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# The International Wine Review

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## Report # 30: The Wines of South Africa

## Introduction

South Africa's reputation for making high quality wine is centuries' old, but the world largely forgot it by the time apartheid ended less then 20 years ago. Since then the industry has rapidly modernized, and South African winemakers have reacquainted themselves with the rest of the wine world. In November 2011 we traveled to South Africa to meet many of these winemakers and to taste their wines. Although we had tasted South African wines in America, we were amazed by what we found. Not only is the wine scene highly dynamic with scores of new, young winemakers and freshly planted vineyards in remote regions, but South Africa is today producing some of the finest wines in the world.

Despite producing more wine than Chile and about half that of the U.S., South African wine is still little known in other countries. While most of the grape varieties (excepting Pinotage) are familiar, the appellations, wineries, brand names, and winemakers by and large are not. The structure of the South African wine industry—many family-run, small-scale producers—makes the task of learning about and understanding wine there all the more challenging for the consumer and wine professional alike.

In this report, the International Wine Review traces the long history of wine in South Africa and explores the diverse wine-growing regions of South Africa. These regions include Constantia, located within Cape Town's city limits; Stellenbosch, the region most familiar to wine lovers; the warmer, inland areas like Swartland; and the vineyards of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts. Similar to California, many of the best vineyards are located within easy driving distance of one of the world's most beautiful cities, in this case Cape Town.

The focus of our analysis is on the country's premium and ultra-premium wines, which cost above $15 per bottle in the US market. South Africa produces many high volume, high value entry-level wines that are exported to the US and other markets. But we think it is the premium wines that are distinctive and are of the greatest interest to wine lovers. We therefore profile

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# Introduction

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the country's premium wine producers, evaluate their wines, and identify the best wines in each major variety and blend category.

We tasted more than 750 wines for this report covering all major varieties and styles. Our wine reviews include the country's workhorse grape—Chenin Blanc—which was brought to the country from the Loire Valley in the 17th century. Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay are the other popular white varietals. The reds include, in addition to South Africa's own Pinotage, both Bordeaux and Rhône varieties with Syrah enjoying particular attention in recent years. Arguably the best red wines are the Bordeaux, Rhône and Pinotage blends.

In our view, the high quality of South African wines is a consequence of several factors discussed throughout the report: intelligent vineyard management practices, including the careful selection of vineyard sites and grape varieties; a strong commitment by a growing number of small producers to craft terroir-based wines; the expertise applied in winemaking across the board, including the use of minimalist winemaking techniques whenever possible; and a profound commitment to protecting and conserving South Africa's bio-diversity through sustainable farming, including organic and biodynamic practices. All these factors augur well for the future of the industry.

Unfortunately, a surprising number of world class South African wines are not even imported to the US. South Africa's share of US imports is small, and the percent of South African wines sold in the US is tiny . There's obviously huge upside potential for South African wine in the US, and marketing of the type provided by the Wines of South Africa (WOSA) can have large payoffs.

Finally, this report examines wine tourism in South Africa. While the country is located far from most foreign wine lovers, it offers huge rewards to those who visit its wine country. Wine tourism is better developed in South Africa than any country we know. Most wineries have excellent tasting facilities, and many have superb restaurants with spectacular mountain vineyard views offering the special wild game and seafood of the country. Most wineries practice sustainable viticulture and actively protect the Cape's unique flora, and visitors can combine tasting wine with viewing the protea, fynbos, and renosterbos that constitute the world's smallest plant kingdom. [Photos can be seen on our Facebook album.]

**Acknowledgements.** We thank, first and foremost, Wines of South Africa and its dedicated staff—Su Birch(CEO), André Morgenthal, Matome Mbatha, Rory Callahan, Helene Oosthuizen, and others—for their support in helping us get to know the wines and winemakers of South Africa. In all our wine travels, we have never worked with a more professional and supportive wine marketing organization. We also greatly appreciate the knowledge and advice given to us by the many wine professionals in South Africa, especially, Michael Bampfield-Duggan, Irina von Holdt, Neil Pendock, Dave Hughes, and James Pietersen. Thanks, also, to the people in the wine industry who provided information to us and helped correct our mistakes, including Ina Smith, Manager, Chenin Blanc Association, Edmund Terblanche, Chairman, Shiraz South Africa, Pieter de Waal, Secretary, Sauvignon Blanc Interest Group and Christian Eedes, former Editor of Wine Magazine. Thanks, also, to Cathy Brewer and Maree Louw for permission to use their photos. We also express our appreciation to the many US importers who provided us with samples and technical information. Many of these importers see their mission as familiarizing Americans with South African wine. Bryce McNamee of Boutique Wines, Theresa Morrison of 34 South, Fran Kysela of Kysela Imports, and Mark Longsworth of Country Vintners all advised and educated us. Finally, we thank the many winemakers and others who spent their time teaching us about South African wine during our 15-day tour of the wine lands. Some spent an extraordinary amount of time with us, and we express our heartfelt appreciation to them.

Mike Potashnik
Publisher

Don Winkler
Editor

# A Brief History of South Aftican Wine from 1652

In 1652 the Dutch East India Company established the Cape Colony to provision its ships making the journey between Europe and Asia. The first governor, Jan van Riebeeck, arrived in what would be Cape Town in 1652 and requested that vine cuttings be sent. Records show that vines (including Chenin Blanc and Semillon) arrived in three different shipments in 1655 and 1656 and the cuttings were "uit Vranckryk" (from France)[1]. Van Riebeeck records the first pressing of Muscat and Chenin Blanc grapes on February 2, 1659. Thus, South Africa was producing its first wine a hundred years before Thomas Jefferson's unsuccessful experiment to grow French varieties at Monticello. Riebeeck's successor, Simon van der Stel, created the first modern vineyard and winery on his mountainside estate and called it Constantia, which produced a world-famous sweet wine enjoyed by European royalty. Some of today's prominent wineries—Buitenverwachting, Constantia Uitsig, Groot Constantia, Klein Constantia—were once part of the original Constantia estate.

In 1679 Van der Stel also founded what was to become the principal locus of wine production in South Africa and named it after himself—Stellenbosch. A little later, he also founded the Vergelegen estate, one of today's premiere wineries. With the arrival in the 1680s of French Huguenot immigrants familiar with viticulture and the making of wine and brandy, South Africa's wine future was set. Many of the original wine-producing estates continue to exist today, such as, Simonsig (established by Jacques Malan in 1688), Fairview (1699), Boschendal (established in 1685 as Bossendaal), Cape Chamonix (part of the original 1688 La Cotte estate), Diemersdal (1698), and many more.

**The French Huguenots**

Sharing the same Protestant religion as the Dutch and oppressed in France, the French Huguenots emigrated to Holland where those with knowledge of viticulture and the making of wine and brandy were among the pioneers invited to settle in the Cape Colony. The first wave of Huguenots arrived in the 1680s, but immigration continued well into the next century.

Arriving in the Cape, some Huguenots settled in Stellenbosch and played a key role early on in the creation of the wine industry there. However, many decided to stay together and settled in Olifantshoek (Elephant's Corner) named for the herds of wild elephants that roamed the area; their village is now called Franschhoek (French Corner) and is regarded as one of the Cape's culinary hotspots.

The influence of the Huguenots on South Africa winemaking is reflected in the French names of many of the wine farms that continue to exist today, among them, La Motte (established in 1709 and named after a village in Provence), Haute Cabrière (established by Pierre Jourdan in 1694), L'Ormarins (established by Jean Roi in 1694), and Plaisir de Merle (established by Charles Marais in 1688).

## Modern Times

Like many other wine-producing countries, South Africa has experienced times of boom and bust. In the early 19th century, wine was South Africa's most important export. But the removal of UK preferential tariffs in 1825 threw the industry into depression. Another bust occurred late in the 19th century when phylloxera decimated vineyards. In the 20th century, another boom and bust was followed by the creation of a large cooperative, KWV, to provide greater stability of income to growers, and in 1924 the government empowered it to set prices for the entire South African wine industry. It reduced the supply of table wine by distilling large amounts into brandy and fortified wine and produced large quantities of inexpensive wine for the domestic market. As with most such cooperatives, there were few incentives for improving quality. With many twists and turns, KWV's role remained dominant until the advent of deregulation with the 1994 election of the Government of National Unity. In 1997 KWV was converted to a private company.

The South African wine industry was also adversely affected by global boycott resulting from the government's apartheid policy. By the 1980s South Africa found its wine export markets shrinking. Foreigners shunned investing in the industry, and winemakers found themselves increasingly isolated. The removal of sanctions in the mid-1990s combined with the privatization of KWV opened up export markets, stimulated domestic and foreign investment, and introduced incentives to raise quality and produce wines demanded by the rest of the world. However, South Africa was by then playing a game of catch-up to countries like Australia and Chile. Still, exports grew rapidly, from 50 million liters in 1994 to 400 million liters in 2010.

