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INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. JAN/FEB 1994



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Through the Glass Lightly

SUE BROWN'S COLUMN



The Noble Rot of Klein Constantia

Back in 1987 the weather conditions on the Klein Constantia prior to harvest proved to be wet and warm, this is perfect weather for the formation of Botrytis Cinerea or noble rot.

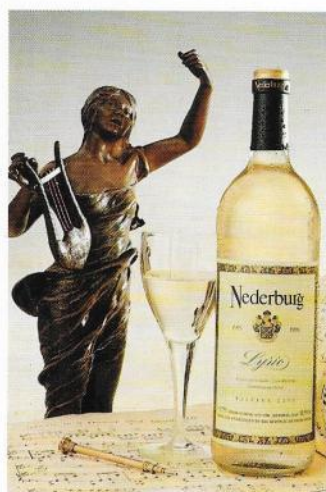
Yields from the grapes infected with the organism responsible for the rot are low, thus the concentrated flavours of the grape is assured. Most wines made from these grapes are sweet and luscious but the wine made from these grapes on Klein Constantia, the Blanc de Blanc, is dry and power-packed with weight and flavour.

Just to remind you of the success of the 1987 Blanc de Blanc: it was an SAA wine of the month in 1991, reached a more than respectable price on the 1992 Nederburg Auction, was selected by the Wine of the Month Club and acquired a silver medal on the 1993 International Wine and Spirit Board. Why I am giving you all this historical fact on a wine you cannot obtain?, because the 1993 harvest mirrors the conditions of the

1987 harvest and Klein Constantia is onto another extraordinary one-of-a-kind type of wine in South Africa. It costs around R12.99 a bottle in selected retail stores and I strongly suggest you invest in a case.

Lyrically Speaking

'The wine is undemanding, unpretentious, a sincere little number.' Actually the new Nederburg white wine Lyric is not that nebulous, but it's an easy slip-down-the-throat-and-relax wine. The aromas – from Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Cape Riesling grapes – blend together into nose appeal and the fruity off-dry taste pleases the rest of the senses. Loosen up with a bottle, it retails around the R8.00 mark.



Waters into Wine

Boschendal's determination to penetrate the UK market received a further boost recently,

when they announced the appointment of Marcia Waters M.W. as the new General Manager of the UK office. Ms Waters, one of the directors of the Institute of Wine Masters, has considerable experience in the British retail market. During her latest visit to South Africa she presented a tasting of a variety of new world wines competing in the same price and style category as the Boschendal wines currently available on the UK market.

Certainly Boschendal Sauvignon Blanc 1993 held its own against the boiled sweet aromas of the Uvas Del Sol Torrontes from Argentina and the more obvious and blatant Motana Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand.

Levelled against the Australian Jacobs Creek Chardonnay 1993, the Boschendal Chardonnay 1992 showed a good deal of elegance and finesse. But the light style of Boschendal Lanoy, I found, struggled against the powerful fruit flavours of the Australian, Barramundi Shiraz/Merlot and was totally different in style to the tannin-loaded and presently austere Inglenook, Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 1988. It did however, knock the Tesco's Mexican Cabernet Sauvignon 1990 into a cocked hat and, with only a 30 pence difference in price, there was no contest there.

Paarl Wine Route's Tenth Anniversary

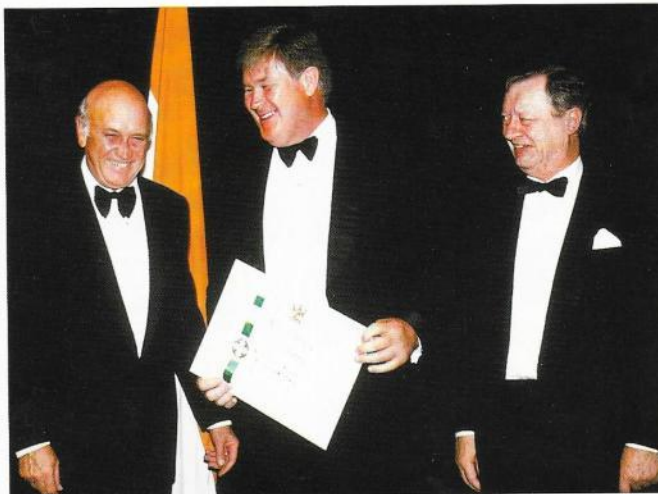
Paarl has been the home of the Nouveau Wine Festival for some years now but, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its wine route, a few extra extravaganzas have been planned. A winter festival will be held on the 11th of June and a Sparkling Wine Festival is planned for the 3rd of September. Paarl hosts a few unique wineries on its route; Zandwyjk, for instance, is the sole producer of Kosher wines in South Africa. Backsberg now has a >

specially imported computer-programmed Cognac still and is in the process of making very fine estate brandy. Meanwhile Villiera was the first estate in the country to establish a joint venture between France and South Africa which has resulted in the Charles de Fere sparkling wines made by the Cap Classique method.

Dewetshof Winning Streak

After collecting the Diners Club winemaking award last year with his wine Finesse, wine-maker Danie de Wet is receiving further accolades. Next up was the State President's award for achievement. And look out for Danie de Wet Green and Grey Label Chardonnay when you are next in London.

If you require more details on the happenings in Paarl call Reana Rossouw on (02211) 23-605.

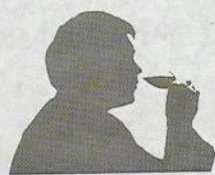


THE STATE PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXPORT ACHIEVEMENT WAS AWARDED TO DANIE DE WET. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: STATE PRESIDENT MR F.W. DE KLERK, MR DANIE DE WET AND MR DEREK KEYS.

PARKER'S

ROBERT PARKER
THE WINE
BUYER'S
GUIDE

The complete, easy-to-use reference on recent vintages, prices and ratings for more than 7500 wines from all the major wine regions



Taste Buddy of America

For many Americans Robert Parker is the guru of wine drinkers. A lawyer by profession,

he now dedicates his time to the pleasures of the palate and is publisher of that world-wide respected journal *The Wine Advocate*. Recently the third edition of his book *The Wine Buyers Guide* arrived in South African book stores. It contains a rating of more than 7 500 wines from the major wine regions of the world with one notable exception, that of South Africa. I do find the omission strange for a man who claims his judgement of wines

is without any bias. He does an extremely good job of lambasting his fellow wine writers for having hidden loyalties to individual wine companies; which, according to Parker, impairs their assessment of wine.

If this makes you feel the writer is somewhat egocentric, you're probably right but he is extremely refreshing in his straight-forward appraisals, and there is no kow-towing to industry sensitivities.

Like all these tomes on wine selection his is a personal review but there is little doubt Parker's palate is very sharp and his research meticulous. This piercing insight into the wine world makes for extremely entertaining reading.

Schoonspruit - Naturally

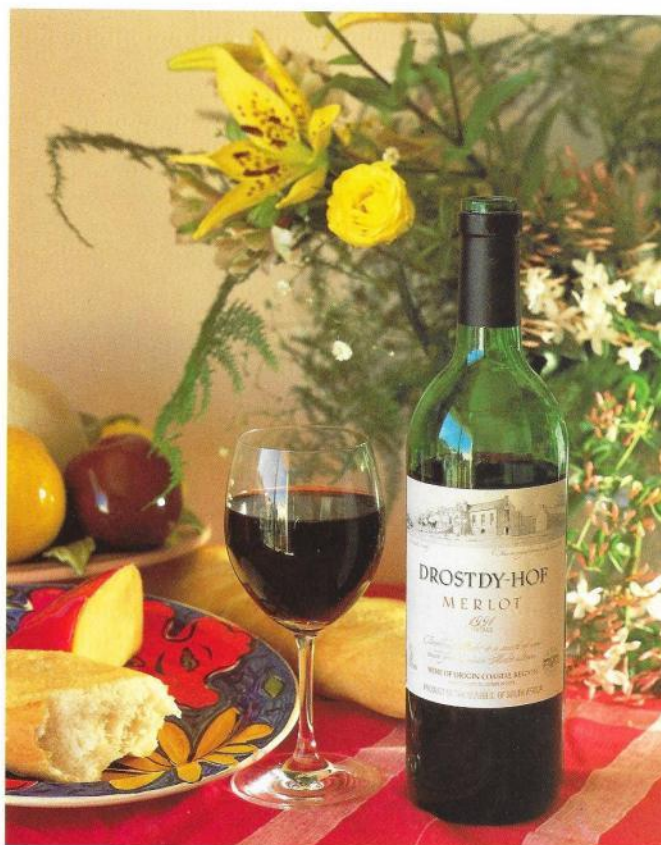
As all dedicated imbibers of the product of the vine know, wine is not a thirst quencher and it is best to use water to slake the thirst. Schoonspruit has come to the rescue again with the launch of their 1,5 litre P.E.T. bottle (P.E.T. stands for Polyethylene Terephthalate). This is a clean, clear, strong yet lightweight container and it fits into the door of the fridge perfectly. This handy-sized bottle is a new addition to the range which already includes both sparkling and natural spring water in the 250ml and 750ml packs. □



DROSTDY-HOF MERLOT FOR THE EVERYDAY WINE EXPERIENCE.

The new features editor queried just this point the other day. I bristled at the comment. Determined to remove such a slur I set to and inveigled an old friend to let me work for him during the Christmas rush at his specialist liquor outlet in Illovo. It has been some years since I last tramped the wine aisles of a store and the experience has been illuminating to say the least.

Take for example the customer who wanted the best Bordeaux blend in the country, the mind went into a spin. There is a stack of questions which come to mind - for drinking now or for laying down? Does the recipient like a fruity accessible style or a more austere style? Consult the oracles you may think but



Wine Buyers Conundrum

BY SUE BROWN

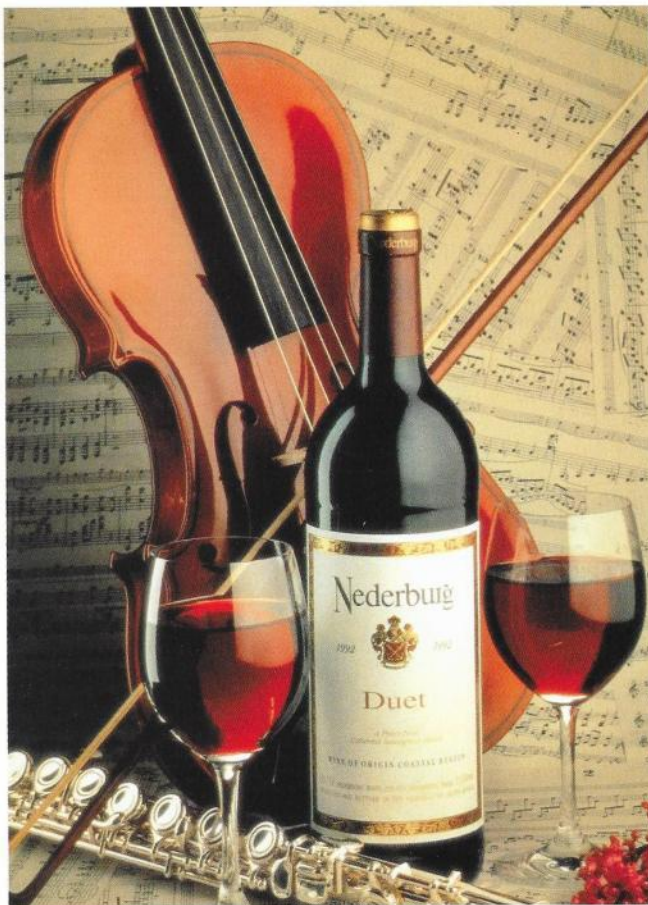
Can wine writers help, or do they sit in ivory towers out of touch with the consumer?

there lies the rub. The 1994 editions of the *South African Wine Buyers Guide* compiled by Dave Hughes and *John Platter's Wine Guide* are now on the market.

Dave Hughes' guide, unlike John Platter who lists his wine producers alphabetically,

lists his selection of wines in style, thus you have a section on Bordeaux blends exclusively. There are seventy different South African so-called 'Bordeaux' blends assessed in Hughes' book, of those 51 are accredited with a four star or more rating.

Four stars according to the blurb in the front of the book denotes an excellent wine whilst five star wines are a 'masterpiece, a tribute to the wine-makers art.' OK we have narrowed the choice down to more than half available. ▽



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE: NEDERBURG DUET - INEXPENSIVE QUALITY, CRAIGHALL - SHOWJUMPERS TIPPLE, OUDE KAAP VAN DER HUM - A COOL END TO A MEAL.

OPPOSITE TOP: BOLS PREMIER - A CREPE SUZETTE'S FAVOURITE PARTNER.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: GRAHAM BECK BRUT - CHOICE OF THE HORSE-RACING SET.

John Platter has been more meagre with his rating system this year and I fear there are going to be some very disappointed wine farmers who are not such high-achievers in ratings as they have been in previous years.

Flicking through Platter's book though, there remains a sizeable amount of wines' descriptions printed in red, denoting exceptional quality.

I would quickly point out that the success of both books is due to the authors' comprehensive knowledge of the wine industry. Both possess fine palates, but from my situation on the floor, they could narrow it down a bit further.

Platter's 1994 edition assesses 2 790 la-

bels which therefore means that around 4 078 wines are evaluated. Additional information in the '94 editions includes new symbols denoting veritas gold awards, up-to-date telephone numbers (Stellenbosch has changed to the 021 code for those of you who have not yet been frustrated by the change) and information on how to start a cellar.

The annual veritas awards are another indicator of quality. Most double gold veritas seals were awarded to wines made from the Cabernet Sauvignon grape variety but red blends, however, collected 9 double golds, one less than the Cabernet Sauvignon grouping, and all of those were for Bordeaux blends.

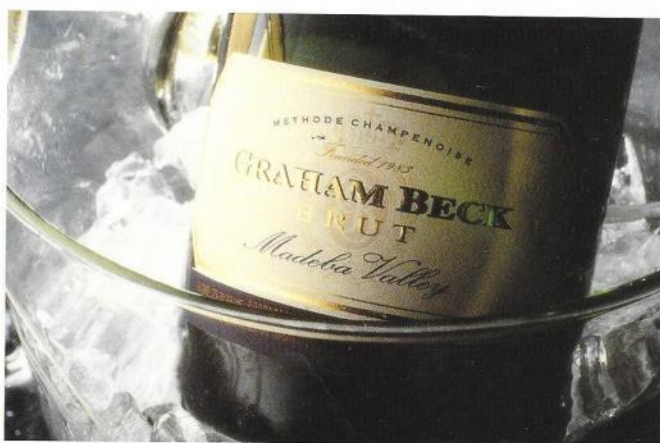
It is, however, pertinent to mention that not



every cellar in the Cape enters their wines on the competition so this is not a true reflection of all wines made.

If you are going to give up on these then read the back of the bottle. Take Kloofzicht Estate wine, 'Alter Ego', the back label states: 'This claret of *origin Tulbagh* the first and only in its style ever attempted in a traditional white wine orientated region, tends to leave the common wine drinker perplexed, the hedonist in turn exhilarated.' So much for the back label.

That leaves you with personal assessment, Christine Rudman has up-dated her guide for those intrepid folk who take to the road and visit the wineries. The book, *A Guide to the Winelands of the Cape*, contains easy to follow



maps of winery locations plus a listing of all their wares along with opening times etc.

