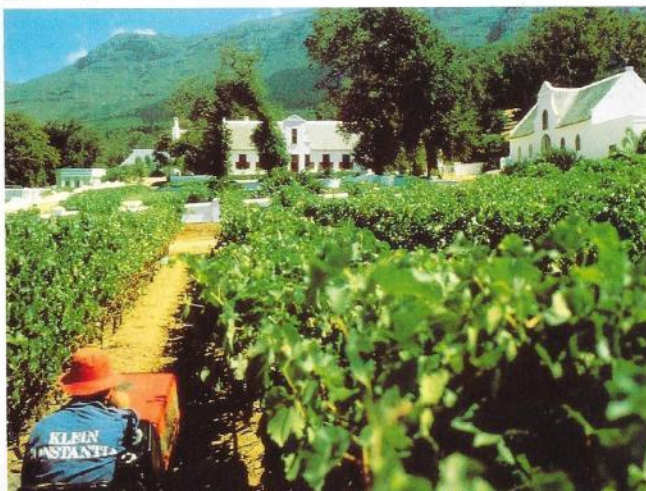
The Klein Constantia Shiraz is rich and deep with fruit foremost on the palate, harmonizing well with oak nuances. Whilst the blended red, Marlbrook, is for the unhurried. Presently developing in the bottle, the structure shows a commitment to produce a majestic wine for drinking in the new century.

A new addition to this range of red wines is the Dry Red. This blend of Merlot and Shiraz grapes, harmonized in oak vats, produces a lighter style of wine for earlier drinking enjoyment.

For more information contact Lowell Jooste on tel: (021) 794-5188. □



BELOW RIGHT: KLEIN CONSTANTIA HOMESTEAD.



habitat

INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. NOV/DEC 1993



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SPARKLING WINE

Pretty Bubbles

BY SUE BROWN

Sparkling wine lifts the spirits and makes women beautiful, so I have been told. It is therefore becoming increasingly important to ensure that you get the right stuff for the job.



Méthode Champenoise was the term used to describe the second fermentation in the bottle. This gives sparkling wine extra dimension and ensures that those precious bubbles stay in the wine for a decent duration of time. For those who wish to test their loved one's generosity, there is a simple check on sparkling wine. As they serve the wine, with the clean napkin obliterating the label, don't ask for information. If the bubbles are still in the wine at the end of the evening, he is not a cheap-

skate. If the bubbles are still in the wine the following morning, stay with him forever. This is a person who puts sensitivity over financial considerations. That may seem a little flippant, but bubbles are the soul of this complex style of wine. If the bubbles have been introduced by the less expensive carbon dioxide injection method, they do not last as long.

With the Champagne region in France now jealously guarding its image, as the Cape and other parts of the world begin to produce sparkling wine on a par

with their own, they have banned the use of the words Méthode Champenoise.

The Cape is truly developing its own unique style; the producers who make this time-consuming highly labour-intensive product have joined forces to name this style of production Cap Classique. This is a label you are going to become increasingly familiar with in the next decade.

Not that all sparkling wine is produced in this way in South Africa. There is another method where the second fermentation

takes place in a tank and is then bottled under pressure. This method of producing sparkling wine is common in Germany. It's a sobering thought to realise that more sparkling wine is made and drunk in Germany than in France. Called Sekt, it differs, as one would expect, from the French champagne. But Sekt has a place in the market, where you can experiment and choose a style to suit your mood or preference. Through the next few pages we look at some of the top producers in the Cape. ▷

Star Spangled Beer

BY SUE BROWN

Despite their British origins, the North Americans have developed their own unique beer style.



A COLLECTION OF CANS AVAILABLE FROM THE OLD U.S. OF A.

Beer has been quenching the thirst of man for aeons. Once the Anglo Saxons got over their love affair with mead, they took to ale like the proverbial duck to water.

Around the late 900's Archbishop Dunstan had to advise King Edgar he should issue a decree stating 'there no longer be drinking of ale in church'. The Archbishop was also attributed with formulating the first measuring directives in an attempt to curb abuse of ale. These measures were fixed by

placing a peg to show the volume allowed, hence today's expression of being taken down a peg or two.

Although ale-making was traditionally a woman's job, the monks soon brewed their own to succour thirsty travellers who stopped at monasteries on their journeys around England. They marked the strength of the beer with X's. No-one during the Australian Rugby series could have missed promotion of the popular Oz beer XXXX (Four X). I now assume the name came from these markings

rather than the rumour that its popularity is due to the vast number of consumers who cannot spell, aided and abetted by immigrant South Africans who could not say Foster's properly.