The 20th century was a time of extraordinary ferment in South Africa's wine history. Abraham Perold created the Pinotage variety and brought new varieties from Europe to South Africa. He also collaborated with George Paul Kanitz at Muratie in planting South Africa's first Pinot Noir in 1927. In the 1950s, Günter Brözel at Nederburg pioneered controlling tank fermentation temperatures, and the wine research institute Nietvoorbij was founded. Frans Malan at Simonsig produced the country's first Chardonnay and Riesling wines as well as the first méthode *champenoise* sparkling wine in 1971. He was also instrumental in developing the Stellenbosch Wine Route, the stimulus for today's highly successful wine tourism. Billy Hofmeyr made the first Bordeaux blend at Welgemeend in 1979, and Dalla Cia followed up with the first bottling of the Rubicon blend at Meerlust a year later. Hofmeyr was also one of the founding members of the prestigious Cape Winemakers Guild in 1982. Brözel made the first botrytis affected dessert wine (Edelkeur) at Nederburg.

The dying days of apartheid and birth of the new republic coincided with hugely positive shifts in the wine industry both in terms of investment and ideas. Winemakers began introducing new varieties and exploring new regions with

[1] **In 1930 Jac van Rensburg wrote a remarkable University of Stellenbosch thesis on the first 100 years of South African viticulture (1652-1752). Ina Smith of the Chenin Blanc Association uncovered the thesis at the Agricultural Research Council and kindly sent us details on the arrival of French vines at the Cape Colony.**

marginal growing conditions. Charles Back introduced Rhône varieties at Fairview in Paarl, and Peter Finlayson followed the Hamilton Russels in planting Pinot Noir in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley near the seaside town of Hermanus. Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen of Oak Valley (1985), Paul Cluver (1986), and Andrew Gunn of Iona (1987) planted vines in Elgin. Vines were also planted in the Cederberg Mountains (1973) and at Bamboes Bay (1999) on the west coast.

There was a rush to invest from both local and international players. In 1987 mining company Anglo American purchased the Vergelegen estate (shown here) and restored it to prominence. Mining magnate Graham Beck (now deceased) established his eponymous winery in Robertson in 1991. A consortium headed by Marc Kent invested in Boekenhoutskloof in 1993, businessman Sybrand van der Spuy created Cape Point Vineyards in 1997, and Eagles' Nest established its vineyards in Constantia (2000).

Foreign investors included the multinational Constellation (now Accolade Wines) which purchased the Flagstone winery in 1997 while renowned consultant Michel Rolland was involved in Remhoogte. Other French personalities included Jean Vincent Ridon (Signal Hill), Madame May de Lencquesaing (Glenelly), and Bruno Prats and others (Anwilka). American investors include Zelma Long at Vilafonte (1997), Hess at Glen Carlou (1996), José Condé at Stark-Condé (1997), and Charles Banks (former co-owner of Screaming Eagle) at Mulderbosch (2010) and Fable.

# The Diverse Regions of South Africa

Almost all of South Africa's high quality vineyards are located in the province of the Western Cape within easy driving of Cape Town. Some are located within Cape Town itself—the only big city besides Vienna, Austria, having significant vineyards within the city limits. While the geographic area is relatively small, proximity to oceans on both the south and west and the mountainous nature of much of the terrain provides incredible variety in terms of microclimate. Altitude, exposure, temperature, rainfall, and soils vary greatly over small distances.

Differences in microclimates and soils provide the rationale for more than 100 appellations currently in existence. The soils in these appellations tend to be degraded sandstone, granite and shale mixed in different portions with clay depending on location. One area—Robertson—is especially known for its calcareous soils. The climates of the different regions vary greatly depending on proximity to the sea, altitude, and prevailing winds. In general, vineyards close to the sea experience low temperatures, more precipitation and stronger winds, while those further inland have higher average temperatures, wider diurnal temperature variations, and less precipitation. However, the existence of numerous valleys, depressions, and exposures means there are many exceptions to these generalizations.

Wind is a major weather element in the vineyards. The contrast between warm inland temperatures and the cold Benguela Current generates strong ocean breezes in much of the Cape, especially during the maturation period. The famous Southeaster wind blows hard in the spring and summer months, affecting fruit set, thickening grape skins, inhibiting some vine pests and diseases, and lowering the temperature by several degrees.

In this section we focus on the most important regional appellations, the ones the consumer is most likely to find written on a bottle of wine. We review these regions beginning in Cape Town and traveling in a counter-clockwise direction, first to Constantia in Cape Town itself, then east to Stellenbosch and further on to Elgin, Walker Bay (Hermanus), and Elim; after that we proceed north to Robertson and west to the central area of Franschhoek, Paarl and Wellington, followed by a detour north to Swartland (Malmesbury on the map) and Tulbagh and, finally, turning west to Darling and south to Durbanville, located just north of Cape Town.

## Constantia and Cape Point

Constantia, located on the eastern side of Table Mountain within the city of Cape Town and close to the sea, is the historic beginning of South African wine, where the first

vineyards were planted. It's one of the few wine producing areas with sufficient rainfall (1050 mm) to make irrigation unnecessary, and summer temperatures are cool (20.5° C). Most the vineyards—Buitenverwachting, Groot Constantia, Klein Constantia, Constantia Uitsig—were part of Van der Stel's original Constantia estate. Steenberg is another old estate recently purchased and renovated by the Graham Beck group, and the exciting new Eagles' Nest is located high on the mountain slope. It's a cool area with granitic soils and long growing seasons that excels in making fresh, crisp white wines and elegant reds with fine-grained tannins.

Cape Point is a bit further south, on the other end of Chapman's Peak, overlooking Noordhoek beach. Very close

to the sea with sandstone and degraded granite soils, it's often covered by sea mists and buffeted by strong winds, which contributes tannic grip to the excellent Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon wines produced here.

## Stellenbosch

Located about an hour's drive east of Cape Town, this is South Africa's premiere wine region. Stellenbosch itself is a charming, old university town that still retains the open irrigation canals planned by Van der Stel in the 17th century. This is also the intellectual capital of the wine industry, home to Stellenbosch University, the only one in South Africa offering a degree in viticulture and oenology, the Elsenburg School of Agriculture, and the Nietvoorbij Institute of Viticulture and Oenology.

Stellenbosch is a complex region with hills and mountains offering widely varying altitudes and soils (mostly sandstone and granite), multiple exposures, and access to sea breezes. Average summer temperatures are about 1° C higher than Constantia. It's home to many of South Africa's best wineries.

The low **Bottelary Hills** on the eastern side of Stellenbosch are home to superb wineries like De Toren, Jordan (Jardin), Reyneke, Kaapzicht, Bellevue, and others. Climbing the Helshgoote on the eastern side of Stellenbosch one finds the mountainside vineyards of Neil Ellis, Thelema, and Tokara, while traveling north one finds Remhoogte, Edgebaston, Beyerskloof, Kanu, Kanonkop and many other premiere wineries in the **Simonsberg** area. South of Stellenbosch and approaching the sea in Somerset West is the **Helderberg** area where Rust & Vrede, Ernie Els, Haskell, Uva Mira, Grangehurst, Ken Forrester and Vergelegen are located.

The incredible variation in altitudes and exposures is exemplified by the rough and rustic **Blauwklippen Valley**, which is home to the Keermont and De Trafford wineries. Subject to extreme weather and surprisingly remote, it's in fact just over the hill from vineyards facing a much more benign climate.

## The South Coast: Elgin, Bot River, Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde), Elim

Traveling south from Stellenbosch, one quickly reaches the sea at Somerset West. Now, if we travel east and take Sir Lowry's Pass up the Hottentots Holland mountains we arrive at a high seaside plateau (300-600 m) of mostly shale and sandstone soils where Elgin is located. The climate is wet and cool with a mean February temperature under 20° C and with large diurnal differences. Fruit ripens very late here, as much as two months after Stellenbosch. Several new Elgin wineries—Paul Cluver, Catherine Marshall, Shannon (Downes Family), Oak Valley—have located here in recent years, and several more either source fruit or have vineyards here. The especially cool terroir contributes to excellent Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc with high natural acidity.