There is also a comprehensive list of hotels, guest houses and restaurants along the way, not to mention hiking trails around the winelands for those in need of exercise. It even gives you information on car hire firms etc; altogether it's a sort of encyclopedia of how best to manage an expedition into the interior.

For the price-conscious, there is a shorter guide for choice wines on the market. *The South African Plonk Buyers Guide* does not have a Bordeaux blend listed in it but you will find author David Biggs has done his level best to show what South Africa has to offer

wine-wise for around the R5.00 a bottle mark. Sadly, the books seems awfully thin this year.

Slightly higher in price and therefore not mentioned in the book, there is little doubt that wines like Drosty-Hof Merlot, Moreson Blanc-de-Blanc, Le Pavillon and Nederburg Duet have caught the imagination of the good, 'everyday drinking' wine brigade if repeat sales are an indicator.

So with all this wealth of information available, how do you sort out one excellent wine from another? The problem is that both Hughes and Platter are right in saying that there is a tremendous amount of high-quality wine to choose from. I pondered over the point when, thumbing through the USA's *Wine*

and *Spirits Magazine*, I suddenly clicked. There in front of me was an advertisement for Geyser Peak wines with the caption 'Official winery of the United States Polo Association.'

This brought to mind our visit to the Dunhill Derby. We stayed to see the trophies presented and whilst sitting amongst the debris of picnic lunches, I happened to spy a disproportionate amount of empty bottles of Craighall.

The combination of the visual images made me realise this is the way to narrow down the choice. If you are into show-jumping then Craighall is your tippie. Not a bad choice on a warm day, lots of guts but not too heavy to accompany an outdoor luncheon repast.

So here goes for the Brown compilation of matching wine makers or owners with their favourite sports:

- Horse Racing - Graham Beck Winery
- Triathlons - Thelema Mountain Vineyards
- Rugby - Alto
- Hedonists - Rudmans Port
- Divers - Bouchard / Finlayson
- Theatre Buffs - Glen Carlou
- Music Lovers - La Motte
- Clay Pigeon Shooting - Landskroon
- Cricket - Bodega
- Golf - Kanonkop
- Boules - Meerlust
- Trout Fishing - Rustenberg
- Surfing - Klein Constantia
- Sailing - Warwick
- Squash - Van Louveren

That may just help to tip the scales in the choice of wine.

So as I cruised the aisles, I hope my features editor appreciated the wear and tear on my feet to gain further insight into the market place. I found that the liqueur market is not dead, try the Oude Kaap Van der Hum cream if you have any doubts or the imported Bols Premier la Grande Liqueur. I discovered that mineral water is big business and those into purity should be pleased to know that Schoonspruit have just launched their 1.5 litre Spring water.

I also discovered that back labels were more fun than I ever realised, look out for that of Outeniqua winery. The label reads, 'Wines selected exclusively for your discerning pallet' (sic). Do they want me to drink it or stack them up? The choice is endless. □

WINE

Wine on a High

BY SUE BROWN

SAA's announcement of their 1994 wine lists, gave a real lift to the Cape wine producers



SAA AWARDS (L TO R) - MULDERBOSCH, BUITENVERWACHTING, LANDSKROON AND VILLIERA. SAA REPRESENTATIVE JOHN HARE.



MIKE DUBROVIC, WINEMAKER OF MULDERBOSCH VINEYARDS AND JOHN HARE.

What happens to wine travelling at a speed of 900kph with an outside room temperature of -31 degrees Fahrenheit, positioned 31 000 feet above terra firma? The answer appears to be, it survives well, as the search for the best wine showpieces of South Africa goes from strength to strength on SAA.

This year the trophy for the best white wine of the 282 white wines entered for inclu-

sion on the list was won by Mulderbosch for their Sauvignon Blanc 1993. You will be hard pressed to find any of this wine available on the shelves so I am afraid a first class trip to foreign parts is mandatory in January. You can sip on a Fleur du Cap Shiraz 1988 if you are more into your red wine during this month as well.

The best red wine, or rather the red wine which reached the highest score of the panel,

was the 1989 Buitenverwaching Grand Vin, 'Wine of the Month' in September. And you could enjoy the top-scoring port from Landskroon, a 1990 vintage post repast anytime. The best Methode Cap Classique is the new non-vintage Tradition, Carte d'Or offered on take-off from Jan Smuts; all this is first class fare.

On the domestic service flights you'll be offered a 1993 Zonnebloem Sauvignon Blanc, 1993 Fleur du Cap Chardonnay, a 1993 Klein Constantia Shiraz and a 1991 Douglas Green Cabernet Sauvignon to help you while away the journey.

For those who need sweetening up whilst flying, SAA offer a Culemborg Stein and to add sparkle to your life there is a non-vintage Cinzano Spumante and a 1993 JC le Roux sparkling Sauvignon Blanc.

What makes the SAA wine list so prestigious for the wine industry, other than the obvious benefits of being 'on show' to international and local travellers alike, is the amount of care that goes into the choosing of the wine. Of the 561 wines entered a panel of twenty experienced palates were asked to narrow down the field. Those wines which survived the culling operation were then assessed by a further panel made up of both local and international judges. This year SAA flew out David Peppercom MW and Serena Sutcliffe MW from London, Ron Wiegard MW from Napa, California, Terry Dunleavy of New Zealand and Bernhard Breuer from Germany to ensure that a truly international acceptance was achieved.

Although the wines selected have to be of a certain required quantity, which does knock out some of the smaller estates for those of us flying steerage, I am consoled by the thought that the same care went into the choice of wine for the everyday domestic routes. □

A Show of Finesse

BY SUE BROWN

Diners Club announced the Annual Wine-maker of the Year Award at a really fine luncheon at the Zoo Lake Restaurant.



HUGH PEATLING, MD OF DINERS CLUB WITH THE 1993 AWARD WINNER, DANIE DE WET OF DE WETSHOF.

Organisation guru, Peter Devereux and Diners Club MD Hugh Peatling kept us all seated in suspense at these annual awards. This is seriously the best kept secret in the industry, all is revealed when the wine-maker walks through the door, a rather exciting aperitif to an excellent function.

This suspense was added to by the fact that there was a large entry of wines for the category judged this year. A Chardonnay from Sydney Back won the wood-aged white award back in 1986 with his 1985 Chardonnay heralding the way for greater things to come from this grape variety. Could he repeat his success?

The experienced panel, who have changed little since the onset of the awards 13 years ago, had a tough time. As usual, the local judges were joined by an overseas judge: Frank Prial, the New York Times wine columnist, was the man chosen for worldly palate input. The panel had to wade their way through a tremendous variation of styles which Chardonnay can produce from a heavy butterscotch type wine with oaky overtones to one with light citrus flavours.

I think I can honestly say this year's win-

ner was greeted with overall enthusiasm and accord. The 1993 De Wetshof Chardonnay Finesse was part of this approval for Danie de Wet has had more than his fair share of hiccoughs in the wine industry. His decision to go it alone recently, without the help of a large marketing organisation, was a brave one. It's always good to see someone who is positive despite the pitfalls, and who continues to produce quality.

Finesse is a subtle, lightly-oaked wine with a powerful citrus finish and a promise of longevity lingering on. Interestingly the wine does not undergo maloactic fermentation, something that is considered *de rigueur* by many makers of chardonnay wines. Danie de Wet is no newcomer to the intricacies of making chardonnay; the farm now has 84 hectares under chardonnay vine, with some of the vines dating back to 1976.

It is also a wine which has proved popular overseas; Danie attributes this success to the fact that the European market has a preference for the elegant French style of Chardonnay rather than the more robust New World wine styles.

If you are beginning to yawn, and perhaps saying, not chardonnay again, try this one, I think it will put you back on track. □

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



FOUNDED

PRIDE OF THE CAPE NOBLE WINES

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INTERIOR DESIGN ART ARCHITECTURE & LIFESTYLE. MARCH/APRIL 1994



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Two Decades of Nederburg

BY SUE BROWN

South Africa's premier auction event is now in its twentieth year.



ABOVE: THE JOHANN GRAUE AUCTION HALL, VENUE FOR THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL EVENT ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN CALENDAR.

BELOW: OVER R20-MILLION WORTH OF WINES HAVE BEEN AUCTIONED BY PATRICK GRUBB OVER TWENTY YEARS.

There were mutterings back in the '80s, as to whether this high-profile auction should continue as an annual event. Marketing fortunately triumphed over finance, a fact which placed the auction in its enviable position today. With greater interest being shown in South African wines overseas, this is the leading South African event on the

international wine calendar.

A far cry from the first auction held in 1975 (only 15 wines from five participants were on offer). This year, 8 600 cases of fine wine – from 34 estates, wineries and cooperatives – came under the hammer. The majority of the wines available were red but amongst the whites, the famous Nederburg Edelkeur and Eminence were offered.

1994 saw some new Estates on the auction. Altydgedacht offered a Cabernet Sauvignon 1986, Eikendal presented its Eikendal Jungfrau Chardonnay 1991 and Villiera Estate submitted its stunning 1989 Merlot. Dewetshof was back, with a powerful Chardonnay – Bateleur 1992 – this wine was highly recommended amongst an international line-up of Chardonnays in London recently.

Of the older reds, Bertrams Robert Fuller Reserve 1984, is worth hunting for when the wines hit the retailers. Also watch out for the 1986 Warwick Cabernet Sauvignon and Rust en Vrede, who presented two vintages of their Cabernet Sauvignon, the '84 and '86.

Groot Constantia's Gouverneurs Reserve 1987 presents with a complex nose and good

lively fruit on the palate and the younger Zonnebloem Merlot 1988 has lots of subtle flavours with good underlying fruit. The Chateau Libertas 1980 magnum size is showing signs of age but is still in drinking form, whilst the 1980 Nederburg Auction Cabernet Sauvignon is very sound. It offered a wonderfully smooth, complex palate and a long, long aftertaste.

Of Nederburg's Private Bin Collection, only available on the Auction, the 1988, R161 Cabernet Sauvignon is a new-style wine. Deep, plummy colour with hints of blackcurrants on the nose, it is a trifle austere at present but will plump out in the future. The 1982 Private Bin R163 Cabernet Sauvignon had a deep concentration of fruit on the middle palate with a nicely-spiced fruit finish.

The excellence of the traditional South African blend of Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon was best illustrated by the Private Bin R115, 1987. The wood was well-integrated with the fruit; this is a big wine with a long way to go.

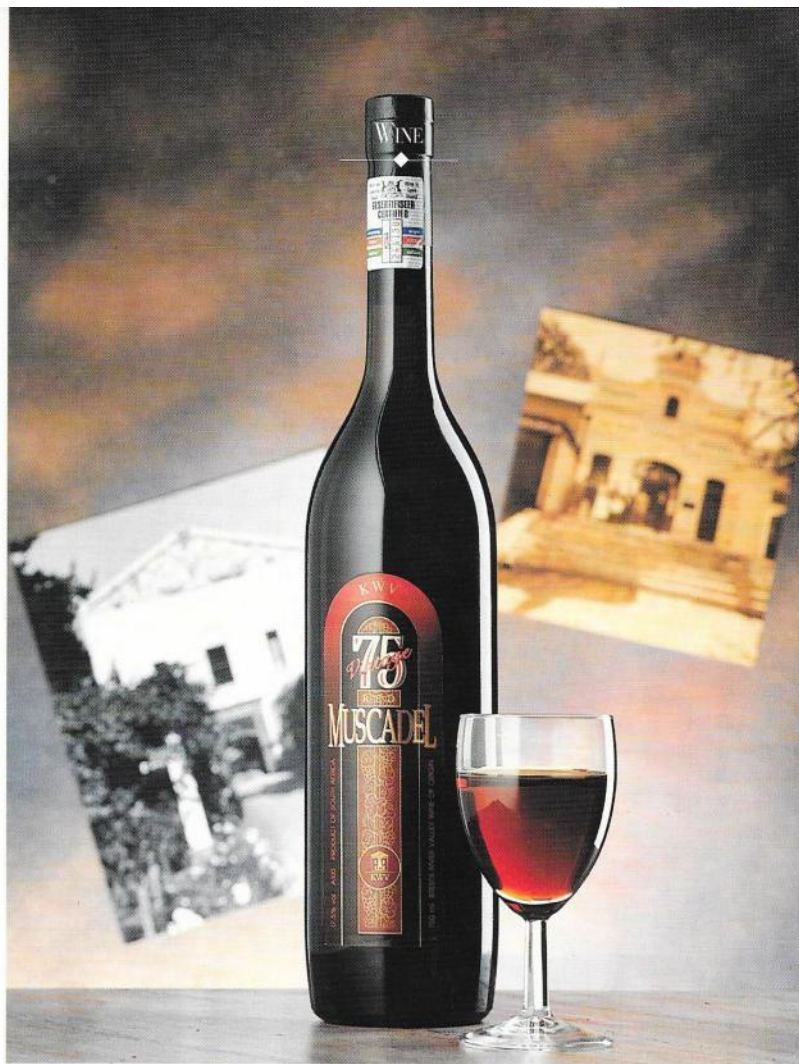
Shiraz as a cultivar exemplified by Nederburg's R121, 1985 vintage. It offered a smoky, oaky nose and was still taut on the palate but had a wonderful berry follow-through.

Of the new blends, the Private Bin R109, 1987 displayed the charm of a Cabernet/Merlot blend. No new wood domination was evident here so the fruit is to the fore, with nice maturity on the palate.

Soon available in the stores will be further gems such as: Boplaas Port and K.W.V.'s White Muscadell Jerepigo and their Red Muscadell Jerepigo 1968.

To find out where you may obtain these wines, which are only available through licensed outlets, call Arlene Johnston on (021) 808-7911. □





Whining Out

BY SUE BROWN

So much has been written recently about mark-ups on wines in restaurants, I just have to put my bit in too.

Should one be allowed to bring one's own bottles of wine to a restaurant and should corkage be charged? And is the restaurant owner ripping us off with a 100% plus mark-up on a given bottle of very ordinary wine?

Restaurateurs claim that the cost of training, glasses and the capital tied up in storage has to be built into the price. No-one could disagree, particularly when you think of the restaurants with great cellars. Allan Strick at Johannesburg's Fisherman's Grotto, a multiple

winner of the Diners Club Wine List of the Year Award, comes to mind immediately. His vast range of wines from all over the world has taken years to amass; I would no more consider taking my own wine to Strick's restaurant than taking along my own piece of fish and ▷

asking for it to be cooked.

Equally, can you really imagine someone staggering up to Grande Roche in Paarl with a bottle in their hand? It negates the point of dining at such an establishment.

These top restaurants aside, some of the most frequented foody places do still seem to have a problem with the idea that the choice of wines is meant to complement the food they are serving. Simplistically, why push a R50.00 bottle of wine with a R15.00 plate of pasta? And why apply for a licence and then only offer a choice of six wines?

But surely, unimaginative wine lists seem to encourage the BYOB (Bring Your Own Bottle) principle. The choice of wine should be part of the pleasure of dining out, not an afterthought. How many times have you looked at a wine list and found the variety of choice sparse and the prices exorbitant? I have great difficulty in understanding how a restaurant can put its reputation on the line as one of the first impressions the customer has of a restaurant is the wine list.

The laws governing issuing of a Wine and

Malt licence have changed and overseas wines appropriate to the establishment are now allowed, whereas previously only South African wine could be served. Among those who have taken advantage of the change some do seem to have lowered the mark-up on these imported wines whilst retaining the high mark-ups on their merchant-printed wine lists containing South African wines. I welcome this change in the law but have a problem with the apparent lack of patriotism from certain restaurants.