Beer has always held a less sophisticated appeal than wine, but it is worth remembering, for those who condemn it as the non-thinking man's beverage, that Shakespeare's father was an official taster of beer. This surely must put in a good word for its effects on future generations.

The British remained faithful to ale even after the Norman Conquest, when wine began to be exported to England. The English were exporting ale to France by the mid-12th century and the introduction of hops to England by the Flemish in the 16th century, added another taste dimension.

Across the Atlantic Sir Walter Raleigh was malting maize for beer production in Virginia as early as 1587 to remind him of his homeland tippie. Hops were being grown in the States by 1625 and the first commercial brewery was opened in 1637. Brewing had also begun in Canada in the monastery of Notre Dame des Anges in 1620. In 1840 lager beer was introduced throughout North America and quickly found acceptance in the marketplace.

It was the early German-sounding breweries in the States that pioneered the can of beer. Experimentation took place as early as 1929. It was only in 1933, when prohibition ended, that interest in this form of packaging was again revived. The company of Canco covered the costs of installation and Krueger beer company test-marketed two products. The rest is history. Early cans tended to emulate the shape of the bottle; this probably aided consumer acceptance. It's rather horrifying to look at them today because they are frighteningly similar to present-day bottles of Brasso.

Cans are easier to export and, with the relaxation of sanctions, North American beers are currently widely available in South Africa. It seemed a good idea to ask a few folk round to sample these new wares. The tasting group consisted of those who had lived in or visited the States and were enthusiastic to have their tastebud memories jogged, a couple of wine-tasters, and Dot. Dot does not like beer, so we had to see if we could tempt her with those from foreign parts.

I asked the panel to judge whether they would buy the beer. That, after all, seemed to be the bottom line.

First up was Labatts pilsner, a so-called light beer at 4% alcohol. Most of the group found it too frothy, very light and lacking in character. Dot was the only one who said she would buy it. This is a good choice for someone who does not like South African beer.

Next on line was Budweiser light which no-one had drunk before. Generally the

group found the obvious malt flavour attractive, but the general consensus was that it lacked guts. There were no buyers this time round.

Budweiser, the world's biggest brand, followed on. Those familiar with the beer looked forward to it, but I detected shades of disappointment. Generally thought of as sweet and gassy, all the 'yes' buyers were those who had spent time in the States.

Labatts Blue had a good head, some definite malt character with the hops noticeable on the palate. This beer achieved a higher 'yes' vote.

Michelob beer went back to what was now thought of as the 'American Style'. Rather sweet to the South African beer-drinking palate, again very light on taste. The Coors beer had a clean malty nose with an undistinguished palate. To quote one taster, it didn't elicit a quick response. The Miller High Life, however, had a good colour and head, a fuller body with malt flavours ending clean. All the group were enthusiastic about this beer, even Dot. It's pertinent to point out that it was the most expensive.

We moved to Milwaukee's best. Although not as popular as the Millers, most of the group felt it had a bit more grip. One wag commented if this was Milwaukee's best, he would skip Milwaukee.

Finally we sipped the Molson Golden. A respectable golden colour, fresh nose with character and a very smooth palate for easy drinking. The group were split when it came to purchasing the beer. Generally it was agreed everyone's palate was on unfamiliar turf with the lack of bitterness in the beers.

We have obviously been brainwashed over the years into thinking that bitter is best. So it's really a case of attuning your palate to a new taste sensation. After all who would have thought, a few years ago, that some of us would be slurping Sol beer from the bottle through a piece of lemon wedged in the neck?

For the experimental among you, or those wishing to evoke happy memories of trips to the States and Canada, these beers are certainly worth a try. I bought them from the Picardi store on the foreshore in Cape Town. You should find them dotted around the place, supplied by N.M.K.Schultz. Consider it a form of sensory callisthenics. □

If the best French châteaux do it, so can we.

Four years were spent perfecting the structure and composition of Le Bonheur's soils, modelling it on those of the famous vineyards of France. The top-performing cultivars were then chosen, all perfected through clone selection, and all ideally suited to the estate's climate.



But that's only the start. At harvest time, the grapes are carefully picked and placed in small baskets to prevent bruising – and then hand-sorted, as is the custom of the best French châteaux. After all, if they go to this trouble to make their noble wines, so can we ...