Continuing east, we descend to Bot River and its shale and sandstone soils and then on to Hermanus and Walker Bay, best known for whale watching and cage diving with white sharks. North of Hermanus one finds the valley with the most charming name in all of the Western Cape—Hemel-en-Aarde (Heaven and Earth). The area (technically divided into three wards) has a terroir of cool, moist sea breezes and mostly weathered shale soils. It's home to Ataraxia, Hamilton Russell, Newton Johnson, Bouchard Finlayson, Southern Right and many more top notch wineries. Above all else, this is Pinot Noir and Chardonnay country, although Southern Right makes excellent Pinotage.

Continuing on our trip to the southeast, we soon run into the southernmost point of the African continent. This is Cape Agulhas (lighthouse shown here) where we find the Elim appellation. Morovian missionaries first planted vines here in 1824, but the first vineyards in modern times were planted in 1992. Swept by winds from the three sides of the peninsula, grapes are very small, thick-skinned, and high in natural acidity. Temperatures are cool, and yields are low. Mostly Sauvignon Blanc and cool climate Syrah are grown here in the vineyards of Lomond, The Berrio, Black Oystercatcher, Strandveld, and others.

## The Center: Robertson, Franschhoek, Paarl, and Wellington

Upon leaving Elim we next proceed in a northerly direction up to Robertson, located in the limestone rich soils of the Breede River Valley. Wine production in Robertson began in part due to the collapse of the ostrich feather industry in the early 20th century. Today, Robertson is known for its white wines, especially Chardonnay, grown on trellised vines. Prominent wineries include De Wetshof, Excelsior Estate, Graham Beck, Rietvallei, and Springfield Estate. Graham Beck produces the grapes for its sparkling wines here, while Rietvallei makes some of the country's best Muscadel, a fortified wine unique to South Africa.

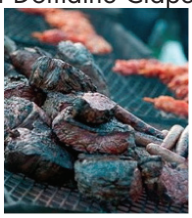
After Robertson we head west to the center of wine country. Here we find the charming village of Franschhoek. It has predominantly sandstone soils and slightly warmer weather (23.5°C summer average) than Stellenbosch. Outstanding wineries include Boekenhoutskloof, Cape Chamonix, and the superb sparkling wine producer Colmant. Chardonnay and Syrah do particularly well here. A bit further north lies Paarl and several of South Africa's best known wineries, including Fairview, Glen Carlou, Nederburg, and Plaisir de Merle. And still further north is Wellington, which is warmer still (24.3°C) and relatively dry, with outstanding wineries like Nabygelegen and Diemersfontein. This is also home to South Africa's most important vine nursery, providing about 90 percent of all vine cuttings.

THE SWARTLAND REVOLUTION

The young producers in South Africa's Swartland are staging a quiet revolution in winemaking. Their goal is to produce authentic handcrafted wines that reveal the unique Swartland terroir and follow the principles of minimalist winemaking. They're committed to natural fermentation, restrained use of oak, and no fining or filtering.

Leader Eben Sadie brings a wealth of international winemaking experience to the Revolution, including producing the outstanding Terroir al Limit. (see IWR Report #28 **Wines of Priorat**). In the Swartland, he crafts the cutting edge Columella, Palladius and Sequillo wines. Other revolutionaries include Chris and Andrea Mullineux, Adi Badenhorst, and Callie Louw of Porseleinberg. [Of course, the original pioneer was Charles Back, who founded Spice Route in Malmesbury in 1997 and asked Eben Sadie to make the wine.] These and other revolutionary leaders are experimenting with Rhône red varieties like Syrah, Mourvedre, Grenache Noir, Cinsaut, and Carignan and white varieties like Grenache Blanc, Viognier, and Roussanne.

The Swartland Revolution is a celebration! The founders host an annual two-day special wine tasting and food event in mid-November, which is held at the Royal Hotel in the small town of Riebeek Kasteel. In 2011 the participants included Olivier Clape of Domaine Clape in Cornas and the UK wine journalists Jamie Goode, Sarah Ahmed, and Victoria Moore. We joined them in tasting Eben's wines at the Sadie Family cellar outside Malmesbury. The celebrated chef Reuben Riffel prepared his famous braai for the participants.



## Swartland and Tulbagh

Proceeding due north from Wellington we find the Tulbagh valley, a prehistoric lake that now forms a bowl that captures and retains the evening's cool temperatures. Daytime temperatures can be very warm, and diurnal temperature variations are huge. The terrain ranges from sandy, stony soils in the bowl to schist and sandstone at higher altitudes. Notable wineries include Fable, Rijk's, Saronsberg, and Twee Jonge Gezellen, home of the superb Krone sparkling wines. Syrah and Chenin Blanc do very well here.

Heading west from Tulbagh one encounters vast fields of yellow grain. However, grain gives way to vineyards on the slopes of the foothills. Here vineyards run right up to the border of the charming village of Riebeek Kasteel (Royal Hotel shown here), home to the annual Swartland Revolution. Soils tend to shale and sandstone, and at 23.3°C, average summer (February) temperatures are about 2° higher than Stellenbosch. The Swartland is home to old bush vines, especially of Chenin Blanc, and has also become famous for wines made from Rhône varieties. Wineries like A.A. Badenhorst, Sadie Family, Lammershoek, Babylon's Peak and Mullineux tend to be small, but they offer unique wines of very high quality.

## The West Coast: Darling and Durbanville

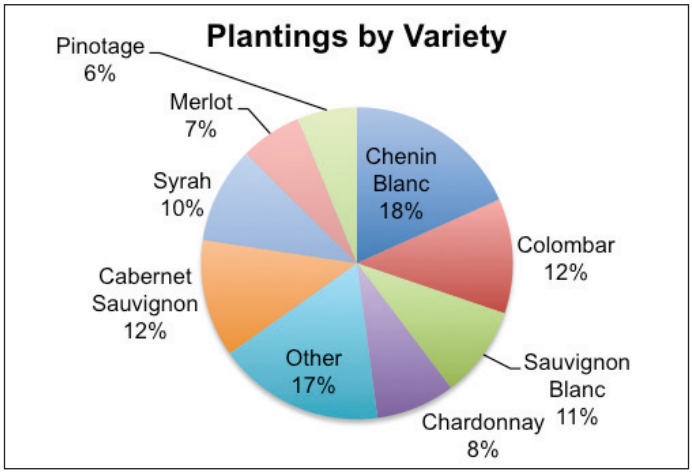
Our counter-clockwise circuit ends by now heading west to Darling and finally south to Durbanville, located just 8 km from the sea and north of Cape Town from where we started. The vineyards of Darling are planted on the eastern side of a range of hills located about 10 km from the cold Atlantic. Low rainfall means vines must be irrigated. Darling is home to Groote Post, Ormonde, and the former cooperative Darling Cellars. The Groenekloof area is especially well known for the quality of its Sauvignon Blanc. Its soils are predominantly granite in origin. Durbanville's terroir is similar—cool and often windy with rainfall adequate for dry-farming. Diemersdal, De Grendel, Nitída, and Durbanville Hills are premium wineries located here.

## Other Wine Growing Areas

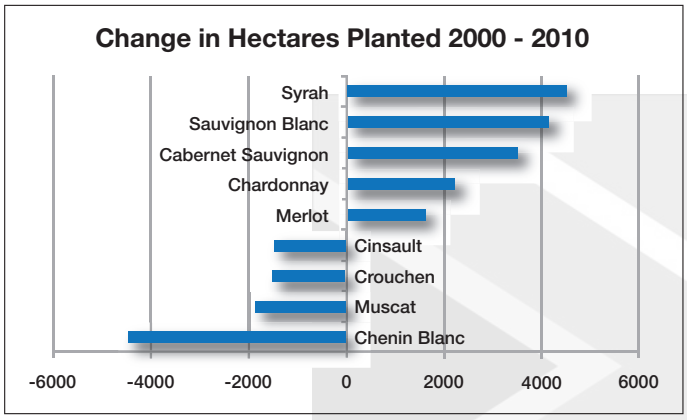
These are the principal sources of premium wines but not the only ones. Worcester, located northwest of Robertson, has the single largest vineyard plantings of any region in South Africa; traditionally used for making brandy, today large quantities of inexpensive, bulk table wine are produced. Another, large wine-growing called Olifants River extends far to the north with generally higher yielding vineyards and excellent value wines. Also further north is the Cederberg Wilderness area with just two, special high altitude (1000 m) growers. Nearer the Atlantic there are cool climate vineyards at Bamboes Bay, Fryer's Cove and Lamberts Bay, all highly regarded for their Sauvignon Blancs. Considerably further north in the Northern Cape one finds productive vineyards and South Africa's single largest cooperative winery (50 million liters) along the Orange River where rainfall is spare and average summer temperatures are high (25.3°C). Also, along the south coast east of Agulhas there's a small winegrowing area called Malgas where some distinctive wines are being produced and even further east, the growing area of Plettenberg Bay. And, east of Cape Town but further inland, one finds Calitzdorp in the semi-arid Karoo. Mostly Portuguese varieties are planted here for the making of very good quality fortified red wines. Finally, in the Karoo just outside the Western Cape and 350 km from the sea is the newly named Sutherland-Karoo district; here we find the Mount Sutherland winery at 1500 meters altitude, located at the foot of the snowcapped Sneeuberg Mountain.