Why are so many restaurateurs lazy? They make across-the-board mark-ups on wine when basic marketing principles dictate the lowering of margins on fast-movers and the increasing of them on slower lines. All restaurants have specials on food, but how many have specials on wine? I don't know about you but sometimes I find it very pleasing to have help in the decision-making process. However, in most places, one is hard-put to find someone who has the knowledge to assist.

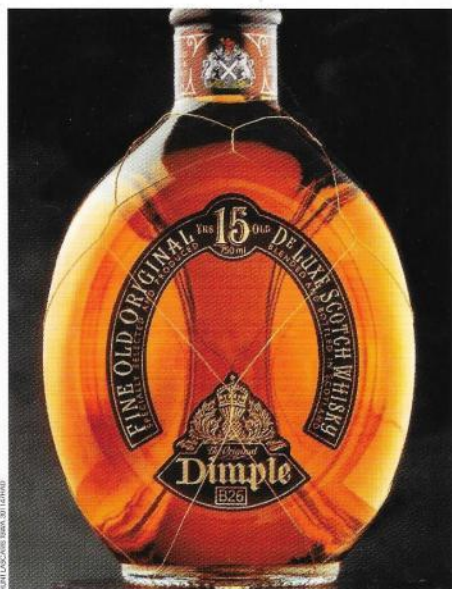
Pray tell me, why do I have to choose a

bottle of wine before I have seen the menu? Couldn't I be offered a glass of reputable house wine, at a reasonable price, whilst I am making my choice.

Then there are those two major irritations in life for wine lovers: the wine waiter who fills one's glass practically to the top, I assume in the hope of gaining extra sales. I am not prone to the shakes but I find it most off-putting having to concentrate hard when lifting a glass. Then there is the real cherry on top: the waiter who picks up the empty bottle and with a flourish, up-ends it in the ice cooler while looking meaningfully at the host.

And are we only allowed one glance at the wine list? Those of us not endowed with a photographic memory are then doomed to keep repeating the order.

When were you last offered a glass of sparkling wine on arrival at one of your user-friendly restaurants? And, when last did someone suggest a glass of port or sweet wine as a finalé to a good meal? As there are now many devices which keep the freshness of wine intact for a reasonable length of time,



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

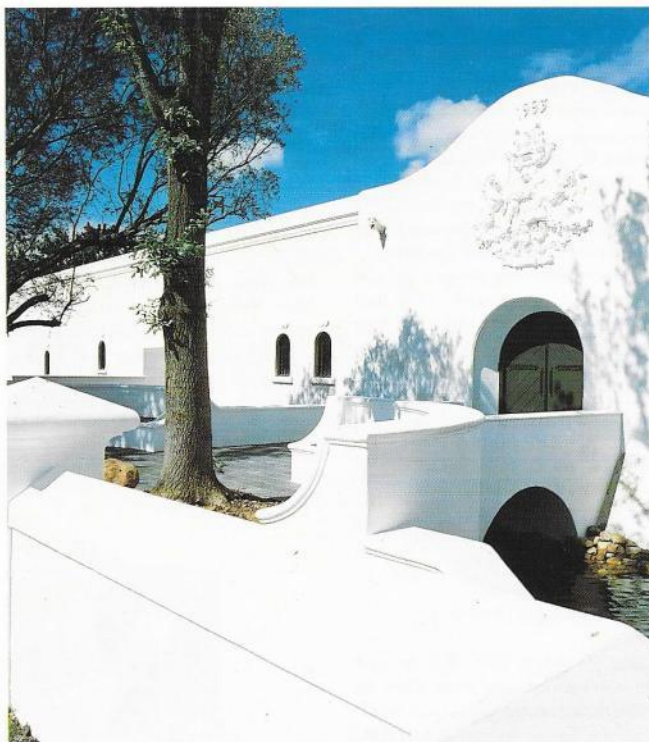
*Dimple 15 year old. From the oldest distillers of Scotch Whisky.
So fine a taste, every day becomes an excuse to indulge.*



Will Breeding Show?

BY SUE BROWN

'I raise my glass to all the people of this country, so that they may share with this wine the same ambition of becoming better, namely that they too will grow in strength and prosperity without losing their tolerance and kindness.' Dr Paul Pontallier



LEFT & OPPOSITE TOP: THE PLAISIR DE MERLE WINERY IS PARTIALLY HIDDEN BY A MOAT AND SOFTENED WITH NATURAL AND ARTISTIC ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES.

These were the closing words of Paul Pontallier's address at the opening of SFW's latest quest for perfection in the art of wine, the new cellar at Plaisir de Merle. Pontallier, of Premier Cru Chateau Margaux fame, has been a consultant to the cellar project since 1990 and was obviously bursting with pride at the opening. Despite his charming accent, (why is it the French wince when the English speak French but the English are always charmed by a foreign accent?), Pontallier showed none of the autocratic French approach to New World

wines. It is more than evident that he has shared his wealth of international knowledge with winemaker Neil Bester.

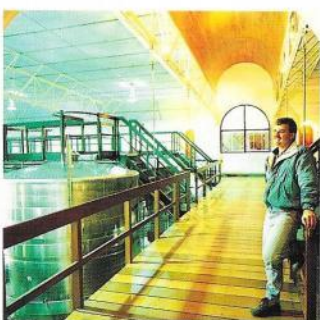
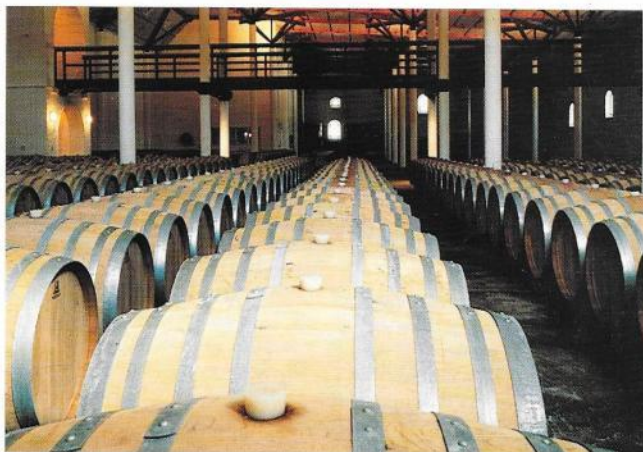
The new cellar was opened to coincide with the 300th anniversary of the granting of the Plaisir de Merle farm to the Marais family by Simon van der Stel. The Marais clan had left France, like so many fellow Huguenots at that time, to start a new life away from religious prosecution.

Settling in the Franschhoek valley the Marais originally called their farm Le Plessis Marly, after the village of their origin. This eventually became corrupted to today's name of Plaisir de Merle, which literally means the 'pleasure of the blackbirds'.

There is a booklet available on the history of the farm, detailing trials and tribulations met by the early farmers. So, there appears to be no bending of history to suit a marketing project here. These Huguenot immigrants are credited with the introduction of a more gracious form of life to a harsh pioneering country whilst the Dutch are given their due credit as the folk who had the wisdom to introduce vines to South Africa.

The design of the cellar marries the finest technology available with an old world feel. This is well illustrated by the frieze over the main doorway, executed by Jan Corewijn, which virtually demands that you stop and study it. Each motif symbolises the different cultures responsible for the stability of the farm.

The re-established mill house, the moat surrounding the new cellar and the old homestead may have a European feel but our northern hemisphere kin do not have guinea fowl strutting about in the vineyards controlling the



unwanted snout beetles. Nor are they able to spot leopard amongst the fynbos on the mountains.

The wines are obviously at nursery stage, but Bester had the spunk to introduce them at the opening and there were certainly great murmurings of approval from the highly critical palates around. A predictable Cabernet Merlot blend, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc will be the first wines on the market. With the expertise, historical know-how and added dollops of romance, these wines should be worth noting. □

ABOVE: NEW SMALL WOODEN BARRELS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE AT THE WINERY.

LEFT: PLAISIR DE MERLE WINEMAKER NEIL BESTER ON THE CATWALK ABOVE THE WINERY.

Venture Into the Interior

BY SUE BROWN

Following in the footsteps of the intrepid commander Jan Wintervogel, Swartland is being re-discovered.



THE MAGNUM OF RED WINE ESPECIALLY BLENDED FROM THE SWARTLAND AREA FOR RELEASE THIS YEAR.

Members of the Swartland wine route certainly pulled out all the stops for a group of journalists and tour operators who visited the area recently. This was not my first visit to the region because usually I drive out, visit the wineries and shoot back to Paarl or Stellenbosch the same evening. With this group however, I was held to a two day trip.

For those of you thinking of visiting the area, there are a few do's and don'ts. Don't for example, take your cholesterol-free diet sheet with you, the traditional fare of the area includes farm butter, lard, *haksel* and *kaiings*, not to mention lashings of liver cooked in a sweet sour sauce. You may as well go the whole hog and clandestinely dig into *melktertjies*, *glansrugte* and suicidal *koeksusters*.

If you feel your medical aid will not cover you for such a feast, it's worth noting that the inhabitants of the area seem to age pretty well, and they are more likely to think that

Floro is a mispronunciation of flora, many species of which adorn the mountainside.

On the 'do' side, slough off the city veneer and be with the locals who really know how to party; a sure sign that red wines keep those high density lipoproteins up and working.

To make the trip more authentic we set off from the castle in Cape Town, sent on our way by Jan van Riebeck, complete with gold coins, snuff and a fairly potent concoction to ward off ills. Taking the coast road, our first stop was Mamreweg Co-op, outside Darling, where the annual wild flower show takes place. I guess I am expected to eulogise about the wine but without appearing to be blasé, this is everyday wine-drinking country. These are good honest wines, producing the type of reds you place in the fridge door for an hour, before pulling the cork, without having to embark on deep-breathing exercises to get your money's worth.

It's also sweet wine country and the Hanepoot which tends to be forgotten during the hot summer months is certainly worth remembering on a chilly Highveld evening.

There are some stars though; this is the home of Allesveloren Port, arguably one of the best ports in South Africa, and made from traditional Portuguese varieties grown on the Estate. The estate also bottles an unforgettable Shiraz, well able to stand up against its French counterparts though with a unique regional whiff. Despite its name, Allesveloren has lost nothing in quality over the passage of time.

Obviously the Swartland Co-operative is worth a visit. Who has not tried the wine from this Co-operative, which was brave enough in the late '70s, to pull away from the restraints of the big wholesalers; those dictators to many co-ops as to the grapes they grew and the type of wine they must make? Swartland set out to market their own wine and the results over the

last decade speak for themselves.

Medals from young wine shows are too numerous to mention, any member of the Wine of the Month Club knows they are constantly winning the panel assessments and their export market is burgeoning. Either they are brilliant marketers or they simply make very good wine for a very acceptable price. Without decrying the efforts of their marketing department, I have little doubt it is the latter factor which has made them so successful. Their Steen has been a favourite for many years and more recently the Sauvignon Blanc. Don't miss out the all-but-forgotten old favourite Colombar, and keep your eyes peeled for the Swartland port, re-launching under a new label this year.

Other wine cellars to visit are Porterville, Riebeck and the privately owned, Winkelshock cellar; they bottle their wines under the 'Weskus' label.

If you decide to stay over in the Swartland you may wish to take in the hospitality at Dunn's Castle, situated just outside Piketburg. This is a sort of Sir Herbert Baker look-alike home where Rian and Beverly will transport you back to a bygone era with the furniture and surroundings of the time; no instant décor or short-circuit cuisine here. The Cedarberg mountains are accessible for healthy hikers, and for the less vigorous, it is worth setting up a search party to see if there are any illicit stills brewing up *wubltiz* around the area.

As you travel the regions between undulating wheat fields and rows of vines, you will likely relax and de-stress. The locals cleverly cultivate this feeling with an almost straw-in-the-mouth, laid-back attitude. But don't be deceived by this aura because if you scratch the surface you'll find that viticulturally and viniculturally these people are well and truly in the 20th century. □

*We have all been told that good things
come in small parcels and Robertson
Co-operative has set out to prove the point.*

Pack It In

BY SUE BROWN

To introduce their new product, Robertson Co-operative flew a group of us down to their winery situated in the Breede River Valley, in an eight seater jet no less. As we entered a gap in the mountains to reach the valley, we appeared to fly at an angle which defied the Bernoulli principle. I had one thought; this wine had better be good to compensate for the sheer terror I experienced during this manoeuvre.

The point of the exercise was for Robertson Co-operative to show off its new aseptic plant. Those of you used to visiting wineries, know that for some obscure reason

winemakers are always inordinately proud of their bottling lines. They persist in showing off their gleaming equipment whilst you follow along nodding knowingly, longing to get a taste of the contents. After ten years, I still know very little about bottling lines due to the fact that I have never heard one word my learned guides have said as their voices have always been drowned out by the noise of clinking bottles.

But, at Robertson it's different. I happily stayed in the plant and expressed genuine interest in the product because the cacophony of the bottling plant was missing. Instead,

neat little combibricks of wines came quietly off the line. Called the vinipak, these cardboard containers have an aluminum foil barrier and a polythene inner lining.

The Co-operative is not the first winery to put wine in these user-friendly packs, but they are the first to invest in an on-site plant to do the job for them. Exhaustive tests overseas have proved beyond doubt that there is no compromise in the quality of wine in combibricks. So Robertson Co-operative went ahead with a considerable investment in the brave new packaging world. They have Nampak's packaging expertise and the marketing muscle of whizz kids Tim Rands and Kevin Kitley of the Vinimark group to ensure they should be onto a winner.

Look out for the 500ml packs on the shelves in your liquor outlets. You will find them labelled as the Robertson Co-operative wines, or at Pick 'n Pay where they have them packaged under their 'house' label, Ravenswood.

To quote Tim Rands, 'The aseptic pack is not a mechanism for disposing of cheap wine. Rather it is a consumer-friendly and convenient way of presenting quality wines to the marketplace at affordable prices.'

Great. So if they are quality wines why are they not labelled by the varietal names of the grapes responsible for the resultant wine ie: Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc or Chenin Blanc? Simply because legislation does not allow it. You can buy a combibrick of fruit juice labelled orange, and know by the small print that it has apple juice added to it, but the consumer will have to buy wine in these packs simply labelled: dry white, dry red, semi-sweet etc.

Of course, if you are wine-wise, one whiff and you will know the variety. However, you can hardly be expected to be allowed to enter liquor stores armed with a pair of scissors snipping and sniffing the contents until you get what you want.

So, once again the 'powers-that-be' insist the mystery of wine remains. It's a long, hard battle for those who believe wine consumers should be given the information of the varietal composition of wine if they want it. We have a couple of giant leaps concerning labelling legislation in the last two years; let's hope 1994 will bring more. □



ABOVE: ROBERTSON WINERY'S NEW 500ML VINIPAK.

BELOW: RAVENSWOOD WINES FROM PICK 'N PAY IN THE NEW VINIPAK.



Through the Glass Lightly

BY SUE BROWN



ABOVE: LOUIS ROEDERER CHAMPAGNES.

Magical, Mystical Roederer Crystal Returns

The care taken by the champagne house of Roederer in the making of a special cuvée for Louis Roederer Crystal is legendary. The uniqueness of the product is due to the careful blending of reserve wines and ultra strict quality control. Unlike many champagne houses, Roederer owns most of the vineyards where the grapes for their champagne are grown, thus they can maintain a strict control from grape to bottle.