Le Bonheur Blanc Fumé

This unwooded Sauvignon Blanc, with its great complexity of flavour, is consistently rated as one of the Cape's finest white wines.

Le Bonheur Chardonnay

A rich dry white wine with the typical lemon-clove character, oak tones and lingering aftertaste of a well-made Chardonnay.

Le Bonheur Cabernet Sauvignon

Barrique-matured, this red wine is fruity and complex: full-bodied, yet well rounded. The connoisseur's choice to accompany gourmet foods.

NEW Le Bonheur Prima

An elegant red blend of Merlot (75%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (25%) matured in new barriques. The soft, berry-fruit taste is complemented by a good backbone for further bottle-maturation.

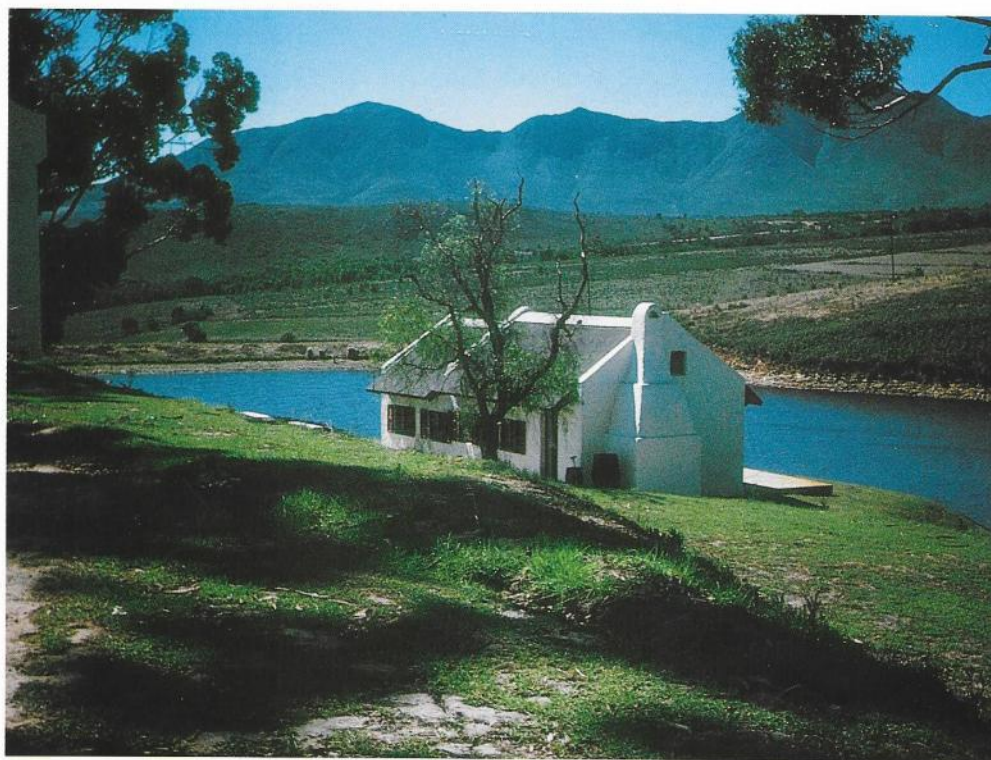
LE BONHEUR
ESTATE WINES OF ORIGIN -
STELLENBOSCH

Made on the wine estate -
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THE WINE CONNOISSEUR'S WINES