# The South African Vineyard

South Africa's total wine grape plantings in 2010 totaled 101 thousand hectares, slightly smaller than Chile. Total plantings have increased modestly (7%) since 2001 but have actually declined more recently as new plantings have failed to keep pace with the required 5 percent replacement rate. A little more than half (56%) of all vineyard planting is to white varieties, down significantly from 75 percent in 1998. As shown in the accompanying graph, Chenin Blanc is the most widely planted of all white varieties, while Cabernet Sauvignon is the most planted red variety.




While total plantings have not increased significantly over the past decade, the distribution of plantings by variety is gradually changing as growers uproot and replant. As shown in the following graph, among white varieties, Chenin Blanc and Cape Riesling (Crouchen Blanc) are losing ground, while Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc are gaining. Chenin Blanc has seen the most radical change, decreasing from 30 percent of all plantings in 1997 to 18 percent today.




Among mainstream red varieties Syrah and Merlot are increasing while Cinsaut is decreasing. Starting off from a low base, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, and Viognier have all shown exceptionally high rates of growth in plantings over the past decade—98 percent for Pinot Noir, 91 percent for Cabernet Franc, and an 18 fold increase for Viognier, which started off the decade with just 50 hectares. Malbec, Mourvedre, and Petit Verdot have also seen significant growth in plantings. Pinotage is holding its own but not increasing in terms of plantings. Overall, red varieties are gaining share, increasing from 36 percent of all plantings in 2000 to 44 percent in 2010. The growing share of red varieties is reflected in the age of the vines. While 26.8 percent of white varieties are greater than 20 years of age, only 6.4 percent of red varieties are this old. In the Swartland, 38.2 percent of white varieties (mainly Chenin Blanc) are over 20 years old.

## Production of Table Wine

While plantings have not shown much growth in recent years, table wine production in 2010 was 781 million liters, an increase of 47 percent over 2001. This reflects a higher percent of grapes being used to produce table wine as opposed to brandy and other distillates. In 2010 almost 80 percent of wine grapes were used to produce table wine, compared to just 62 percent in 1997.

Average yields have remained relatively constant over time at about 15 tons/ha (6 tons/acre) across all regions and all varieties. Yields vary by variety and by area of production with varieties used to make bulk wine and used for distilling having higher yields. While the average yield of Chenin Blanc is 14.6 tons/ha, that of Pinot Noir is just 4.2 tons/ha. The average yield for estate wines in Stellenbosch is just 6.5 tons/ha compared to an average of 23.4 tons/ha in the Orange River areas where wines are often made and sold in bulk.

## Challenges in the Vineyard

Viticulturalists face many of the same challenges the world over. High humidity, especially in the coastal areas, is one particular problem in South Africa. This can cause a number of problems, including downy mildew, powdery mildew and botrytis bunch rot. Growers like Cape Point Vineyards try to prevent these problems by facilitating air circulation by planting rows so summer winds flow down the rows. They do this by planting trellised rows in the direction of prevailing winds and by keeping canopies open.

In inland areas the problem is more likely to be one of sunburn and dehydration during late summer heat spikes. Canopies can be managed to shade fruit, and irrigation can reduce stress on the vine. Bush vines are particularly good at providing shade.

The most serious challenge facing South African growers is leafroll virus, which is transmitted by phloem-feeding insects like grapevine mealybug and leafhoppers as well as through grafting. Leafroll virus doesn't affect the vine early in the growing season, but vines subjected to the stress of heat and dryness later in the season shut down, and grapes fail to attain full phenolic ripeness. The virus is easily observed as the leaves change color and wither. The impact of the virus is most serious for late-ripening grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon. Since it ripens early, Pinotage is less seriously affected. In general, the virus has a greater impact on red than white grapes, since the former mature

later. There are no effective cures, save ripping out diseased vines, letting the land lie fallow for some time, and replanting with virus-free material. The cure is costly, but extensive replanting is widespread in the Cape.

## Trellising

The traditional practice of bush vines has largely been replaced by trellising. Today about 87 percent of all vines are trellised, although bush vines are still predominant in the Swartland, where 40 percent of red grapes and 49 percent of white grapes are grown that way. Since bush vines require hand picking, they are least used in areas that produce inexpensive wines and where mechanized harvesting is required to keep costs low. In areas like Orange River and Worcester about 97 percent of vines are trellised. In the greater Stellenbosch-Constantia area 14 percent of red vines and 22 percent of white vines are bush.

## Bio-Diversity and Environmental Protection

The commitment of South Africans to protecting and conserving the environment is a longstanding one, visible in its extensive system of national parks from Kruger in Mpumalanga and Limpopo to Cape Point and Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens in the Western Cape. Consistent with this commitment, the wine industry actively participates in efforts to protect the unique Cape Floral Kingdom (see box on BWI) as well as the natural fauna of the area. Jordan Wine Estate (sold under the Jardin label in the U.S.) is a living example of this commitment. The Jordans have cleared over 60 hectares of alien vegetation from their estate and protected and enlarged the pockets of indigenous vegetation. They also protect the threatened Cape Dwarf Chameleon, which is found in the native grasses growing near the winery's highly regarded restaurant.

In addition to BWI, the wine industry in 1998 established a certification program called the Integrated Production of Wine (IPW) to promote environmentally sustainable farming. The IPW establishes guidelines on disease and pest control, use of chemical sprays, carbon emissions, substances added to wines, etc. Members of the IPW are evaluated and audited and permitted to display the IPW seal on their wines.

Consistent with sustainable farming, a number of vineyards in South Africa follow organic practices and a few follow biodynamic practices. The only winery that is certified both organic and biodynamic is Reyneke although Waterkloof is set to follow soon and other wineries (e.g. Fable) claim to adhere to biodynamic principles. A number of other wineries produce selected organic wines, e.g., Backsberg, La Motte and Spier. Similar to what we've found in other countries, the number of certified organic vineyards is a misleading indicator of organic practices in the industry.

Many of the wineries we visited claim to follow organic practices—use of natural pesticides, natural fertilizers, ground cover between rows to improve microbial activity and to host beneficial insects, etc.—but fail to obtain certification for reasons of cost and, more importantly, to reserve the right to use non-natural procedures should it be required by extreme circumstances. Confusing certification procedures and the lack of international standards also deter producers from seeking certification.

**Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (BWI).** Over 90 percent of South Africa's vineyards are located in the Cape Floral Kingdom, the smallest and richest plant kingdom on earth. It is also under severe threat from agriculture, urban development and invasive alien species. Less than 5 percent of the original renosterveld and fynbos habitat continue to exist. In response to this threat, in 2004 the wine industry created the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative, a voluntary effort to preserve and protect the flora of the Cape. To date over 130 thousand hectares have been conserved and native fynbos restored by BWI producers, more than the current vineyard footprint of 102 thousand hectares. In visiting the vineyards and talking with the producers of the Cape, we found their commitment to this preservation effort to be obvious and profound.

## Vintages

South Africa has been blessed with a string of very good to excellent vintages over the past five years. Unlike in Europe, the growing areas of the Cape do not experience much vintage variation, although there are exceptions, such as 2008, and there are regional variations also. The table below summarizes the vintages 2007-2011. Our own tastings of wines from these vintages confirmed that the 2009 and 2007 vintages uniformly produced excellent red and white wines. The year 2008 is a winemaker's vintage that produced wines of good to very good quality, depending on the producer. Our tasting of 2010 and 2011 wines found them to be very good but generally not up to the 2009 and 2007 quality levels. Detailed vintage reports can be found by on www.wosa.co.za under "Vintage Reports".

| Vintage | Quality |
|---|---|
| 2011 | Good to Very good. Unrelenting summer heat. |
| 2010 | Very good. Good phenolic ripeness in general. |
| 2009 | Excellent. Low yields and optimal ripening. |
| 2008 | Good. Wet spring and summer, late harvest. |
| 2007 | Excellent. Optimal weather. |

# South Africa's Grapes and Wines

South Africa makes some of the best premium wines in the world. In this section, we summarize the results of our tastings of these wines and discuss the viticulture and winemaking that lie behind the best wines. The categories of grapes and wines discussed are: Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Sparkling Wines, Chardonnay and Other Whites, Pinotage, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Red Blends, and Pinot Noir. For each category we also give a listing of the top wines, based on our tastings. Full tasting notes on these wines can be found in the section Tasting Notes and Ratings.