Louis Roederer Crystal Champagne is now available in South Africa. Don't miss out on this unforgettable taste sensation.

Grangehurst Winery Launch Their First Vintage

Grangehurst Winery was established in 1992 by Jeremy Walker, the man responsible for

putting Clos Malvern wines on the map, and his new wines are certainly noteworthy. The Cabernet/Merlot blend is well worth investing in, and the Pinotage is the type that is making British wine critics sit up and take notice of South African wines. This is very much a boutique winery with a small quality production, so should you be interested in ensuring supplies in the future you may like to assist in the financing of Grangehurst winery by investing in debentures.

For more information contact Jeremy Walker on (024) 55-3625.

Beyerskloof Flowing Smoothly

Winemaker Beyers Trutter has produced some stunning vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon from the Beyerskloof vineyards. As in previous years, a limited edition of the wine, in a presentation wooden case, is available. The 1992 Andante collection contains two 1.5l magnums and four 750ml bottles of Beyerskloof. Lay this wine down in the cellar for new century drinking after the millennium.

In From The Outback

Australian wine has arrived in our shores under the label of Jacobs Creek. Presently available is the 1993 Semillon Chardonnay blend, the 1992 Shiraz Cabernet blend and the lightly wooded Chardonnay. Competitively priced around R13 to R15, this is not the greatest wine Australia produces, but the wines do demonstrate the quality and consistency that has been the cornerstone of Australia's success in the European wine market.



ABOVE: UITKYK ESTATE.

Bergkelder Vinoteque Pre-release Offer 1994

Some of the pre-release wines presently nestling in the barrel are the Allesverloren Cabernet Sauvignon 1992 and the Tinta Barocca 1993. Both are deep, inky wines at this stage with one dimensional 'noses' ripe for further development. The Cabernet is a fine example of the sumptuous South African style of this variety. Meerlust Rubicon 1992 meanwhile, displays hints of tobacco on the nose and flavours emanating from the wine, 'simpliminally' say, 'don't spit me, drink me'.

Le Bonheur 1992 Cabernet was one of the leaders of the pack. It has an amazing deep rich colour with good depth, a fruit cake nose, well integrated wood and a long finish.

Stellenryck Cabernet 1992 simply stands out amongst its peers; subtle, creamy textures are well woven together for tactile pleasure in the future.

Wines a little older and more accessible on the palate were the Alto Cabernet 1989 with a wonderful cedary, woody nose with soft berry fruit caressing the palate. La Motte's Cabernet 1989 is very youthful in colour, well-structured though lighter than one would normally expect from Cabernet.

For information call Jacques Vandewalle at the Bergkelder Vinoteque on (021) 887-2440 □

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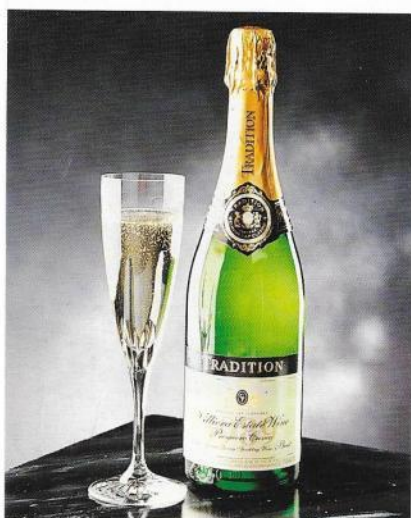


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WINE

Through the Glass Lightly

SUE BROWN'S COLUMN



Keeping up with Tradition

Tradition was one of the first sparkling wines made in the *Cap Classique* style and gained a healthy market share from the outset. The latest addition to the range is the *Première Cuvée 1989*. The classic Champagne varieties of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay form the base of the blend and part of the wine was matured in 300 litre barrels. The wine was then left on the lees for a further four years and disgorged in October 1993. Despite its age, the wine has a remarkable freshness about it and good weight on the palate.

A quick taste of the whole sparkling range with winemaker Jeff Grier was pretty impressive. The non-vintage Tradition Carte Rouge shows intensity on the nose, good mouth feel and access to flavour. 'Mouth feel' by the way, is the buzz in-word in wine tasting terms at the moment. Mention it around the dinner



table and impress the company.

The Grande Cuvée Carte D'Or is more complex, there is bit of wood reserve wine in this blend, lots of fruit and a very appealing nose.

For the starry-eyed, the Tradition Rosé N.V. is worth a second look, the wine is a blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with Pinotage blended in for the colour. A good, full wine with lots of underlying fruit.

Paul Cluver Wines

Deep in the heart of the apple country one

hardly expects to find vineyards, but the Elgin area over Sir Lowry's Pass has proved ideal. About a decade ago SFW whizz viticulturist, Ernst le Roux went on the search for cool grape growing regions and found that Elgin was just what the doctor ordered. The doctor in this case is Paul Cluver, owner of the farm, and a man with enough vision to embrace the experiment. His foresight paid dividends, originally the farm was more experimental rather than market-orientated but this is rapidly changing.

The grapes are harvested at Elgin and trucked through to Nederburg. The fundis will be pleased to know that these grapes are chilled to ensure no spoilage occurs *en route*.

The wine is then made in the Nederburg cellars; the outcome being some really different wine. Forget those nose-blasting, fruit-driven new world styles of wine, this is a return to the more elegant and reticent wines of Northern Europe.

The Sauvignon Blanc has a delicate clean nose with surprising weight on the palate and a good follow-through. The Chardonnay presents with a shy, citrus, buttery nose, but with a tautness on the palate and the fruit is easily accessible despite its oak-ageing. And their Rhine Riesling is certainly worth a good look; a remarkable varietal nose leads to a subtle oily feel with fruit on the palate.

Lastly, the Gewurtztraminer has an intricate nose and again it is a revelation to find so much weight on the palate from such shy beginnings. I was also fortunate to try an experimental Pinot Noir, definitely worth a second vintage tryout.

Classical Glen Carlou

The obvious 'drink off' competition has to be between the Australians and South Africans. Round one of the Chardonnay contest went to Australia for their Seppelt Corella Ridge 1992. Glen Carlou though came in a respectable second. This testing was held in South Africa but a return bout is to take place in Sydney in the near future. Meanwhile the Cabernet Franc is finding its niche whilst British Airways selected the 1990 Cabernet Sauvignon for on-board imbibing. All this and more as the Port, blended from such varieties as the Portuguese Touriga Nacional and the Touriga Francisca is maturing quietly in the cellars ready to make a debut.

Bergkelder Update

Old favourite Allesverloren Tinta Barocca 1989 is another of those full, rich wines from a good 'red' vintage year, tightly packed with fruit and enough tannin for long-term cellaring. The Meerlust Rubicon 1988 will continue to please this Estate's devotees, a very elegant and accessible wine this. The 1988 Merlot from this Estate is also on the shelves and is silky and opulent.



It is pleasing to see the return of Alto Cabernet, there was no 1985 Cabernet from this estate bottled but the 1986 vintage retains all the special characteristics one expects from this farm, though there is a little more subtleness creeping in, which gives a greater harmony on the palate.

Of the whites, the Uitkyk Riesling 1993 proves to be a well-rounded, although undemanding wine. The Sauvignon Blanc 1993 however, will be a welcome relief for those who do not want a whack of fruit to assail the senses and a mouthful of high acid to wake up the taste buds. It is an elegant and subdued example of this variety.

For those of you who have temporarily 'gone off' Rhine Rieslings, give the 1993 L'Ormarins Rhine Riesling a try. Although I

prefer a little age on wines from this variety, this one has an appealing freshness and its off-dry style, makes it very acceptable as a relaxing tipple.

Ellis in his Element

Neil Ellis has found a new home for his hand-crafted wine-making style – Oude Nektar Estate. Estate owner Hans Schroder, has formed a partnership with Neil Ellis and the original Oude Nektar wines are being phased out. Ellis is a true negotiant, he buys and vinifies grapes only from top quality vineyards sourcing his grapes from as far afield as Elgin and Darling. ▷



The proof of the pudding is in the eating and Neil Ellis wine has for some time attracted more than favourable comments both here and overseas; from the reasonably priced everyday drinking wine in the Inglewood range to the more refined vineyard selection of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Winter Woollies

Woolworths have launched the first wines of the season. Referred to as Nouveau wines, the Paarl wine growing area has been celebrating the annual arrival of these wines with much festivity on top of the Paarl mountain. There are various ways the winemakers get their wines 'on top', some of them extremely novel.

Jeff Grier of Villiera Estate, makes the wines exclusive to Woolworths. He is aided and abetted by Woolworth's senior wine buyer, Cape Wine Master, Alan Mullins who judging by his track record is well tuned to consumer's palates. There are three styles to choose from, The Jeunesse, made from Gamay, the traditional red grape variety of Beaujolais, the home of nouveau style wines. The Jeune Blanc a crisp, aromatic wine made from a blend of three white cultivars and the Jeune Rose, a lively semisweet wine with a romantic pink hue. All the wines are best enjoyed chilled.

Jordan on Track

One of the new wineries in Stellenbosch is that of Jordan, architecturally an interesting winery. At present there are four wines on offer. The 1993 Chardonnay surprised me by showing great complexity in a wine so young and the 1993 Blanc Fumé is crisp and firm; though I was unable to try the 1993 Rhine Riesling as it was sold out on the farm. An interesting wine was Chameleon Blanc, a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay and slightly tart at present with no wood to mellow it down. This is a wine farm worth keeping an eye on in the future.

New Innings for Bodega

If you thought the only interest Eddie Barlow had was cricket, then think again, he is also into wine. There is more than a touch of romanticism about his farm in the Paarl district. His wife Julianne freely admits to being on a learning curve, which is mirrored in the wine because it gets better with each vintage. Their 1991 Bodega Cabernet Sauvignon is very up-front with lots of tannin evident but the fruit does show through.

Auction Aftermath

Nearly 50% of wine sold on auction at Nederburg will leave our shores this year. Those who feel Denmark is all fairy tales and Lego-land will be surprised to hear that they were the biggest overseas buyers at the auction with the Far East not far behind them.

Overseas visitors also bought forth cheer when guest speaker, Robin Day of the Orlando Wyndham Group of Australia, opened the auction. Arguably one of the best opening speeches of the twenty year auction, Day drew parallels between the South African and Australian wine industry. Commenting on the success of the bag-in-the-box on the local Australian market and the increase of Australian wine exports, Day ascribed the success which resulted in the doubling of Australian wine production from 1972 to 1989, to the fact that wine was placed within easy reach of the average person.

He emphasised there was no room for

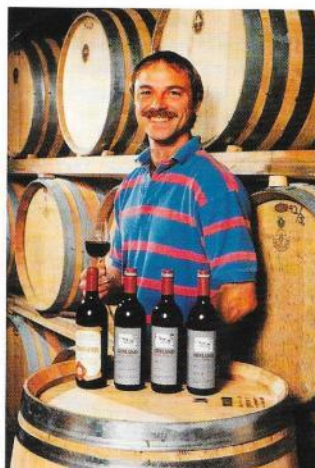
elitism, maintaining that producers cannot fall into the trap of letting the mystique of wine do all the promotional work. Day said: 'To overplay the mystique, for centuries a valuable and favourite marketing tool, is to run the risk of alienating perfectly good consumers, a practice which tragically has become almost an art form in sections of the international wine market.'

Whether we agree or disagree, one thing is for sure, Australia has certainly captured the European wine lover's imagination and we have a lot more spade work to do before we catch up.

Lievland Lives On

My visit to Lievland Estate coincided with the arrival of Alan Young, author of nine wine books and director of San Francisco's International Wine School. Young was here to gain greater insight into the Cape Winelands and Lievland's winemaker, Abe Beukes was on hand to lead the tasting.

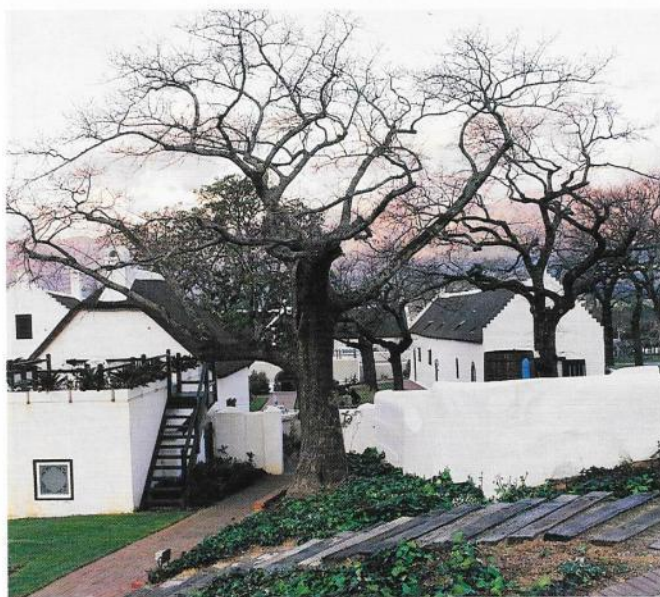
Lievland's Chardonnay 1992 was developing nicely though it remained a little austere on the palate. The 1990 vintage showed what maturation can do for this Chardonnay, a wonderful rounded palate and lots of long-lasting flavours. Lievland is most famous for their Shiraz, which Alan Young was particularly impressed with. Warm, rich and luxurious, it is a sort of spoil-yourself wine. □



A Matter of Taste

BY SUE BROWN

"A woman is only a woman but a good cigar is a smoke."



ABOVE: THE GRAND ROCHE HOTEL IN PAARL WHERE A MONTHLY CIGAR DINNER IS HOSTED.



ABOVE: ACE CIGAR SMOKER AND PORT LOVER, THEO RUDMAN.

The above quotation is from that doyen of literary imperialism, Rudyard Kipling. It probably did more damage to cigar smoking as a result of feminist reaction than all the anti-tobacco lobbies put together. But the Grande Roche Hotel in Paarl are making a valiant attempt to put cigar smoking back into perspective. And to this end they invited cigar ace, Theo Rudman, to host a monthly Cigar Dinner at the hotel, where smoking is virtually mandatory for both

sexes.

Recently, I was lucky enough to attend one of these evenings where the first thing I discovered was that cigars vary so much in taste that the descriptions read like wine tasting notes. Terms such as, 'velvety mouth feel', 'coffee cream' or 'tea flavours with a light aftertaste', abound.

Then there are the variety of shapes and sizes. The Corona Grandes measure six inches in length and the half Coronas a mere three

and a half inches; a range large enough to ensure oral gratification for all concerned. The size difference does not effect the quality, but the longer the cigar, the cooler the smoke.

Cuba is still considered the home of the great handmade cigars. The Cubans put this down to the fact that they have the right seeds, the right climate, the right soil and many years of experience.

However, if one looks at the cigar business in depth there are a few holes in this scenario.

After the Cuban revolution, the farms were taken away from the large land owners and companies and returned to the peasants in 150 acre lots. So the key tobacco growing

areas lost some of their collective know-how and uniform tobacco growing.

The original land owners took their experience and the famed Cuban seed and moved mainly to the Dominican Republic and Honduras, where they claim to replicate the 'quality' cigar. Whether they have achieved this remains a point of conjecture amongst cigar smokers today. The problem arises with the brand names, take for example Romeo Julieta, if it comes from Cuba then it will have Habana on the band, if it hails from the Dominican Republic then it would state Dom. Rep. Partagas is not so easy, sure it reads Habana if it is Cuban but merely states the date of the founding company (1845) if it is from the Dominican Republic.