LEW 0116



HRV HOMESTEAD LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

H.R.V. Positive

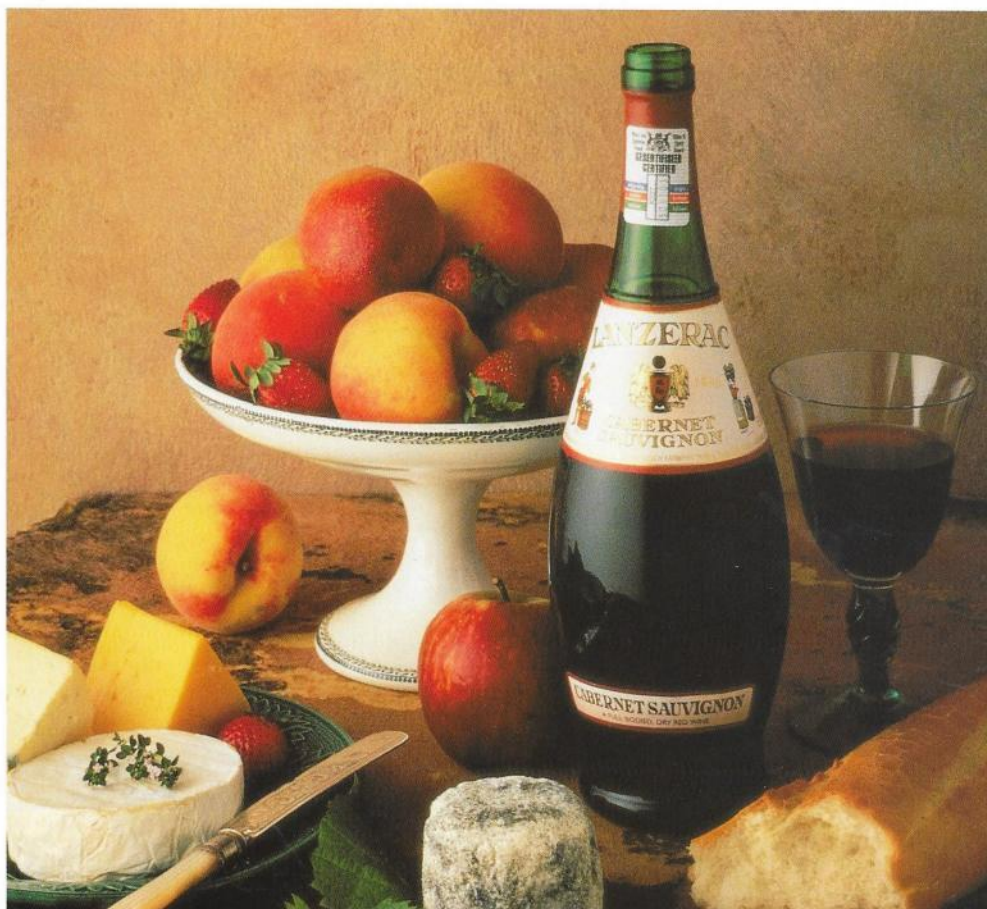
BY SUE BROWN

Whilst some really negative vibes are floating around, it's good to feel the positive vibrations coming from Hamilton Russel Vineyards

Anthony Hamilton Russel of Hamilton Russel Vineyards is a person with vision and commitment. He inherited his father's clear direction of the pursuit of excellence, quite an act to follow.

Father Tim Hamilton Russel was, to anyone adverse to changing the comfortable wine restrictions of the late '70s and '80s, the *bête noir* of the industry. Here was a marketing man from the Transvaal arriving in the Cape,

founding new vineyard areas, cutting across red tape and challenging legislation. He also had the audacity to charge what he felt his wine was worth. Buyers from the early '80s are no doubt quite happy with their invest- ▷



ABOVE: S.F.W., PROUD PARENTS OF THE NEW CABERNET SAUVIGNON.

OPPOSITE: NEDERBURG WEISSER RIESLING - THE BRITISH CHOICE.

ment today, after all you can't buy a Mercedes for an Uno's price.

Will we see the same tilting at windmills from son Anthony? I expect so, but from a different angle. Anthony has spent the past few years educating himself in Europe and the States, to come back equipped with global thinking and sound business experience. If this sounds unromantic, then speak to him about the farm to hear about a dreamlike commitment to making quality wine.

Anthony has nothing but praise for winemaker Storm Kreusch Dau. Dau handled this year's vintage in an advanced stage of pregnancy and it will no doubt be a great vintage to celebrate the birth of her daughter.

Storm and Anthony have expanded the range of Hamilton Russel wines to include a Chardonnay/Sauvignon Blanc blend. This blend continues to gain popularity in South Africa, the Sauvignon Blanc adding bite to the fuller Chardonnay style of wine. This

blend is ideal to introduce consumers to the big guns from the farm, the Pinot Noir and the Chardonnay. Both these are considered benchmarks of the South African style and are now achieving international recognition. Certainly, the Pinot Noir is in a class of its own and the long-term familiarity of Hamilton Russel Vineyards with the variety is now showing dividends.

You will not find gold stickers adorning the neck labels of these wines. Anthony ex-

plains that it is their aim to set even higher standards than the panel awarding these accolades. He admits to pandering to the European palate: 'A wine must never be out of balance,' he insists. This dedication does not come cheap. As Anthony comments, there is a difference in lifestyle between here and Europe. Here the status motor vehicle reigns supreme, whereas in Europe a person may be happy to drive a mini but would not dream of drinking inferior wine. It depends on your sensitivity I guess.