## Chenin Blanc

Chenin Blanc is South Africa's grape. The founder of the Cape Colony, Jan Van Riebeeck, brought the vine to South Africa in 1655 along with cuttings of Semillon and Palomino. Chenin is a vigorous grape that adapted well to the climate of the Cape, and it soon became the dominant variety. Still, today, it is South Africa's most widely planted variety, with 18.5 thousand hectares planted, about double the acreage of Chenin in the Loire.

Chenin Blanc became the workhorse of South African wine, used to produce inexpensive wine for drinking and for distillation. It was only in the early 1990s that winemakers discovered the treasure that was old bush vine Chenin Blanc and began producing high quality wines that compete with the Loire in terms of quality. Chenin Blanc winemaking pioneers and their respective wineries at that time include Teddy Hall (Kanu), Mike Dobrovic (Mulderbosch), Jeff Grier (Villiera), Martin Meinert (Ken Forrester), Zakkie Bester (Riebeeck), Jean Daneel (Jean Daneel), and Irina von Holdt and Fran Botha (Old Vines). By the mid-90s, winemakers were experimenting with the use of barrel aging, and Hilko Hegewisch (Boschendal) won the first Chenin Blanc Challenge in 1996 with a wooded wine.

### Viticulture and Winemaking.

Chenin Blanc is a grape that is sensitive to its terroir, especially the type of soil in which it is grown. Soils affect the aroma, flavor and minerality of the wine. For this reason, producers like Raats blend grapes from both granite and sandstone based soils for complexity and balance. The training of the vine also affects fruit quality. Compared to trellised vines, bush vines produce lower yields and more dense clusters of smaller grapes with thicker skins.

Chenin Blanc is grown throughout the warmer, interior growing regions, with clusters of old vines in the Swartland, Paarl, and Stellenbosch. Eben Sadie, who is known for seeking out very old parcels of vines in unlikely places, makes a superb Chenin Blanc from an Olifants River vineyard with vines up to 90 years old located 300 km north of his Malmesbury winery.

**South Africa's Chenin Blanc Association.** South Africa has several wine associations organized to facilitate exchange of learning between producers and to promote their wines. The Chenin Blanc Association (CBA) is one of the most successful. The impetus to start the CBA was a 1995 Masters of Wine visit that expressed surprise at the quality of South Africa's Chenin Blanc. The CBA was created the following year and now has 70 members. Ken Forrester (pictured here), the current chairman of the CBA and owner of Ken Forrester Wines, has been a steadfast promoter of the variety since he started his eponymous winery in Stellenbosch in 1994.

### Wine Styles.

South African Chenin Blanc is more fruit driven and higher in alcohol than the Chenin of the Loire, but the wines are equally well-balanced with excellent acidity. Chenin Blanc styles run a continuum from stainless steel fermented, unwooded wines that are easy drinking with straightforward fruit flavors to barrel fermented and aged wines that are rich, ripe and complex.

The best Chenin Blancs are rich, judiciously oaked, and densely flavored wines with 6-11 g/l residual sugar. Many are made from the fruit of dry-farmed, extremely low-yielding, old (35+ years) bush vines, are fermented in partially new oak (mostly 400 lt barrels), spend extended time on the lees in barrel, and may even have a small amount of botrytis or even raisined fruit. As in the Loire, producers like Miles Mossop do multiple passes (*tries*) through the vineyard to select optimally ripe fruit. Fermentation is sometimes slow and long using ambient yeasts, with extended time (up to 12 months) on the lees and at least partial malo to provide the creamy texture one expects from these wines. The result is a richly layered, complex wine with an unctuous palate and ripe and nutty flavors.

In the table on the next page we list the current releases of Chenin Blanc and Chenin Blanc based blends that we scored 91 points or more in our tastings. Not reported here (but included in the Tasting Notes and Ratings) are some of the superb older vintages that we tasted.

**Highly Rated (91+) Chenin Blanc & Blends (*)**

| |
|---|
| Beaumont 2010 Hope Marguerite Walker Bay (Bot River) |
| Bellingham 2010 Bernard Series Old Vine Chenin Blanc Coastal Region |
| De Morgenzon 2010 Chenin Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch |
| *De Trafford 2009 Sijnn White Swellendam (Malgas) |
| *Fable 2010 Jackal Bird Coastal |
| Graham Beck 2009 Bowed Head Chenin Blanc Coastal Region (Paarl) |
| Kanu 2007 Chenin Blanc KCB Stellenbosch |
| *Keermont 2010 Terrasse Stellenbosch |
| Ken Forrester 2010 Reserve Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch |
| Ken Forrester 2009 FMC Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch |
| *Miles Mossop 2009 Saskia Stellenbosch |
| Mulderbosch 2009 Small Change Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch |
| *Mullineux 2010 White Blend Swartland |
| Reyneke 2010 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch (Bottelary) |
| Rijk's 2007 Reserve Chenin Blanc Barrel Fermented Tulbagh |
| Rudera 2009 Chenin Blanc Robusto Stellenbosch |
| Sadie Family 2010 Skurfberg Chenin Blanc Olifant's River |
| Spier 2009 Chenin Blanc Private Collection Stellenbosch |
| Villiera 2010 Chenin Blanc Traditional Barrel Fermented Stellenbosch |
| Vins d'Orrance 2010 Chenin Blanc Western Cape |

## Sauvignon Blanc

South Africa ranks third in the world in terms of Sauvignon Blanc plantings after New Zealand and Chile. Its origins in South Africa aren't known, but in his 1927 volume "A Treatise on Viticulture", Abraham Perold already referred to it, saying, "At the Cape it also produces an excellent wine, but it is unfortunately grown very little." Sauvignon Blanc started to gain popularity in South Africa in the 1950's and 1960's; the oldest vineyard of Sauvignon Blanc today is a bush vine vineyard at Spice Route on the west coast dating back to 1965. In 1973 the first varietal wine designated Sauvignon Blanc was produced in 1973 by Verdun (Asara, today). By 1985 over 2200 hectares had been planted, increasing to 9550 hectares in 2010. Today it is one of the country's most important and successful varieties grown in some of the most extreme winegrowing climates, including at Cape Agulhas and at Lutzville in the Olifants River Valley.

Some of the preeminent Sauvignon Blanc winemakers today include André van Rensburg (Vergelegen), Bartho Eksteen (Hermanuspietersfontein), JC Becker (Boschendal), Thys Louw (Diemersdal), Miles Mossop (Tokara), Erika Obermeyer (Graham Beck) and Duncan Savage (Cape Point).

**Viticulture and Winemaking.**

The challenge with making Sauvignon Blanc is to produce a wine that is neither too high in pyrazines (i.e., grassy/capsicum notes) nor mercaptans, which gives unappealing sweaty notes. In the early 1990s, research led by Johann Marais of the Agricultural Research Council led to recommendations regarding the appropriate terroir and canopy management to obtain the best expression of the variety. This led to new plantings in the coastal areas of Constantia, Darling, Durbanville, Elgin, Walker Bay, and, more recently, Elim, as well as higher altitude areas of Stellenbosch. The most popular clone in these plantings is SB11, the Weather-Station Clone (Weerstasie).

Growers have learned how to manage the canopy to produce the desired characteristics of the variety. They reduce foliage within the canopy to provide light and air while continuing to shade the fruit. In vineyards near the windy west coast, Sauvignon Blanc bush vines are trained low due to the high winds.

Sauvignon Blanc is sensitive to harvesting decisions. Picked early, the pyrazines and accompanying herbaceousness can be aggressive. Picked ripe, it evokes passion fruit, guava, kiwi, and ripe fig. Picked over-ripe, the wine is flat and boring. Some producers do multiple pickings to obtain a wide range of flavors and to ensure that pyrazines are present but not excessively so. Picking also is ideally done early in the morning, often by hand, to keep the berries whole and cool and to avoid oxidation.

In addition to multiple pickings, winemakers often blend fruit from different sites to obtain maximum complexity of flavors and aromas. The fruit is then fermented cool, sometimes employing different yeasts to separately vinify fruit from different sites as Erika Obermeyer does with fruit from Graham Beck's vineyards in Darling, Durbanville, and Stellenbosch. After fermentation, many of the top producers give the wine extended lees contact to lend a creamy texture and added mid-palate weight.