The array of choice does not stop in the Caribbean despite the fact that the '*Nicotiana tabacum*' is a native of South America. The reason: the Dutch and Swiss introduced machine-made 'dry' cigars; those cigars which do not need humidity when stored, and are of Indonesian origin.

If geography is not your strong point then the construction of handmade cigars, the filler, the binder and the wrapper may take your fancy. The filler is obviously all important, the lucrative tobacco crop only takes 80 to 90 days to grow from seed. When fully developed 16 to 17 leaves are picked at various intervals, the higher or *ligero* leaves being the stronger, the bottom or *volado* leaves having the more subtle flavour.

After the leaves are dried on poles, they are placed in a sort of compost heap where the extractions of the oils, tars and nicotine takes place, mellowing the harsh components. This all takes years and the process of sorting the best from the mediocre is yet another stage in fine cigar making.

Next in the assembly is the binder which holds the tobacco in shape. With a Cuban cigar the binder will also be Cuban but cigars made in other areas may shop around for the quality they need, using binders from Mexico or Connecticut.

The same goes for the all-important wrapper. Despite claims of superiority from Cuba's Vuelta Abajo region, Connecticut is fast weighing in as the prime producer of leaves for this component.

A good wrapper has a satiny, oily appearance. The tobacco leaves are grown especially for this purpose under tents of muslin to en-

sure the leaves grow at optimum temperature and humidity. This is to ensure a uniform size and colour. Ideally the leaf is a foot long, radiant green and paper thin.

There is little doubt that one can get hooked on cigar tasting as quickly as wine tasting. Once the huge spectrum of smell and taste sensations grabs you, you embark on a roller coaster of heightened awareness.

There are also the rites that go with the smoke, the matches, the guillotine and the wonderful cedar wood humidors. Look what the anti-tobacco campaign has done to a generation of children, where else did you keep your crayons than in your father's old cigar boxes; compare that smell with today's plastic pencil cases. Of course, there is always the hardened cigar smoker who has withstood the rigors of social ostracism through the years. One such person was my neighbour at the dinner table who informed me rather unromantically that he always refreshed his cigars in the deep freeze.

How did our dinner host get into the enigmatic subject of cigars? For Theo Rudman the perfect partner to a cigar must be Port. Port had always been a passion of his but when he married Cape Wine Master, Christine Rudman, he switched this focus from Portugal to our local product and started to campaign for dryer South African Port, more in line with the originators of the product.

Soon wine producers began to look seriously at re-instating this very civilised post prandial tipple. It was Rudman's drive, and the wine makers desire to improve the local product, which caused the formation of SAPP (The South African Port Producers Association).

Today there are twelve members who set down guidelines to improve the image and quality of the product. One of these ports is Rudman's Port, made in conjunction with winemaker Stefan Smit. One of the driest Ports on the market, its packaging is easily recognisable, a most unusually shaped bottle depicting a rather portly gentleman.

So if life is getting you down, try an evening of Port and cigars at the Grande Roche. You might as well go the whole hog and stay the night, and if – despite the fact that you do not inhale cigars – you fear residual smoke in your lungs, a quick jog around the vineyards on a fresh Paarl morning will soon allay those worries. □

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



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The Noblest of Them All



The Stellenryck collection of wines, made at the Bergkelder, are very special. Only produced in those years when there is an exceptional quality vintage, and only made from the noble grape varieties, the Cabernet Sauvignon 1989 is now available.

To ensure the superior quality of the wine, the Cabernet Sauvignon clones were carefully selected before they were planted in the Stellenbosch, Durbanville and Paarl areas.

From then on, all the viticultural aspects are supervised by a team of experts from the Bergkelder. The vines' yields are kept low to ensure maximum concentration of flavours and components. In 1988 the growing season was ideal and as the new year began, the temperatures started to rise and the rains lessened to ensure further concentration of the berry. The low yield of 6 to 8 tons per hectare were harvested at sugar levels of 21.8-degrees balling.

The grapes were then taken to the Bergkelder cellars, and following fermentation, the wines from the different pressings were matured separately in small wood casks, for a period of 27 months.

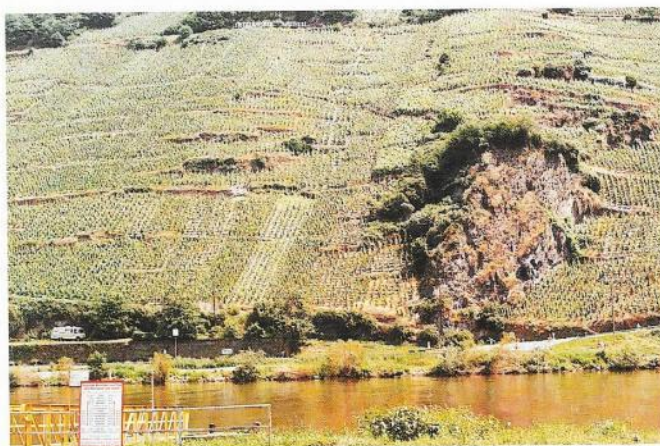
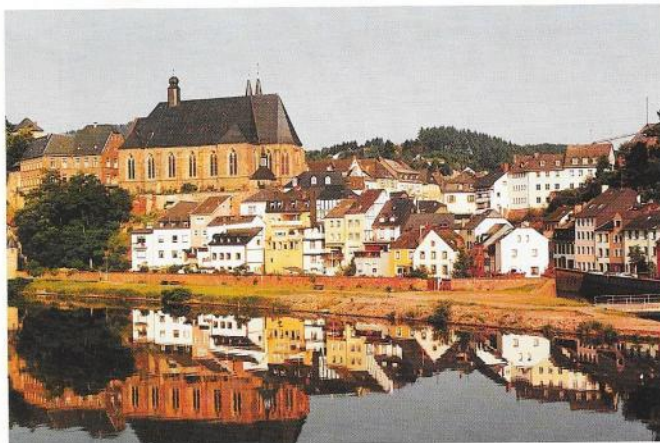
The different batches were tasted and tested regularly and after two years the wines were skillfully blended. Following a three year maturation period in the temperature and humidity-controlled Bergkelder cellars, the wine has now been released for the wine consumer's enjoyment.

Each bottle has an individual registration number, so that every bottle is listed in the cellars at De Bergkelder. □

WINE

Mosel Mosey

BY SUE BROWN



TOP: SAARBURG, A VISIT TO ANOTHER TIME.

ABOVE: VINES STANDING LIKE AN ARMY OF SOLDIERS UP THE STEEP HILL SIDE AT TRITTEN.

I have a theory about the Mosel River. I am certain that eons ago its course was a straight one in order to facilitate grape growing. I suspect some yuppie celt prayed to his gods asking if the distance between him and his cousins along the Rhine could be closed up a little. As this took place in innocent times, the gods acquiesced and sent down the necessary bolts of lightning, earthquakes etc. and rucked up the countryside. The result was that the river became convoluted and the gods above were satisfied that the distance to Koblenz appeared shorter than before.

W as our little celt pleased? I doubt it, since as the river appeared to be shorter in length, the banks were heightened, giving the next generations the arduous task of growing vines on ter-

rain similar to the north face of the Eiger.

All this makes for one of the most beautiful and delightful wine areas to visit. Old villages nestle on the banks where there is a distinctly south-facing bend on a river that runs almost



ONE OF THE NUMEROUS WINE TASTING PLACES ALONG THE MOSEL.

north. A student of the area has only to study a map and discover that these south-facing vineyards lead to an area where the greatest wine can be found.

Untrellised vines stand like an army of straight-back soldiers rooted in what appears to be solid rock. This 'soil' or rather slate, is what local Mosel folk claim is the secret of their success.

Despite the northerly location of the vineyards, it is difficult to believe the vines had to struggle to ripen. When we first arrived, the sun was shining and the river was so calm and tranquil I was almost tempted to spend an afternoon cruising the length of it. This was supposedly the start of a working day, or so we thought. But, out of the potential 52 weekends in the year, we happened to be upon the Mosel during the Happy Mosel Festival. The roads were closed and thousands of cyclists were meandering their way along the banks with carefree abandon. Undaunted by this minor hiccup, we set out on a vinous voyage.

Germany's new breed of winemakers are still excessively fond of their dry wines. I have yet to be really impressed with any wine in the medium priced range and found nothing memorable in the better quality line. In fact, in the end we referred to them as Rennie's

specials, due to the discreet sounds of little white papers being unwrapped after every wine tasting. That far north there is no shortage of acid.

My first taste of dry wines on this trip, was in Saarburg, on the Saar River which feeds the Mosel. There were wonderful large tartrate crystals in the bottom of the glass and the wine was served in one of those attractive dumpy green-stemmed Mosel glasses. With the first sip my throat constricted. After the initial shock there was little or no fruit to soften the blow. However, in Tritten, we fell upon a respectable 1992 Riesling; Auslese, Trittenheimer Apotheke, qmp, from Clusserath, Schmitt, Eiffel, this went down very well. Of course we had to try the wines of the Bernkastel in the dry section, a 1991 Badstube Riesling Kabinett from Erben Karl Dillinger did not assail the stomach lining. With an alcohol content of only 8.5% it meant the liver was not too averse to a second bottle. At Zell we tried a pleasing Zeller Schwarzekatz from F. J. Weis. At Krov, a Naktarsch wine was mandatory and a spatlese from Hans Kinn Kaufmann hit the spot.

The semi-sweet, off-dry or 'medium' as it is referred to is far more palatable even if it is unfashionable among wine *cognoscenti* at present. Although wine makers still cling to their ideals of making a lusciously sweet wine, the weather permits the grape to reach a really late harvest stage on extremely rare occasions.

Looking at the shelves in supermarkets and general bottle stores in Holland, Belgium and the UK you can gauge the popularity of 'medium' German wine by the large amount of shelf space allocated to the wines.

It was very heartening to see an increase of South African wines available in these supermarkets. Vinifruco seem to be doing a great job, we found one of their wines being promoted in The York Inn in the tiny village of Churchinford, Somerset. We still have a long way to go before we threaten wines from other countries though. The one factor that Germany has over us, when it comes to wine, is their alcohol content, it is so very much lower than ours. And this is a relevant point in their favour with the increased awareness of alcohol limitations.



On *Middelvlei* every rose tells a story

Middelvlei was the first wine estate to have rose bushes heading the rows of vines, as in France, to give early warning of possible vine diseases. This is one example of the care lavished on Middelvlei's immaculate vineyards.

The Momberg family – owner Jan, and his sons Tinnie and Ben – believes in doing things naturally. Thus, the vines are not irrigated to reduce yield and concentrate flavour, and only natural fertilisers are used.

Soil and climate, careful farming and progressive know-how have made Middelvlei a foremost red wine producer.

Middelvlei Cabernet Sauvignon 1986

A Veritas Double Gold Medal winner, the wine is rich on the palate, fragrant on the nose. Showing good tannin, it has years of maturation potential.



Middelvlei Pinotage 1988

A Veritas Gold Medal winner. Intense and powerful. This is the cultivar that initially made the estate famous.



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Now open for wine tastings and sales.
Tel: (021) 883-2565

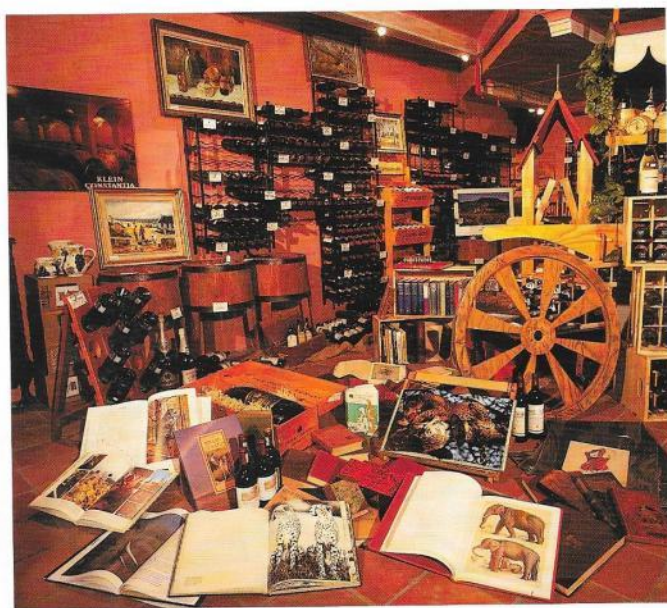


Wines of Origin, Stellenbosch. Made on the wine estate and marketed by The Bergkelder.

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Through the Glass Lightly

SUE BROWN'S COLUMN



Sensual Shopping

For those of you who are looking for a tranquil place to while away a couple of hours, it may come as a surprise to hear that I would recommend a bottle store. A rather harsh sounding generic term for the 'Little Wine Shoppe', situated in The Colony on Jan Smuts Avenue. It's here, whilst being softly serenaded by the classics that you can browse around amidst over 3 500 different wines from the Cape and further afield. Added to your enjoyment is an assortment of antiquarian and out of print books also housed in the attractively designed cellar. Terry Renaud of Pickwick books has joined forces with Wally and Reinette Watton, owners of Little Wine Shoppe, to create this unique venture. Another added attraction is

the on-going exhibition of paintings by such artists as Wessel Marais and Gail Opperman.

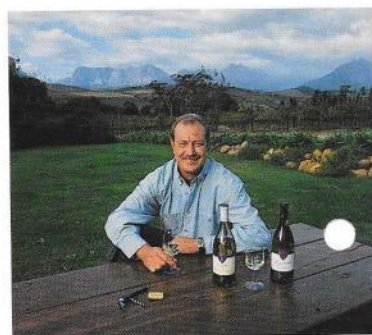
Diners Do It Again

Still on the food and wine route, Diners Club recently announced the winners of their prestigious Wine List of the Year Award. The Cento Restaurant in Kensington, Johannesburg run by the famous Strick duo were the runaway winners in the Long Wine List category. Of the Standard Wine List group there was another Johannesburg winner, this time Le Bastille Restaurant. In the Short Wine List category, which produced some very unique and interesting lists, The Upper Crust of Cape Town took the honours.

Whilst the Cape and Transvaal shared

most of the runners up trophies and the Recommended Wine List Certificate awards, Natal showed poorly. It would appear by these results that the only place to find a noteworthy wine list in the province is at the Crayfish Inn, Ramsgate.

The Peter Devereux Trophy was presented this year for the best new entry in the competition, named in recognition of Devereux's work in initiating the Wine List of the Year Awards. The winners, Michael Davimus and Linda Murray of the Homestead Restaurant in Edenvale accepted the trophy from Peter's widow Marie.



Louisvale Launch

Louisvale Chardonnay 1993 has just made its debut on the market place. This is one of those serious Chardonnays that I almost want to enjoy on my own so as to capture all the aromas undisturbed. Rounded and smooth, the wine is well integrated after its eight months in a selection of new and old wood. The alcohol content of 12.6% ensures a good weight on the palate and along with the low pH, this is a wine to enjoy now but will no doubt improve with a bit of cellaring.

The 1992 vintage received numerous accolades from America and the UK as well as being a Gold Medal winner at the Concourse Mondial de Bruxelles.

The Chardonnay's stable mate, Chavant continues to increase in popularity and made the top 100 wine list, the only South African wine to achieve this, at the Sydney International Wine competition.