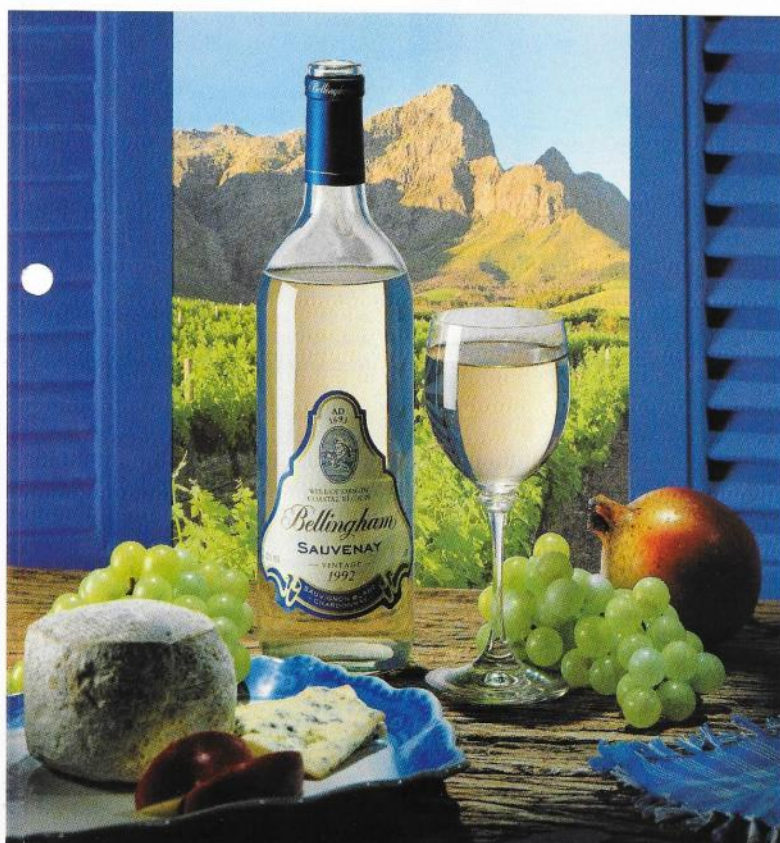
Whatever your priorities are in life, rest assured Hamilton Russel Vineyards are committed to producing one of the 'premier crus' of the Cape for generations to come.

From dynasties in the making, to those in the running, Meerlust is another of the Cape's great growths. Rubicon still remains a firm favourite, and the current 1987 vintage will not disappoint its followers. I was particularly keen on the Cabernet Sauvignon 1986, which appeared to have more grip than previous vintages. Although the fruit was apparent it

was not over-generous. It has been difficult to assess the maturation potential of some of Meerlust wines in the early '80s, but this Cabernet has all the signs of a long term stayer. The wine that really appeals is the Merlot 1987, a beautifully balanced wine packed with fruit. The new wine to try is the Dry Red 1990 vintage. This is a bargain from Meerlust, produced under their label though not considered one of their top-flight wines. All of you who invested in the 1985 Dry Red will no doubt be delighted by the introduction of this vintage. This wine was released earlier than the 1985, but patience will be rewarded.

Meerlust is marketed by the Bergkelder. Some of the other farms Bergkelder represent have seen some changes. Uitkyk for one has a new winemaker, Theo Brink, so it will be interesting to see what he achieves with the grapes from this Estate.

The Uitkyk Carlonet 1987 was made by Sakkie Coetzee and is worth a second look. A very fruity, meaty wine and an inter-▷