**Wine Styles.**

South African Sauvignon Blanc has its own unique style, frequently described as a hybrid of the Old and New Worlds. While some wines show the minerality and refinement of the best Loire wines and some show the aggressive herbaceousness of some New World wines, most South African Sauvignon Blancs lie somewhere in between. The best ones combine understated ripe tropical and citrus fruit with green herbal notes, chalky minerality, a creamy, leesy texture, and bracing but unaggressive acidity.

In our tastings, we found three distinct styles of Sauvignon Blanc — 1) herbaceous, 2) citrus/tropical fruit and 3) wooded, blended. Unlike the aggressive, green notes that were common in South African Sauvignon Blanc in the past, the lush citrus/tropical fruit style appears to dominate with prominent notes of passion fruit and grapefruit. Which style is best is a matter of personal taste. Charles Hopkins likes the herbaceous style, and that's reflected in his superb De Grendel Koetshuis Sauvignon Blanc.

Finally, there's the wooded Sauvignon Blanc, almost always blended with Semillon. The Steenberg Magna Carta, Tokara Director's Reserve, and Vergelegen White are all superb examples of this style.

In the table below we list the current releases of Sauvignon Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc based blends that scored 91 points or higher in our tastings. Most of these wines come from cool, coastal or high altitude vineyards.

**Highly Rated (91+) Sauvignon Blanc & Blends (*)**

| |
|---|
| *Bizoe 2009 Henrietta Western Cape |
| *Black Oystercatcher 2008 White Pearl Elim |
| Boschendal 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Durbanville |
| Buitenverwachting 2010 Husseys Vlei Sauvignon Blanc Constantia |
| Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Cape Point |
| Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Cape Point |
| *Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Isliedh Cape Point |
| Cederberg 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Cederberg |
| *Constantia Uitsig 2010 Constantia White Constantia |
| De Grendel 2011 Koetshuis Sauvignon Blanc Durbanville |
| Graham Beck 2011 Pheasant's Run Sauvignon Blanc Coastal Region |
| La Motte 2011 Pierneef Sauvignon Blanc Walker Bay (Bot River) |
| Lomond 2010 Sugarbush Sauvignon Blanc Cape Agulhas |
| *Nico van der Merwe 2011 Sauvignon Blanc – Semillon Robertson |
| Reyneke 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch (Bottelary) |
| Sir Lambert 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Lamberts Bay |
| Steenberg 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Constantia |
| *Steenberg 2009 Magna Carta Constantia |
| Strandveld 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Elim |
| Tokara 2010 Elgin Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Collection Elgin |
| *Tokara 2010 Director's Reserve White Stellenbosch |
| Uva Mira 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Cellar Selection Stellenbosch (Helderberg) |
| Vergelegen 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch (Helderberg) |
| *Vergelegen 2009 White Stellenbosch (Helderberg) |
| Waterkloof 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch (Helderberg) |

## Sparkling Wines

In 1971 Frans Malan made South Africa's first *méthode champenoise* wine at Simonsig using Chenin Blanc grapes and called the wine Kaapse Vonkel. [Beginning in 1987, Johan Malan converted to a Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blend.] It took a while, but by the late 1980s Simonsig was joined in making quality sparkling wines by the partnership of Jean Louis Denois and the Grier siblings at Villiera, Archim von Anim's venture at Haute Cabrière, Graham Beck's Robertson investment (with the help of Pieter Ferreira), and Nicky Krone's release of its Krone Borealis Brut at Twee Jonge Gezellen. Finally, in 1992, the Cap Classique Association was founded and the term Méthode Cap Classique (MCC) came into being. Today the Association has 79 members.

Since few South African sparkling wines are exported, they are one of the pleasant surprises awaiting the visitor to South Africa. Perhaps the best news is that the bar for the top MCCs keeps getting set higher. Established producers like Graham Beck, Boschendal, Pongrácz, Villiera, and Twee Jonge Gezellen are bringing out flagship sparkling wines with 5 years and more on the lees that represent a significant improvement in the sparkling wine industry. And newer producers like Topiary, Colmant, and Ambeloui are already raising the bar with other producers not far behind.

In the table below, we report the wines that we evaluated at over 90 points. The best of these wines—by Boschendal, Colmant, Graham Beck, Topiary, Twee Jonge Gezellen/Krone, and Villiera—can compete with the best New World sparkling wines anywhere.

**Highly Rated (>90) Sparkling Wines**

| |
|---|
| Boschendal 2007 Grand Cuvée Brut Franschhoek |
| Cederberg 2006 Brut Blanc de Blancs Cederberg |
| Colmant NV Brut Chardonnay Western Cape (Franshhoek) |
| Colmant NV Brut Reserve Western Cape (Franschhoek) |
| Graham Beck 2005 Brut Zero Western Cape (Franschhoek) |
| Graham Beck 2008 Blanc de Blancs Robertson |
| Graham Beck 2005 Prestige Cuvée Clive Robertson |
| Pongrácz 2003 Desiderius |
| Simonsig 2005 Cuvée Royale Blanc de Blancs Stellenbosch |
| Topiary 2009 Brut Blanc de Blancs Franschhoek |
| Twee Jonge Gezellen 2005 Vintage Rosé Cuvée Brut Robertson |
| Vergelegen 2007 MMV Stellenbosch |
| Villiera 2008 Brut Natural Chardonnay Stellenbosch (Bottelary) |
| Villiera 2005 Monro Brut Stellenbosch (Bottelary) |

## Diverse White Wines

Space does not allow us to go into depth on each of the white varieties produced in South Africa, but we have reported our favorite wines in the table below. Excellent single varietals are being made from Chardonnay (especially) but, also, Semillon and increasingly Rhône varieties like Viognier and Roussanne.

**Highly Rated (91+) Diverse White Varieties and Blends (*)**

| |
|---|
| Ataraxia 2009 Chardonnay Western Cape (Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| *Black Oystercatcher 2008 White Pearl Elim |
| Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Semillon Franschhoek |
| Buitenverwachting 2009 Chardonnay Constantia |
| Cape Chamonix 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Stellenbosch |
| De Wetshof 2009 Bateleur Chardonnay Robertson |
| De Wetshof 2009 The Site Chardonnay Robertson |
| Eagles' Nest 2010 Viognier Constantia |
| Glen Carlou 2010 Chardonnay Quartz Stone Paarl |
| Hamilton Russell 2010 Chardonnay Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) |
| Paul Cluver 2009 Riesling Close Encounter Elgin |
| Rustenberg 2011 Roussanne Stellenbosch |
| *Sadie 2010 Palladius Swartland |
| Saronsberg 2010 Viognier Tulbagh |
| Steenberg 2010 Semillon Constantia |
| Steenberg 2009 Semillon Constantia |
| *Sterhuis 2008 Astra White Stellenbosch |
| Sterhuis 2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch |
| The Winery of Good Hope 2008 Radford Dale Chardonnay Stellenbosch |
| Vergelegen 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Stellenbosch. |
| Vergelegen 2008 Semillon Reserve Stellenbosch |

## Pinotage

Pinotage is South Africa's national grape. In 1924 Professor Abraham Izak Perold at the University of Stellenbosch crossed Cinsaut and Pinot Noir with the goal of creating a wine that had classic Burgundy flavors and the disease resistant quality and vigor of the Rhône's Cinsaut. His work and that of others (Dr. Charlie Niehaus and Professor C.J. Theron) resulted in the creation of a new grape known as Pinotage.

Kanonkop planted Pinotage as early as 1941, but the variety first acquired fame when a Bellevue Pinotage won the 1959 National Young Wine Show; the Stellenbosch Farmer's Winery subsequently marketed the wine—the first to be sold as Pinotage—in 1961 under the Lanzerac label. These early wines were sometimes criticized for having acetone and burnt rubber notes. Today growers have learned how best to cultivate the grape, and winemakers how best to vinify it, the result being some delicious wines.

### Viticulture and Winemaking.

Pinotage is mostly grown in the Stellenbosch-Franschhoek-Paarl belt, with the Bottelary Hills offering a concentration of excellent producers in Bellevue, Kaapzicht, and Beyerskloof. Bush-vine Pinotage produces small berries and low yields (about 5 tons/ha), but low trellising is also used so the fruit can benefit from radiant heat. Trellised Pinotage may yield up to 10 tons per hectare of high quality grapes. An early ripener, it is normally harvested in early to mid-February, well before Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon. Harvesting Pinotage ripe, but not over-ripe, is key to making good wine.