It's going to be very interesting to see what winemaker Marinus Bredell does with the Merlot Cabernet blend presently at kindergarten stage in Louisvale's cellars.

The Gilt-Edge Guild

The Cape Independents Wine Auction once again delighted collectors of the wares of some of the Cape's top winemakers. The Guild now has 23 members and the wines offered this year range from the 1989 vintage to two of the 1994 vintages, namely Boschendal Sauvignon Blanc and Morgenhof Chardonnay.

Of the wines on offer, I took a fancy to the Zevenwacht Blanc Fumé 1991, which had lovely weight on the palate with the wood well integrated. Bouchard Finlayson were up to their usual high standard with an Oak Valley Chardonnay 1993. Although needing a little time to round off, it had a good citrus edge and a long fruit finish, with wood unobtrusively apparent. I preferred this vintage to the 1992. Boschendal's new blend of Pinot Noir (30%) and Chardonnay (20%), was a slightly austere wine with the softer Chardonnay flavours coming through. I would like to taste the wine again after a couple of years.

The red wines were on the whole rather superb. Look out for the Delheim Merlot Signe 1991. Intense fruit cake nose with a splendid concentration of fruit on the palate. The Klein Constantia Shiraz Reserve 1991, was spicy and complex with lots of warm fruit flavours. Warwick Femme Bleue 1992 appealed as a wine to keep in the cellar, well integrated wood and fruit with a long-lasting aftertaste.

Pioneering Stuff

Jan 'Boland' Coetzee is a man big in size and heart. His generosity to folk is legendary and it was he who spearheaded the movement in upgrading vineyard workers conditions, playing an indispensable role in the initial years of the Rural Foundation.

There was no open cheque book for Jan when he began. After he had bought the farm Vriesenhof, it took almost eleven years from when he made his first wines under the oak trees to finish the modern cellar now situated on Vriesenhof. Across the valley a small farm called Talana Hill was acquired by his old rugby adversary Doug Smollen along with three of his friends. They invited Coetzee to run the vineyard and make the wine.

This year sees the formal business merger of these two farms although they will retain their own separate identities wine-wise. The

new merger is advantageous from a marketing point of view particularly in the export arena.

The Vriesenhof Kallista and Cabernet Sauvignon 1991 are now available on the market as is the 1993 Chardonnay. For the first time, the Talana Hill Royale 1991 is made from grapes solely grown on the farm. Also available is the Chardonnay 1993, more lightly wooded than previous years.

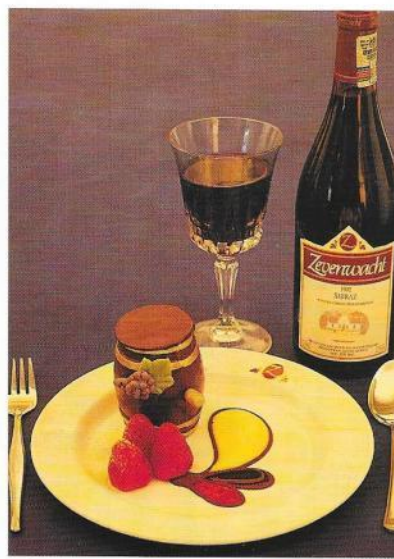
The Paradyskloof range, the second label from Vriesenhof remains available with the non-vintage red and white wine and a Pinotage 1992.



An up to date restaurant complex is now *in situ*, headed up by Zevenwacht director and executive chef, Sidney Bond. In the complex, light lunches are served and picnic baskets can be shared whilst relaxing under the willow trees. For those who wish to enjoy an excellent menu, they can visit the Zevenwacht >

From Rags to Zevenwacht

Harold Johnson's life to date reads a little like a fairy tale. Brought up in Stellenbosch, his family suffered more than their share of finan-



cial hardships. However, after a spell in the navy, Johnson embarked on a commercial career which opened up opportunities which he grasped with both hands. Today he heads up Johnson Crane Hire, the biggest of this type of operation in the country. This put him in the position to be able to return to the Boland and acquire Zevenwacht Estate in 1992. The hitherto financially failing venture has had an enormous injection of cash to put it well and truly back on the wine map.

The farm's history dates back to 1688, but it is in more recent times that research showed its proximity to the sea and the soil composition earmarked it as an ideal environment for grape growing.

Pride Restaurant for a culinary experience.

The wines are being presented with a complete new look. Winemaker Eric Saayman has been spending time abroad to further improve his wine-making techniques – go, see and taste for yourself, either in the Cape or visit their wine tasting room in the Transvaal.

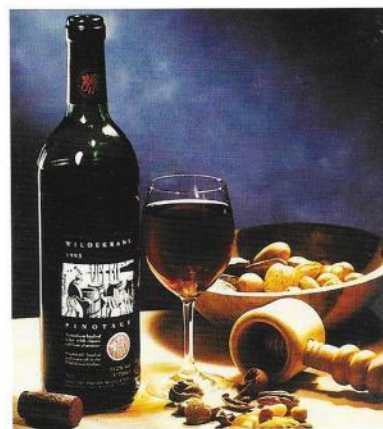


Ethnic Is In

One of the leading foodie groups, the Chaîne des Rotisseurs, recently confirmed that ethnic 'is in' with a very different gastronomical experience at Gramadoelas Restaurant.

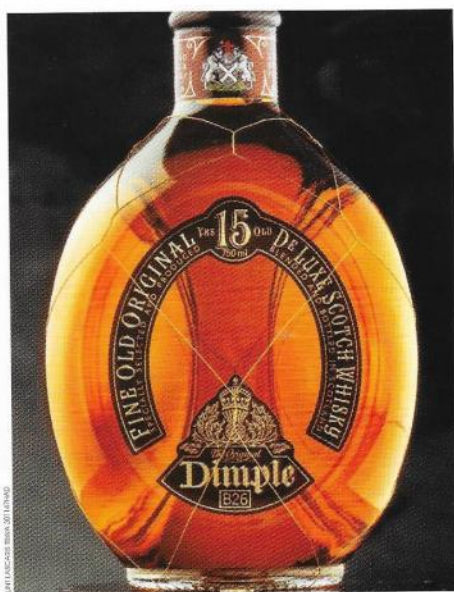
Unaccustomed as I am to Mopani worms in peri peri sauce, not to mention traditional black tripe, choosing a wine to accompany the meal really stretched the imagination of the local Chaîne Bailli, Yvonne Haas. This august lady appeared to satisfy diners with a 1992 Paul Cluver Gewurztraminer which complemented the two spicy starters wonderfully. The Nederburg Pinotage 1978 married well with the Moroccan, Ethiopian and West African dishes. Whilst a 1991 Edelkeur was, needless to say, the perfect accompaniment with a rich Cape pudding.

LEFT: THE CONFRÉRIÉ DE LA CHAÎNE DES ROTISSEURS FROM L TO R: GUGU SIBIYA, YVONNE HAAS AND HABITAT'S FOOD EDITOR, ISABEL JONES.



In From The Wilderness

Wildeckrans Cellars has two rather prestigious neighbours, namely Hamilton Russel Vineyards and Bouchard Finalyson. From that



*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.



you can deduce that the area of Walker Bay has the potential to make great wines. Last year you probably came across a very reasonably priced, well produced Sauvignon Blanc from these cellars. Both the wooded and unwooded versions ripple with interest. Now they have produced a Pinotage from the 1993 vintage.

This wine has just won a Silver medal at the International Wine Challenge in the UK so I would keep my eye on the cellar, its present production augers well for the future.

Not Run of the Mill

Vergelegen's release of their first red wine may come as a surprise to those who were expecting a serious wine from this estate. Instead, this maiden release is rather whimsical and definitely quaffable. A blend of predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon with smaller percentages of Merlot and Pinot Noir and a touch wood maturation to add complexity. Look out for Vergelegen's Mill Race Red, it is a wine for all seasons, no fuss, just let the good times roll.



Nederburg in Cap Classique

Nederburg Blanquette Cap Classique de Chardonnay 1991 is now a permanent addition to the range of Nederburg wines. The

1990 vintage of this sparkling wine was first introduced to guests at the Nederburg Auction as part of Nederburg's bicentennial celebrations. Two thousand cases (packed six to a box) of the 1991 vintage, have now been made available to consumers.

Blanquette is made in the Cap Classique tradition, differing from the other two popular Nederburg sparkling wines which are made in the Charmat method. The winemaking team have had to wait patiently for the Chardonnay vineyards to reach maturity. The grapes are grown on the cool slopes of the Simonsberg and are now into their fourth crop.

Additional dimension has been given to the wine by maturing part of the base wine in small wooden casks and allowing the wine to mature for 24 months prior to release. It will be available in your local bottle store for under R20.00 a bottle.



Bergkelder's Bargains

If you are looking for that slightly older bottle of wine which has been laid down in optimum conditions, now is your time to zip off to your local licensee and make your choice from Bergkelder's Special Release.

There are some very special wines, including the Meerlust Rubicon, from the 1984 vintage which many claim was the best vintage of

the decade.

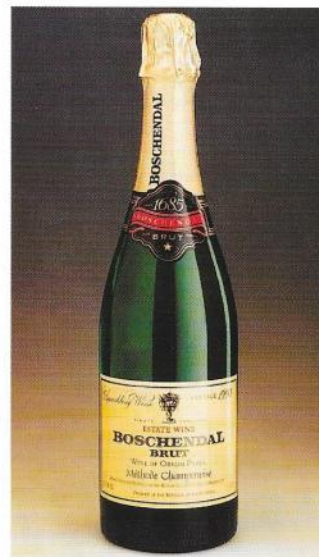
Also from 1984, an Alto Cabernet, winner of the Grand Prix d'Honneur at the 1993 Vinexpo. Another wine from the famous vintage is the Uitkyk Carlonet. This was the last vintage made by Dr Harvey Illing before he retired from the farm. There is a 1984 Le Bonheur Cabernet Sauvignon and a Fleur du Cap Cabernet Sauvignon – well worth denting your credit card for.

Remember for a nominal charge all wines will remain in The Bergkelder's Vinoteque until delivery is requested.

Boschendal's New Vintages

A wine to look out for is the Boschendal 1990 Brut, this sparkling wine has been left on the lees for four years and was only disgorged in February 1994. Twenty percent of the Chardonnay was matured in small oak barrels, the blend of grapes used in this Cap Classique wine is 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir.

New vintages available are the Blanc de Blanc, Riesling, Blanc de Noir and Le Bouquet; all from the 1993 vintage. For those who enjoy a slightly more mature, complex white wine, Boschendal's single vineyard wine, Jean Garde Gewurtztraminer should appeal. □



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WINE

Méthode Cap Classique

BY SUE BROWN

M.C.C. does not stand for Marylebone Cricket Club in wine circles; but winemakers can lord it over cricketers when it comes to sparkling performances.

To a wine maker it's a labour of love, making a Cap Classique wine, and to ensure that quality is maintained a group of producers gathered together to form an association to ensure high standards are maintained. By general consensus the group upholds French traditional standards while allowing for variances in style due to Cape conditions.

The grapes of choice are Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and they undergo specialised treatment during the pressing to ensure only the finest juice is gained.

The winemakers expertise is needed throughout the long process of making M.C.C. wines. But their individuality comes to the fore with the treatment of the sparkling wine during its all important second stage fermentation in the bottle.

Some of the base wines ready for the second bottle fermentation may have been stored in wood to add to the complexity of the resultant product.

And some base wines have undergone Malolactic fermentation to allow for the softening and rounding of the acids. Certain wines spend a greater length of time in contact with the lees, many winemakers feel the longer that contact time, the more developed is the complexity and freshness of the wine. The maturation time of the bottle *sans* lees is also a matter of personal taste.

Last and by no means least is

the question of the sugar content. Many a Cap Classique wine drunk unaccompanied by food will be enjoyed with a sugar content around 7-10 g/l.

The maximum sugar content for a Cap Classique wine labelled 'Brut' is 15 g/l. Others prefer

their sparkling wine much drier, Clos Cabriere being a notable example of the Cape's ultra dry style.

Not all wine makers using the traditional *méthode champenoise* process of making sparkling wine are members of the Méthode Cap

Classique Association. Over the next few pages though, we outline the individual qualities of some of South Africa's best Cap Classique Sparkling wines, all made by members of the M.C.C., committed to producing a quality product. ▷



PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE CORNER

Ten Years of Tempting Tourists

BY SUE BROWN



LABOIRE ESTATE IN PAARL, HOSTS TO THE 1994 SAA WINE LIST SELECTION PANEL.



SAA WINE TASTING JUDGES: (L TO R, BACK ROW) NEIL SCHNOOR, DAVE HUGHES, JABULANI NTSHANGASE, JOEL VAN WYK. (FRONT ROW) MICHAEL FRIDJHON, ZELMA LONG, JAMES HALLIDAY, JULIAN BRIND, LYNNE SHERRIFF, ALAN MULLINS, CH'NG POH TIONG.

SAA is currently the only new world airline that serves wines exclusive to its country of origin.

South African Airways over the past decade has assumed the role of ambassador-at-large for the Cape Wine Industry.

Hundreds of thousands of passengers, travel on SAA's routes around the world each year, sipping only South African wines.

How to make the choice of the wines served *en route* is a tough one. There is tremendous kudos attached to having a wine on SAA's wine list, thus more than 600 wines are offered for consideration.

The first screening panel for the selection

of wine is executed by that prominent, palate perfectionist, Cape Wine Master Tony Mossop, he somehow manages to manoeuvre 25 tasters from various vinous backgrounds to cut down the field to 200 wines. Then the international palates come in to the picture.

Each year SAA flies in prominent wine folk from different parts of the world and asks for their opinions on the final selection.

This year a wine man with a great sense of humour, Ch'ng Poh Tiong was back again from Singapore. One of Australia's top wine growers, authors, and tasters — James

Halliday was also happy to make a return visit. Julian Brind, Master of Wine, who heads the buying department for the vast UK Supermarket chain, Waitrose, was a great asset with his understanding of 'consumers' tastes. From the USA it was a pleasure to see the erudite Zelma Long, Chief Oenologist of the Robert Mondavi Winery in Nappa Valley return to our shores.

Two home grown judges now living out of the country were also invited; Jabulani Ntshangase, vice president of Cape Classic Inc., based in New York and Lynne Sherriff a Cape Wine Master in her own right and the first South African lady to achieve the coveted British Master of wine title. She heads the commercial side of Vinifruco in the United Kingdom.

Local judges included Professor Joel Van

WINE

Impressive Accolades

BY SUE BROWN



It was the wines of Constantia that first achieved worldwide recognition for South Africa. Klein Constantia continues to maintain the quality standards set by its forefathers.

Klein Constantia reawakened the public's awareness to its potential with a stunning and unforgettable 1986 Sauvignon Blanc. This wine won accolades from the wine cognoscenti and was al-

most in danger of overshadowing other wines from the Estate.

But the Cabernet Sauvignon also achieved more than a ripple of excitement when it was released. The 1986 maiden vintage was so different from the run of

the mill Cabernet Sauvignons on the market that it took some experts by surprise. By 1994 this vintage averaged a price of R60 a bottle on the Nederburg Auction.

The 1987 vintage was the Champion Cabernet Sauvignon at

the 1987 SAA wine show. It was chosen for Cathay Pacific First Class wine lists and won the Oaks Wine Club panel selection of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The next vintage, 1988, achieved even greater heights. Out of 1 700 entries it was the Champion wine overall of the 1988 SA Wine show.