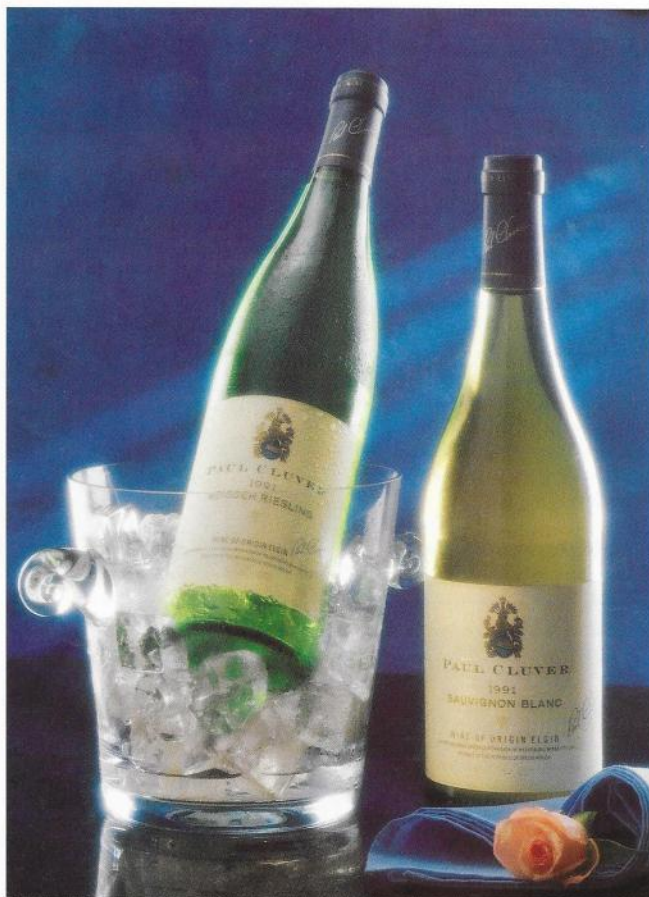


BELLINGHAM
SAUVENAY
An Expression of Exquisite Taste

When selecting the vineyards from which the Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc grapes are harvested, great emphasis is placed on the interaction between the soil and climate.

Sauvenay has the lively, green fruit character of Sauvignon Blanc and is beautifully rounded off by the fullness and roundness of Chardonnay.

Sauvenay is light yellow with shades of green. It is perfectly balanced, as neither cultivar dominates the other. A fresh, rounded and full bodied wine. The light wood adds an extra dimension, making the after-taste unique and interesting.



ABOVE: A GREAT START FOR ELGIN WINES FROM PAUL CLUVER.

esting departure from Carlonet's previous style.

Another farm, Le Bonheur, is back on track after three unproductive vintages. The Le Bonheur Blanc Fumé 1993 (unwooded) shows all the style and grandeur of its first vintages, with superb nose and a tight flavoursome taste.

Still with the Bergkelder stable of wines, Alto Estate has been hitting the top spots

with 1984 Alto Cabernet. Winner of one of the only 17 Grand Prix d'Honneurs, awarded to the best wines in their category at the Vin Expo Wine Competition this year, with a cast of thousands of wines from all over the world, this accolade cannot be sniffed at.

On tasting the wine, it was interesting to note it was not a French-style cabernet. Firmly South African in manner, with lots of berry and tea chest aromas on the nose, it has

good structure on the palate with a long-lasting fruit finish.

Across the channel in England, Nederburg romped home with honours for their dry Weisses Riesling at the International Wine and Spirit Competition in London.

Sister company S.F.W. is puffed up with pride. The 1990 vintage of Lanzerac Cabernet Sauvignon received a 4-star rating in the John Platter wine guide and has been chosen by the Wine of the Month club as a 'best value' wine. At R13.00 a bottle it must be another of this year's bargains.

Still with major corporate-owned farms, Anglo American's Boschendal has just extended their Pavillon range to include a light red wine. A blend of Merlot and Pinot Noir, this unusual marriage of classic French varieties produces a soft accessible wine. This is, as the advertising says, a 'no jacket required' wine. I would suggest you put it in the fridge for half an hour during the summer months for maximum enjoyment.

In the months to come you should look out for the Paul Cluver range of white wines. Coupled with the expertise of Nederburg, Paul Cluver's farm in Elgin is producing dry light wines. There is a 1991 Weisses Riesling for those who like just a hint of balanced sweetness on the palate, and a 1991 Sauvignon Blanc for those who like wine dry and subtle.

Lovers of wine from Elgin will sigh with relief to know that Neil Ellis has found a home for his winery at Oude Nektar. This will no doubt ensure that supplies of the Whitehall Sauvignon Blanc continue. If that is a tippie of your choice, Woolworths will soon stock wine from the grapes of Elgin farms, made by Neil Ellis himself.

Sharpen your tastebuds for the welter of new releases that start flooding the market at this time of the year. Some of you no doubt keep your palate in practice; those who joined in the Zonnebloem Wine Taster of the Year Competition are already in fine form. After three rounds of tasting, Pretoria's Lorna Dryburgh walked off with first prize, a trip to Chile and California, courtesy of co-sponsor Varig Airlines. Cape Town's Roddy Mills was second, with Natal's Liz Cluver third. It certainly pays dividends to keep your palate prepared. □