The best producers of Pinotage craft wines that are fruit forward, fresh and elegant using winemaking methods similar to those for Pinot Noir. They use pre-fermentation cold soaks and short hot alcoholic fermentations in open top fermenters. These techniques help promote the fruity aromatic qualities of the wine (eliminating acetone or burnt rubber smells) and ensure good color. The fermenters are of differing materials (Kanonkop uses epoxy tanks) and differing sizes (small tanks allow for fermenting small lots). Most winemakers use cultured yeast and punch down the cap by hand. Pressing is done with bladder or basket presses and after settling, the wine is transferred to barrels for maturation. The top winemakers use medium toast barrels and rarely use new oak. Maturation in barrels can last for 12 to 18 months before blending or bottling.

### Styles of Pinotage.

Pinotage is made in a variety of styles. The most basic style is fruit forward, easy-drinking and ideal for early consumption. It is inexpensive and produced on a large scale, usually showing red fruit (raspberry and mulberry) mixed with spicy notes. The more interesting and highly rated wines are of two types--elegant and robust. The elegant style is close to Pinot Noir and is made with fruit from cooler climates. When young, it shows ripe cherry fruit and good depth of flavor. During aging the aromas evolve taking on notes of wet pine needles and mushrooms like Pinot Noir. The robust style, made from warmer climate fruit, shows more red plum and dark cherry fruit and chocolate. The styles of Pinotage are changing as winemakers become more proficient at producing and blending it.

One of the most exciting trends associated with Pinotage to emerge from South Africa is the Cape Blend, a concept that emerged in the late 1990s. It is the product of a search for a unique South African red blend to match the great blends of Bordeaux. There is a healthy debate as to the ideal blend but general agreement that Pinotage should be an important component. The quality of these blends is impressive as shown by producers like Kaapzicht, Simonsig, Stellenzicht, and Sumaridge.

In the following table, we present those Pinotage varietal and Pinotage blends (wines having at least 25 percent of

that variety) that scored highest in our tastings. The quality of these wines is impressive, as it the number of such excellent wines.

**Highly Rated (91+) Pinotage and Cape Blends (*)**

| |
|---|
| Beaumont 2008 Pinotage Walker Bay |
| Beyerskloof 2009 Diesel Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| Diemersdal 2010 Pinotage Reserve Durbanville |
| Fairview 2009 Primo Pinotage Coastal Region |
| Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| *Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Vision Cape Blend Stellenbosch |
| Kanonkop 2009 Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| Kanonkop 2007 Black Label Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| L 'Avenir 2007 Grand Vin Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| Neethingshof 2010 The Owl Post Pinotage Reserve Stellenbosch |
| Rijk's 2007 Pinotage Reserve Coastal Region |
| Scali 2006 Pinotage Paarl (Voor-Paardeberg) |
| Simonsig 2008 Pinotage Red Hill Stellenbosch |
| *Simonsig 2006 Frans Malan Cape Blend Stellenbosch |
| Spier 2009 Pinotage 21 Gables Stellenbosch |
| Spier 2009 Pinotage Private Collection Stellenbosch |
| Stellenzicht 2009 Golden Triangle Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| *Stellenzicht 2006 Rhapsody Stellenbosch |
| *Sumaridge 2008 Epitome Hemel-en-Arde Valley |
| Vriesenhof 2007 Pinotage Stellenbosch |
| Warwick 2008 Pinotage Old Bush Vines Stellenbosch |

**Cape Winemakers Guild (CWG)**

Three decades ago, eight independent winemakers created the Cape Winemakers Guild with the objective of honoring winemakers with a consistent track record of making excellent wines. In December 2011 Bartho Eksteen of Hermanuspietersfontein and Miles Mossop of Tokara were the latest winemakers to be inducted into the Guild, which now numbers 45 and constitutes a who's who of South African winemaking.

Each year members of the Guild produce small volume wines exclusively for the Nedbank CWG Auction. The auction provides a venue for showcasing winemakers and their wines. The Auction also has a fund-raising component to help support the charitable activities of the CWG, including the Protégé Program which provides paid internships and mentoring to aspiring young winemakers with priority given to those from underprivileged backgrounds.

## Cabernet Sauvignon

With 12 percent of total plantings, Cabernet Sauvignon is the most important red grape in South Africa at present. While grown in many areas, Stellenbosch with its mountain slopes, varied soils and cool ocean breezes provides the ideal growing conditions for Cabernet Sauvignon. And within Stellenbosch the prime growing area is the Golden Triangle located in the Helderberg between Stellenbosch city and Somerset West. High concentrations of Cabernet Sauvignon are also found in Franschhoek and Paarl.

### Viticulture and Winemaking.

Cabernet Sauvignon needs a warm climate and plenty of sun to excel. It buds late and is late ripening, at least a week or two after Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The most interesting wines are blends of vineyard parcels with different soils, exposures, elevations and clonal material. The vertical trellis is widely used to facilitate ripening of fruit and balanced growth. For producers like Dave De Trafford, 1 kg of fruit per vine is the limit for producing top quality wines. The best grapes are small with thick skins, deep colors, and high levels of phenolics.

Top Cabernet Sauvignon producers do 100 percent destemming and crushing by hand and use small open-top fermenters. When possible, they use ambient yeasts and control fermentation at around 30°C. They do punch downs of the cap by hand and press using bladder or traditional basket presses. The wines undergo malolactic fermentation in barrels with varying degrees of new French oak. They do not shy away from using new oak if their fruit has high levels of phenolics and tannins. Oak aging usually lasts up to two years to help soften the fruit tannins and add in softer oak tannins. Many wines spend an additional year in bottle to help further soften tannins before release.

### Wine Styles.

The top-rated Cabernet Sauvignons of Stellenbosch in general show dense black fruit (black currants, cassis and blackberry) aromas and flavors as well as graphite, nuts, mint, eucalyptus, minerals and toasted oak. They also show good structure and balance, velvet tannins, and persistent finishes. The most interesting wines offer secondary and tertiary aromas and flavors from mushroom and truffle to leather and cigar box. The Cabernet Sauvignon of warmer areas like Paarl and Wellington exhibit ripe, dense flavors tending to blackberry compote in warm vintages. Cabernet Sauvignon at higher elevations tends to exhibit added complexity and depth compared to fruit grown on the valley floor. While some winemakers produce high-octane fleshy wines, most of the Cabernet Sauvignons we tasted in South Africa were well balanced and neither excessively powerful nor alcoholic. While Cabernet Sauvignon shines on its own in South Africa, it is also the base wine for outstanding red blends that include Petite Verdot, Malbec and other Bordeaux varieties as well as Shiraz. Below we list the Cabernet Sauvignons we rated 91 points and higher in our tastings.

**Highly Rated (91+) Cabernet Sauvignon**

| |
|---|
| Anthonij Rupert 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Coastal Region |
| Bilton 2006 The Bilton Stellenbosch |
| Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Franschhoek |
| De Trafford 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Edgebaston 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Ernie Els 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Glen Carlou 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Gravel Quarry Paarl |
| Graham Beck 2007 Coffeestone Cabernet Sauvignon Robertson |
| Hartenberg 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Kanonkop 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Le Riche Wines 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch |
| Le Riche Wines 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch |
| Rust en Vrede 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Rustenberg 2007 Peter Barlow Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Stony Brook 2006 Stony Brook Ghost Gum Cabernet Sauvignon Franschhoek |
| Thelema 2009 The Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Vergelegen 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |
| Waterford Estate 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch |

## Syrah

The origins of Syrah (Shiraz) in South Africa aren't known for sure, although there is evidence of it being planted at Groot Constantia in Cape Town at the end of the 1890s. The first wine labeled Shiraz was produced by Bellingham in 1957, followed by Groot Constantia in 1963. By 1992 total plantings had increased to 900 hectares; this increased to 7200 hectares by 2001 and over 10 thousand by 2010. Today it is South Africa's 4th most planted variety, and it is likely to soon become the 2nd most planted variety, after Chenin Blanc. While today's Syrah vines are young, the quality of the wines is impressive and will undoubtedly improve with greater vine age.

### Viticulture and Winemaking.

Mostly grown in warmer areas like Paarl, Wellington and the Swartland, there are also new plantings of Syrah in cooler areas like Constantia, Walker Bay and Elim on a wide variety of soil types. The excessive vigor of Syrah requires that top producers do crop thinning, usually twice a year, and careful management of the canopy to reduce yields. Careful site selection, using lots of organic materials, keeping vineyards virus free, and avoiding overcropping are key requirements for producing high quality Shiraz.

The top producers of Syrah hand-pick, sort and de-stem grapes. Most crush their grapes and ferment in open-top fermenters, keeping lots separate until blending. A few use some whole clusters and stems. Punch downs by hand or pump-overs (both are used) are usually performed three to four times a day to capture color and flavor in the wine. Fermentations are slow and are followed by malo in barrel. The wine is then racked into a combination of new and 2nd or 3rd fill French oak barrels and matured for up to 18 months with one to two rackings. The top producers generally prefer 225 lt French barriques; some use 100 percent new oak, depending on fruit quality. All producers today are careful not to over oak their wines.