SAA's rigorous panel chose it once more for their First Class wine list and awarded it the highest score of all the 255 red wine entries for 1993. The wine collected a gold medal at the Veritas awards and the Oaks Wine Club and the International Vineyards Club chose it as the best wine in its class.

If the 1988 vintage ran away with awards, the Cabernet Sauvignon made in 1989 was set to try and better it, this time the wine was a runner up Champion red wine at the 1989 SA Wine Show.

The wine that beat it was the 1989 Klein Constantia Marlbrook (Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend). Again SAA chose Klein Constantia Cabernet Sauvignon on First Class and again the International Vineyards selected the wine for its members.

The 1990 vintage has not been released long enough to know its final track record of achievements. It has auspicious beginnings though: Reserve Champion of the SA Wine show it was chosen again for SAA's First Class passengers.

There is little more to add, other than to say if you have not tried it yet you are missing out on a unique experience. □

Through the Glass Lightly

BY SUE BROWN

An Uncommonly Good Wine

It was nearly a decade ago that South Africa discovered the delights of Boschendal Blanc de Noir and there are some who might feel it is now *passé*. The members of the British House of Commons however are just starting out on the pleasure curve.

Prime Minister of Boschendal's marketing, Margaret Le Roy, was delighted when she

heard the 1993 Blanc de Noir will be enjoyed by M.P.'s and House of Commons staff.

As this gold rather than iron lady says: 'With our markets expanding, the United Kingdom has become one of our key areas of operation and we are very pleased that a Boschendal product should grace such a prestigious wine list'.

Maybe those afternoon sessions Sky television presents of the British parliamentary assembly in progress may perk up a little now.



" ★ ★ ★ ★ "

THAT'S WHAT JOHN PLATTER THINKS OF OUR:

GOUVERNEURS RESERVE 86-89
SHIRAZ 87/89
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MERLOT 90
WEISSER RIESLING 90-93
CHARDONNAY 92
GEWURTZTRAMINER 91-93
NOBLE LATE HARVEST 90-92

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THE JETTER DRAWING ROOM CAPE TOWN 0645

Uitkyk on the Right Track

Perhaps the choice of venue to launch Uitkyk's 1991 Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz blend was a little strange.

Blue Train in some social circles has a rather lowly connotation, far removed from this superb wine. However, it was in fact on a journey on the Blue Train between Johannesburg and Pretoria that Uitkyk launched their latest wine.

The Olde Worlde glamour and timeless feel certainly enhanced the pleasure of the wine.

Uitkyk is a large Estate with vineyards situated above the 200 metre mark. Here, on carefully selected slopes, the Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz grapes are grown. The Shiraz only yielded 5 tons per hectare which no doubt explains some of the concentration of fruit in the wine. The blending of the vari-



etals was completed prior to the maturation in second fill small oak barrels and was left to mature for a period of 14 months, one of the reasons why this wine is so well integrated.

Certainly, new wine maker Theo Brink must be well pleased by taking South Africa's greatest blending partners Shiraz and Cabernet to new heights.

Did the Blue Train experience seduce me as much as the wine – no. The waiters still have this peculiar habit of serving the men first, which flummoxes some of the less chauvinistic of the species, and the food did not live up to the excellence of the wine.

Pinotage Back in Fashion

The wines made from the Pinotage grape have been around for the last 33 years. It was the 1959 vintage from Lanzerac which first brought this varietal to the attention of the



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Now open for wine tastings and sales.
Tel: (021) 883-2565



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

MWV 004E

public and Lanzerac Pinotage is still worth attention. It has just earned double honours from the Wine of the Month Club, voted the best of the Pinotage from the 1990 vintage and best value Pinotage.

At under R12,00 a bottle this soft, fruity, very accessible wine, can be enjoyed now, but should improve even more with ageing. The alcohol is low enough to put it in the lunch

time drinking category which is a pleasant departure from some of the alcohol-driven wines presently available on the market.

Slainte

Whisky lovers are perhaps a little coy about the age of their tippie. The first record of the distillation of whisky is an entry in the exchequer rolls in 1494, where it is listed; 'eight bolls of malt to Friar John Cor wherewith to make Aquavitae'.

Thus 1994 is a good excuse for a party, but that entry adds credence to the Irish claim that Whisk(e)y was in fact invented in Ireland and the recipe taken across the sea by their monks to Scotland. This of course is open to speculation and needs more than the help of a wee dram to swallow. As any self respecting Scot will tell you, archeological sites found in the Hebrides prove that distillation was well and truly entrenched before St. Patrick even arrived on the Emerald Isle.

However, the marketing men take any opportunity which presents itself and have launched a Friar John Quincentenary Scotch to celebrate the occasion, so it's a case of Happy Five Hundredth Birthday Scotch Whisky, Happy Birthday to you.

Grangehurst Grows

Trying to lay one's hands on Grangehurst wines could have caused some frustration in

the past as production is limited; certainly there will never be huge supplies of this wine. Of the 1992 vintage of the Cabernet Sauvignon, the Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot Reserve and the Pinotage, only 1 360 cases were available. There are only 2 000 cases of the 1994 vintage of these wines, although we may be able to look forward to a straight varietal Merlot being added to the range in the future.

Now that the export markets are muscling in on the production; with orders from California, Canada and the UK, supply will be even more limited.

There is one way round the shortage and that is to acquire debentures in the farm but you will have to move fast as there were only a hundred on offer. They would make the most amazing Christmas present for your wine loving partner.

Chip Off The Old Block

Historically it's been wood, wood and more wood; recently though Cape Winemakers are definitely achieving the finer balance of wood and wine.

Vergenoegd is a good example of this harmony, they received a double gold award at the 1993 Veritas Award with their Vergenoegd Reserve 1990.

Vergenoegd wines have attained prominence in shows before but winemaker 'father', Jac Faure has now handed over the reigns to his son John whose judicious use of wood, and replanting of the vineyards with superior clones, has gained dividends. The reserve is an intense wine, packed with fruit and the soft tannins are well integrated. Predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, it is blended with Cabernet Franc (20%) and Merlot (20%) for further dimension and complexity.

This farm can also tempt you with their Vergenoegd Port, 1990. Made from Tinta Barocca grape variety, it follows the more traditional sweeter style of South African port and has been matured and rounded for two years in large oak barrels.

Robertson Runs Away With Winners

The J.G. Graue Trophy for SA Champion





White Table wine at the South African National Young Wine show was won by the Robertson Cooperative with their Chardonnay 1994.

So often the wine winning this award ends up blended away in obscurity, but this winner will reach the shelves and in a new package. Because the Robertson Winery has just revamped its image with new consumer friendly labels.

This is the same winery, which in collaboration with Vinimark, were the first to commission the installation of an aseptic wine packaging plant for the production of Vinipacks. They have even made the Wine and Spirits board sit up by proving that the consumer would like the name of the cultivar from which the wine was made to appear on the package. Previously, the consumer/buyer was only allowed to know if the wine was white or red, dry or sweet.

Changes are afoot, goodbye dark ages, we are beginning to see the light.

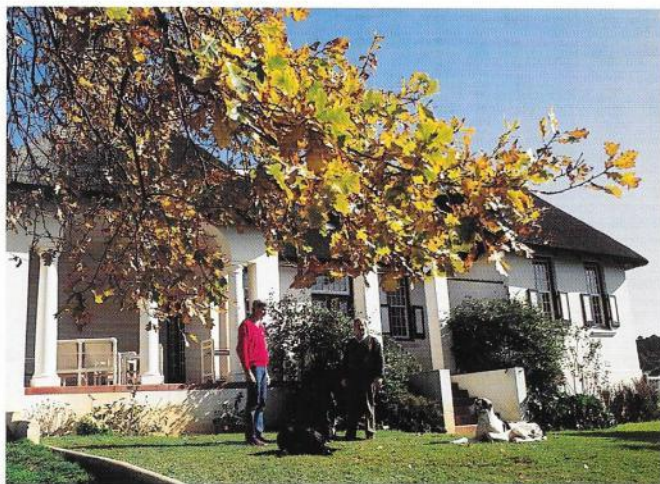
Louisvale Lovers Delight

To date Louisvale farm has secured their position as one of South Africa's leading producers of quality Chardonnay.

First came their Chardonnay, an intense fruity and complex wine.

Next was Chavant, a more gentle and user-friendly style of wine, and now they have launched their Sauvignon Blanc/Chardonnay blend from the 1994 vintage. Made from 54% Sauvignon Blanc and 46% Chardonnay, winemaker Marinus Bredell describes this wine as having the pronounced citrus aromas of Chardonnay marrying well with the ripe fig overtones of the Sauvignon Blanc. It's worth checking out in your local wine merchant.

BELOW: LOUISVALE'S PROPRIETORS, (L TO R) LEON STEMMET, HANS FROELING AND GREAT DANES IN FRONT OF THEIR HOMESTEAD.



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



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Through the Glass Lightly

BY SUE BROWN



From Russia with Love

And you thought vodka was just vodka, wrong again. I suspect like most people if you drink vodka you drink it with a mixer. Now with the cold war over, Russia is releasing her secrets, one of which is a really smooth vodka, drunk neat.

The Premium Smirnoff Vodka is distilled in batches in a copper pot still, which always gives much more individuality to a product than the continuous stills, which the bulk of spirits are obtained from.

Pot still distillation gives more flavour and more smoothness, and the crucial charcoal filtration stage which makes the product so

pure and clear is only, they insist, from the very special Siberian silver birch charcoal.

The Pierre Smirnoff Company of Russia have produced this vodka which embodies the traditional values associated with Imperial Russian Vodka. This upmarket, distinctive vodka is exclusively made in Moscow, and should be served at Siberian room temperature, ie: straight from the freezer.

Some say it should be drunk as a digestive following the meal but try it as an ice breaker when your guests arrive and I guarantee a swinging party.

Cloete's Making History

Look at any book on the history



of the upper portion because he realised that Sauvignon Blanc was eminently suited to the soil and micro climate. One taste of the wine and he seems to have certainly proved a point – so look out for the 1994 Cloete Sauvignon Blanc.

Pieter's neighbours on the lower portion are more keen on Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, plus an experimental selection of Italian varieties. When next in Somerset West, drive through this area, it's worth a second look.

Backsberg Bubbles

Backsberg has just made their 1989 Backsberg Brut available in commercial quantities so now everyone, not just a favoured few, can enjoy this real value-for-money Cap Classique.

Made from 50% Chardonnay and 50% Pinot Noir, wine maker Hardy Laubscher has created a real winner.



STELLENRYCK

International Gold for Cabernet

Stellenryck Cabernet Sauvignon 1987 was one of only two South African wines – and the only red – to win a prestigious gold medal in the 1994 International Wine Challenge, London, where 7 500 wines were entered.

This is the latest success for Stellenryck Cabernet Sauvignon. Every vintage released has gained high honours in competition with the world's best.

1986 vintage

Gold Medal and Dave Hughes Trophy for the best SA red wine, 1991 International Wine & Spirit Competition, London

1984 vintage

Grand Gold Medal, 1990 Monde Selection, Luxembourg • **Gold Medal**, 1990 International Wine, Brandy and Fruit Juice Fair, Yugoslavia • **Selected** for 1991 Blue Diamond Collection, SAA

1982 vintage

Gold Medal with Palm Leaves, 1988 Monde Selection, Athens • **Double Gold Medal**, 1991 SA Bottled Wine Show • **Gold Medal**, 1992 International Wine & Spirit Competition, London

1981 vintage

Gold Medal with Palm Leaves, (highest number of points of all award-winning liquor products), 1987 Monde Selection, Brussels

1980 vintage

Gold Medal, 1985 Monde Selection, Brussels

1979 vintage

Gold Medal, 1985 International Wine & Spirit Competition, London

**Proven to be one of
the world's great wines**



SRW 174E

Platter's Worldwide

John Platter's latest wine guide, the 1995 edition, is now available on the book shelves. At the 1994 price of R34.99 a copy, it's the wine bargain of the year. Complete with a whole new ethnic image, once again the Platter's wine guide makes for a good read, whilst being packed with really useful facts. The rating system has been changed slightly, boxed five stars denote superlative wine, underlined 4 to 5 stars denote outstanding or fine international standard wine, four stars mean excellent and the rest of the star rating remaining the same.

Klein Constantia Sauvignon Blanc for example has an underlined star rating, Mulderbosch Sauvignon has boxed stars. Neil Ellis premium range Cabernet has an underlined star rating but the 1992 vintage has the stars boxed, so on and so forth. If you find this just a teensy weensy bit difficult to follow without a great deal of concentration, I must agree with you.

This is the most definitive guide on South African wine available, a fact recognised by publishing giants Mitchell Beazley who later this year will be publishing the Platter Guide worldwide. I almost get the impression with this version though, that the vast wealth of knowledge and understanding of the industry that the Platter's have gained over the 15 years, is bursting within the binding of this small book. I think it's time for another book by this talented duo.

Mr Coffee Bean

By the end of November the wine scribe is really beginning to think his/her palate will never recover from all the tastings that

occur at the end of a year. It was therefore good of the Chaîne de Rotisseur to offer something rather different in the form of a coffee tasting. We tasted, thanks to Marc Schonland who is a tea and coffee broker from W.M. Cahn, coffees from all over the world and from different types of beans. A word of warning – as a result of two bad frosts in Brazil, causing a worldwide coffee shortage – the price of coffee is spiralling.

Weaving a Winning Webb

Following on the success Thelema Mountain vineyards achieved in the SAA line up, the farm also took the honours at the country's top wine competition. This year's Diners Club Wine Maker of the Year was Gyles Webb for the wine, Thelema Mountain vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend 1992.

There is no doubt great celebrations continuing on this family farm, which nestles in the Simonsberg Mountains.

All the travelling to see other vineyards, all the study and all the commitment to the production of quality grapes have paid dividends. Thelema must now be considered the number one vineyard in the country. It is not only this red blend which beat 61 other entrants in the category but it would appear just about every wine Gyles Webb and his team produce has star quality.

For heavens sake move quickly though to obtain this wine, it's not the largest of farms and production is limited and there are many people both here and overseas who are captured by the multifaceted Webb.

For further information contact (021) 885-1924.



Master's Choice

Longridge Chardonnay scored 89 marks at an Institute of Cape

Wine Master's tasting in London recently. This means that it is rated 'excellent' by this august group and enables Longridge to carry the Master's Wine Star of Excellence on its label. This is the first South African wine to achieve this honour, which should please winemaker Danie Zeeman. He will no doubt go from strength to strength now as the new cellar has been completed, on the slopes of the Helderburg in Stellenbosch.

Rent-a-Row

If the idea of owning your own wine farm is too much like hard work, why not get yourself an allocation of a row of vines at L'Avenir wine farm?

There is a 'one-off' payment

for the rows which will be yours for the next ten years, though obviously the farm does all the dirty work. There are other advantages as far as wine sales are concerned so it's certainly worth looking at if you fancy a little land owning in Stellenbosch.

The man who thought up the idea is French Mauritian, Marc Wiehe, who recently acquired L'Avenir and is busy putting the final touches to a really lovely guest house situated on the farm. Francois Naude, a well-known figure in Pretoria wine circles, is now looking very comfortable in his new role as wine maker; he has some very interesting reds nestling in the small oak vats.

To find out more about this Stellenbosch farm, either for the



guest house or rent-a-row, phone (021) 889-5001. ▷



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WINE

A Balanced View

BY SUE BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG FRASER

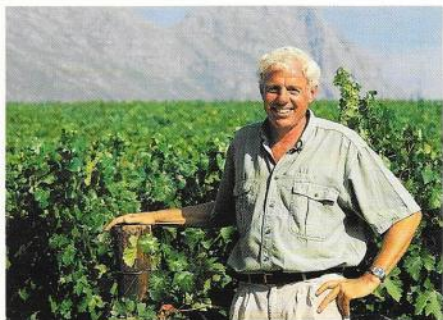


Climb up the Simonsberg to where the vines end and the fynbos takes over and you look out to Table Bay and beyond. Look out also for the wines being produced on this historic estate.

Theo Brink is now the winemaker at Uitkyk and in control of making sure the wines are of world class standard. He is a quiet, gentle man, of great humour and considerable expertise. One wine he still keeps in the line-up which has presently fallen foul of the fashion pundits is Cape Riesling. Uitkyk is one of the few

estates in the Cape to still bottle the variety; it is a light easy drinking wine with a very refreshing tartness.

The white wine which shows the class of this estate though, is their Sauvignon Blanc. The 1993 vintage, not generally thought to be the best year for this variety in the Cape, produced on Uitkyk Estate a wine with a wonderful



OPPOSITE: THE UITKYK HOMESTEAD.

ABOVE: THEO BRINK, THE RESIDENT WINEMAKER.

RIGHT: UITKYK'S IMPRESSIVE SELECTION.

BELOW: PART OF THE PICTURESQUE ESTATE.



grassy nose, long, long follow-through and the acid, though forward, is well balanced. The 1994 vintage has a less dominant grassy nose and is softer in style but the powerful fruit on the palate and long aftertaste places it in a class of its own.

The 1994 Chardonnay has a good citrus fruit nose not overwhelmed by the oak. There is

plenty of fruit and weight on the palate and it's worth holding on to for a couple more years for the wine to develop further.

Of the red wines for which Uitkyk historically was more famous, Carlonet, made of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, is the flagship. The 1989 vintage presents with masses of fruit on the nose and the complexity on the palate

ensures that you savour the wine in your mouth for as long as possible. Although accessible now it will definitely improve with further ageing.

Just to check on the form of this Estate, the 1984 Carlonet showed a wonderful mellow, pepper nose with soft rounded fruit on the palate and still enough body for further maturation.

The Uitkyk Cabernet/Shiraz 1991 blend is a wine with backbone and good blackcurrant flavours which will be further enhanced with time. This is a fine example of this traditional South African blend.

The estate is now open to the public. The manor house is worth a look, as it is the only Thibault-designed house in the winelands. Today's architects think it unlikely that Thibault ever designed the house for the farm itself, as there are no records of this.

Therefore it is presumed that Anna Caterina Melck and her husband Johan David Beyers somehow acquired the design and had the house built during the latter part of the 18th Century.

Current owners, The Bergkelder, are busy renovating the house uncovering such gems as an original frieze which is now painstakingly being restored to its former glory. Uitkyk is truly a farm of great historical interest as well as a producer of great wines.

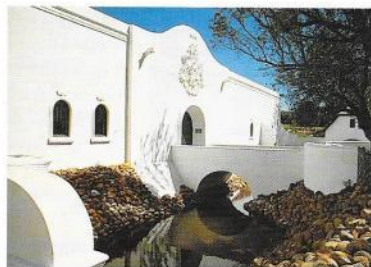
For further information contact Dave Cobbold on tel (021) 887-2440. □

Plaisir de Merle

BY SUE BROWN

*When the cellar was opened, the birds began to sing:
'Was that not a dainty wine to set before a king.'*

(Apologies to Anon.)



For those of you confused by the name *Plaisir de Merle*, literally translated, pleasure of the blackbirds, it is a corruption of *Le Plessis Marly*, the name of a French town from which the first owner of the farm, Huguenot Charles Marais. There have been various corruptions of the name throughout the farm's history.

C. Louis Leipoldt in his book,

300 years of Cape Wine wrote: 'The farm Plaisir Merle produced one of the finest light, dry wines of the "claret type" that has ever been made in South Africa.' He went on to say that the wine had been highly recommended by M. Escoffier the famous chef of London's Savoy Hotel, when he sampled a bottle in London back in 1904. So the question now asked is: can SFW's new multi-

million Rand investment in the farm produce wines which will receive similar accolades from local and international gourmets?

The answer appears to be that they are definitely on the right track. Today, the farm covers 974 hectares, making it one of the largest single units in the Cape. It comprises five adjoining sectors namely Plaisir de Merle itself, Rust en Vrede, Drosteries, La Rochelle and Rachelfontein. With a variety of slopes to choose from, and different altitudes to play around with, the choice of grape variety best suited to the aspects has been carefully researched.

The greater percentage of the grapes grown will continue to be supplied to Nederburg but wine-maker Neil Bester is able to nurture the special grape varieties destined for Plaisir de Merle wines. The production of these wines is small despite the more than adequate sized cellar designed by Chris de Hart and recently completed on the farm.

The Chardonnay is made from grapes harvested high up on the South Eastern slopes of the Simonsberg, benefiting from low temperatures during the day and cool nights. A heavier style of Chardonnay, it has been barrel fermented and matured on the lees, lots of texture and subtle flavours proliferate. It should retail around the R25.00 mark.

The Cabernet Sauvignon

1993, is full of fruity tannins and although aged in small French Oak there is very little of the harshness one so often associates with very young red wine. The wine is already showing complexity and is destined for greatness. Accessible now, the more patient will discover even greater flavours in time.

The third wine to be released later this year is the Sauvignon Blanc, truly a great wine, there was some controversy as to whether to include it in the range initially for reasons I cannot understand. At the time of tasting, it was truly stupendous with all the Sauvignon Blanc characteristics moulded together to produce an elegant yet decisive taste.

Plaisir de Merle has certainly had its share of expert opinion during its more recent formative years. Dr Hans Ambrosi of Kloster Eberbach in Germany, as well as local experts, Ronnie Melck, Ernst Le Roux, Gunter Brozel and Hannes Van Rensburg, all had their say. Currently, Dr Paul Pontallier of Chateaux Margaux is the consultant to the farm, he also advised on the layout of the cellar.

The history of the farm is fascinating and has been well documented by Romi Van der Merwe. Copies of her book are available; and it will whet your appetite for both the wines and a visit to the homestead and cellars tucked away in the mountains. □

Veritas Awards

BY SUE BROWN

Arguably the most important wine awards in the country, it's a case of test the team for the consumer.



ABOVE: VERITAS WINNERS FROM L TO R STERIK DE WET (KWV), WOUTER PIENAAR (SFW), HARDY LAUBSCHER (BACKSBERG), NEWALD MARAIS (NEDERBURG), PHILIP JORDAAN (DU TOITSKLOOF) AND ABE BEUKES (LIEVLAND).

TOP RIGHT: LINEUP OF WINES AT THE VERITAS AWARDS TASTING.

RIGHT: GERMAIN LEBOHY OF WITS HOTEL SCHOOL WHO WAS ONE OF THE JUDGES AT THE VERITAS AWARDS.

BOTTOM: PAUL CLUVER — A HAT TRICK WITH THREE VINTAGES OF WEISSER RIESLING.



The Veritas award judging takes place each September and wines from all over the country are nosed, swirled and spat out by panels of wine fundis, hoping to merge into a consensus as to the winners. When the scores are added up the wines are then awarded double gold, single gold, silver or bronze medals, or nothing at all. However, of the 957 entries this year only 12% of the wines went home without some form of recognition.

Not every estate or wine merchant enters their wines for the awards. Excuses for not standing up to be judged vary from uncertain-

ty as to the competency of the panel, and/or the reckoning of results. Then there are the real reasons such as the inability to come up with the 200 cases necessary for entry, or commitment of stock to other competitions, such as the SAA Wine awards which are run at the same time. Sometimes Capetonians are so laid-back they are prone to forget. Whatever the reason, those who do stand up to be counted probably deserve all the accolades they achieve.

Nederburg collected 4 double gold and 17 gold medals; many of their winning wines however, are only available on the Nederburg

Auction.

Nederburg also achieved a hat trick for Paul Cluver wines, which have now achieved double golds for the '91, '92 and '93 vintage

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

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marketed nationally
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The Bergkelder

THE WINE CONNOISSEUR'S WINES

Now for those of you have not received the full booklet available on the award winners let me fill you in on the double gold medal winners listed in alphabetical order:

Allesverloren Port 1988
Backsberg Sauvignon 1991
Backsberg Malbec 1992
Bellingham Sauvignon 1993
Bergsig Soet Hanepoot 1989
Blaauwklippen Shiraz 1989
Bovlei Cabernet Sauvignon 1992
Buitenverwachting Sauvignon Blanc 1994
De Helderberg Chenin Blanc 1994
Delheim Cabernet Sauvignon 1992
Du Toitskloof Hanepoot Jerepigo 1990
Du Toitskloof Special Late Harvest 1993
Kanonkop Cabernet Sauvignon 1989
Klein Constantia Chardonnay 1989
KWV Noble Late Harvest 1988
KWV Noble Late Harvest 1989
KWV Onzerust
KWV Rooi Muskadel 1975
L'Ormarins Cabernet Sauvignon La Maison
Du Roi 1989
La Motte Shiraz 1991
Lanzereac Pinotage 1990
Le Bonheur Cabernet Sauvignon 1987
Lievland Cabernet Sauvignon 1991
Lievland Edellaatoeswyn 1992
Lievland Natuurlike Soet 1994
Middelvlei Cabernet Sauvignon 1987
Monis Collectors Marsala 1983
Nederburg Edelrood (1,5 litre) 1986
Nederburg Private Bin S354 1992
Nuy Wit Muskadel 1992
Overgaauw Cabernet Sauvignon 1990
Paul Cluver Weisser Riesling 1991
Paul Cluver Weisser Riesling 1993
Rooiberg Jerepigo 1992
Rust en Vrede Shiraz 1990
Rustenberg Merlot 1990
Saxenberg Cabernet Sauvignon Private
Collection 1992
Simonsig Cabernet Sauvignon 1990
Weltevrede Gewurztraminer 1994
Zonnebloem Blanc de Blanc 1994
Zonnebloem Merlot 1990

Around the same time as the Veritas Awards there are the SAA awards, which have a monumental line up of wines assessed by local and overseas judges, to ensure that passengers gain their sky-high quality tittle. Man of the moment this year was Gyles Webb,

whose small farm, Thelema Mountain Vineyards, not only won the trophy for the best white wine but also achieved the distinction of having no less than three of his wines on the First Class Wine of the Month list. The other notable wine stable on this year's line-up was the KWV, who walked off with the best red wine trophy for their Cathedral Cellars Triptych and also achieved three wines in the final count down.

The line up for the 24 wines which gain Wine of the Month status on SAA in month by month order are:

Mulderbosch Sauvignon Blanc 1994
Meerlust Merlot 1989
Thelema Chardonnay 1993
Simonsig Shiraz 1991 (Silver '94 Veritas Awards)
Simonsig Weisser Riesling 1991 (Gold '94 Veritas Awards)
Buitenverwachting Grand Vin 1989 (Double Gold '92 Veritas)
La Motte Blanc Fumé 1993
Thelema Cabernet/Merlot 1991
Zonnebloem Blanc de Blanc 1994 (Double Gold '94 Veritas)
KWV Cathedral Cellars Cabernet 1992 (Silver '94 Veritas)
Backsberg Chardonnay 1993 (Silver '94 Veritas)
Hamilton Russell Pinot Noir 1992
Bellingham Sauvignon Blanc 1993
Kanonkop Pinotage 1991 (Silver '94 Veritas)
KWV Cathedral Cellars Chardonnay 1992
Blaauwklippen Zinfandel 1989 (Double Gold '93 Veritas)
Thelema Sauvignon Blanc 1994
Fleur du Cap Cabernet 1986 (Gold '93 Veritas)
Buitenverwachting Chardonnay 1993 (Silver '94 Veritas)
Grangehurst Pinotage 1993
L'Ormarins Blanc Fumé 1993 (Silver '94 Veritas)
La Motte Shiraz 1991 (Double Gold '94 Veritas)
Groot Constantia Gewurztraminer 1994 (Bronze '94 Veritas)
KWV Cathedral Cellars Triptych 1992 (Silver '94 Veritas)

Both competitions appear to be good guides to follow as to the quality wines available but the real test of taste is done by the consumer who puts his money where his mouth is. □

of Weisser Riesling.

Price is not a factor in this wine assessment. Nederburg Private Bin S354 1992, an Auction wine, was a double gold winner in the blended white wine category along with Bellingham Sauvengay 1993 and Zonnebloem Blanc de Blanc 1994; rather more price-friendly wines; these. Interestingly, the more popular, though similar blend of Craighall, 1994 vintage, only managed a bronze on this competition. The new and 'must make a note of' Jordan winery, hit gold in this category with their Chameleon Blanc 1994.

In the Chardonnay category the unwooded versions did not score well with the panel, the highest and only silver award went to De Wetshof Bon Vallon, 1994. The wooded style of Chardonnay only received one double gold and that went to Klein Constantia Chardonnay 1989. It was nice to see Rhebokskloof, an estate which has suffered more than its fair share of ups and downs in the last couple of years, win a gold in this section with their Chardonnay Sur Lie Reserve 1993; proof that winemaker John Reagh can rise above all the

business problems which beset this estate.

There were other surprises in the Chardonnay category though. Glen Carlou Reserve 1993 only scored a silver and the ordinary chardonnay – of the same vintage – a bronze medal. De Wetshof Chardonnay d'Honneur and De Wetshof Finesse Chardonnay, both of the 1994 vintage, only slithered in with a silver. All very strange when you consider the Chardonnay category incorporates some of the most expensive white wine on the show.

Of the Sauvignon Blanc I can speak more knowledgeably as I was one of the judges on that panel of seven. Just for the record there are six panels of seven judges tasting the different categories. The seven are made up of five members who are directly involved in wine-making, or in other words those whose daily task it is to taste wine, and two consumers with educated palates, the 'consumers' tend to be wine writers and/or Cape Wine Masters. The wines are tasted 'blind'. Two years ago I was the only woman out of the 42 judges; this year there were five women,

though sadly missing was the first lady ever to break the male domination, Angela Lloyd.

Back to Sauvignon Blanc, there is still some controversy as to whether we are getting better in making Sauvignon Blanc or whether the opposite is occurring. Then we have to query – do we wish to make a New Zealand Cloudy Bay style; these wines are as powerful on the nose as an air freshener.

Personally, I do not like a wine which is too aggressive but I do like it to have some character. Some of the Sauvignon Blancs we tasted that morning were totally devoid of any kind of personality.

The results reflected this disappointment by the awarding of a plethora of bronze medals, a good dollop of silvers, but only six gold and one double gold.

One new addition to this year's competition was the introduction of a few overseas wine makers, pitting their wines against ours. The Argentinean wine, Trapiche Medallo Blanco won a gold medal whilst the Trapiche Medalla Tinto 1992 was awarded a silver medal in their blended wine sections. ▷



*Because you're familiar enough to know that
Margarita is not Dennis the Menace's girlfriend -
You're ready for the Salsa.*



All Gold Mexican Salsa. Real Tomato, Real Chilli, Real Bite.

GOOD WITH ENCHILADAS. JUST AS GOOD WITH, CHICKEN, CHIPS OR AS A DIP.