### Wine Styles.

South African Syrah is vinified in a variety of styles. The wines from warmer areas show dark berry fruit, black pepper and complex flavors resulting from the blending of different parcels. From our tasting with winemaker Eben Sadie in the Swartland, we were able to observe significant differences among Syrah that is grown in slate, schist and granite soils like those of the Perdeberg hills. Some producers like Charles Back of Fairview are cultivating a number of single-vineyard Syrahs. He sources fruit from the Leeuwenkuil (Lion Creek) estate vineyard in Paarl for the magnificent Beacon Shiraz; Leeuwenkuil has been farmed by the same family for seven generations. The Syrah from warmer areas can also be rather big, lush and high in alcohol, a style preference of some producers. These big over-ripe wines, however, are not typical of the Syrah being produced in most of South Africa.

Typical cool climate Syrah displays rich dark-ruby or plum colors and aromas of white pepper, dark berry fruit and hints of violets, complemented by nuances of smoke and leather derived from maturation in barrel. The top cool-climate Syrahs like Eagles' Nest also show elegance, balance and refinement with nicely integrated tannins. Alcohol levels are kept in check with most wines at 14 percent or below. Several producers are also successfully blending or co-fermenting Syrah with Viognier as is done in the Rhône. They are also blending Syrah as the lead variety with Grenache (La Motte), Mourvedre (Sadie) and Bordeaux varieties (Reyneke), adding richness and structure. In addition to these producers, other top Syrah blend producers include Anwilka, Boekenhoutskloof, and Rust en Vrede.

In the table below we list the Syrah and Syrah based blends that we scored 91 points or more in our tastings. This is a high standard, and the large number of such extremely high quality wines indicates that Syrah has arrived.

**Highly Rated (91+) Syrah and Syrah Blends (*)**

| |
|---|
| *Anwilka 2008 Stellenbosch |
| *Badenhorst 2007 Red Blend Coastal Region |
| Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Syrah Coastal Region |
| *Boekenhoutskloof 2010 The Chocolate Block, Western Cape |
| Cirrus 2007 Syrah Stellenbosch |
| De Trafford 2009 Syrah Stellenbosch |
| De Trafford 2008 Blueprint Shiraz Stellenbosch |
| Eagles' Nest 2010 Shiraz Constantia |
| *Fable 2009 Lion's Whisker Coastal Region |
| Fairview 2008 The Beacon Shiraz Paarl |
| Graham Beck 2009 The Ridge Syrah Robertson |
| Hartenberg 2006 Gravel Hill Stellenbosch |
| Hartenberg 2007 The Stork Stellenbosch |
| Haskell Vineyards 2008 Aeon Syrah Stellenbosch |
| Julien Schaal 2010 Syrah Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley |
| *La Motte 2008 Shiraz Grenache Stellenbosch |
| *La Motte 2008 Shiraz Viognier Stellenbosch |
| Mullineux 2009 Syrah Swartland |
| *Post House 2009 Penny Black Stellenbosch |
| *Reyneke 2008 Reserve Red Stellenbosch |
| Rijk's 2007 Estate Syrah Tulbagh |
| Rijk's 2005 Private Cellar Shiraz Tulbagh |
| Rust en Vrede 2007 Cirrus Syrah Stellenbosch |
| Rustenberg 2009 Syrah Stellenbosch |
| *Sadie Family Wines 2009 Columella Swartland |
| *Saronsberg 2008 Full Circle Tulbagh |
| Saronsberg 2008 Shiraz Tulbagh |
| Saxenberg 2006 Shiraz Select Stellenbosch |
| *Stellenzicht 2006 Rhapsody Stellenbosch |
| *Sumaridge 2008 Epitome Walker Bay Hemmel-en-Aarde |
| Vergelegen 2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch |

## Top Rated Bordeaux and other Red Blends

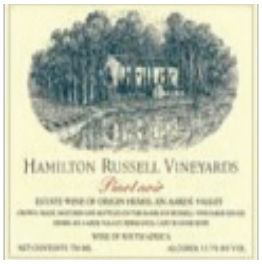
One of South Africa's most successful wines is the red blend, combining Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Cabernet Sauvignon serves as the backbone of the blend providing rich black currant, cassis and graphite as well as structure and tannic grip for aging. Merlot adds ripe lush fruit and Cabernet Franc adds fragrance and herbal nuance. Bordeaux blends continue to be part of the repertoire of many of the top wineries. As shown in the table below, some of our favorites are De Toren Fusion V, Ernie Els Signature, Hartenberg The MacKenzie, Kanonkop Paul Sauer, Morgenster Morgenster, and Vergelegen V. These wines rank among the very best Bordeaux blends being made in the world today.

The red blend category has expanded beyond the Bordeaux blend in recent years. As noted earlier, there are now many fine blends being produced with Syrah as their principal component but also including Bordeaux varieties. Our top rated Syrah-based and Cape red blends were identified in earlier tables. In the table below we list our top rated Bordeaux red blends and other red blends (marked by an asterisk).

**Highly Rated (91+) Bordeaux and Other Blends***

| |
|---|
| Ataraxia 2007 Serenity Western Cape |
| Bilton 2006 Sir Percy Stellenbosch |
| Camberley 2008 Philosopher's Stone Stellenbosch |
| *Cederberg Private Cellars 2009 Merlot Shiraz Cederberg |
| De Grendel 2007 Rubaiyat Durbanville |
| De Toren 2009 Fusion V Stellenbosch |
| De Toren 2009 Z Stellenbosch |
| *De Trafford 2007 Elevation Stellenbosch |
| Eagles' Nest 2008 Verreaux Constantia |
| *Ernie Els 2009 Proprietor's Blend Stellenbosch |
| Ernie Els 2007 Signature Stellenbosch |
| *Graham Beck 2007 Ad Honorem Stellenbosch |
| Hartenberg 2007 The MacKenzie Stellenbosch |
| Haskell 2007 Haskell IV Stellenbosch |
| Iona 2006 The Gunnar Elgin |
| Kanonkop 2005 Paul Sauer Stellenbosch |
| Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Pentagon Stellenbosch |
| Keermont Vineyards 2008 Estate Blend Stellenbosch |
| Le Bonheur 2009 Tricone Reserve Stellenbosch |
| Meerlust 2007 Rubicon Stellenbosch |
| Miles Mossop Wines 2007 Max Stellenbosch |
| Morgenhof 2004 Estate Stellenbosch |
| Morgenster 2006 Morgenster Stellenbosch |
| Neethlingshof Estate 2009 The Caracal Stellenbosch |
| Rietvallei Wine Estate 2008 Estéanna |
| *Rust en Vrede 2007 Estate Stellenbosch |
| Rustenberg 2007 John X Merriman Stellenbosch |
| *Spice Route 2009 Chakalaka Swartland |
| *Spier 2005 Frans K Smit Stellenbosch |
| Uva Mira 2007 Red Blend Stellenbosch |
| Vergelegen 2005 Red Stellenbosch Stellenbosch |
| Vergelegen 2006 V Stellenbosch |
| Vilafonté 2008 Series C Paarl |
| Vilafonté 2007 Series M Paarl |
| Vriesenhof 2005 Kallista Stellenbosch |

## Pinot Noir




Pinot Noir is another of South Africa's promising reds. Although plantings of Pinot Noir are still relatively modest, they have increased dramatically in recent years, especially in Hemel-en-Aarde in Walker Bay and in Elgin. Hamilton Russell pioneered the production of outstanding Pinot Noir (and Chardonnay) beginning in the mid-1970s and Bouchard-Finlayson followed a decade later. Since then, a small group of other top producers such as Newton Johnson, Cape Chamonix, Catherine Marshall, Paul Cluver, Domaine des Dieux and others have followed in their footsteps.

Notoriously difficult to succeed with outside its native Burgundy, the cool climate coastal vineyards in Walker Bay and Elgin nevertheless offer excellent growing conditions for Pinot Noir, although achieving phenolic ripeness can be difficult in cooler vintages, and winds can sometimes play havoc in the vineyards. As in Burgundy, vineyards are densely planted (for South Africa) ranging from 5,000 to 9 thousand vines per hectare and yields are kept low by green harvesting. Improved, virus free clonal material, mainly Dijon clones such 115, 113, 777, were introduced in the 1980s.

The leading producers generally follow Burgundian wine-making practice with good results. Stylistically, the top Pinot Noirs are comparable to those of Burgundy, offering bright red and dark red cherry fruit, a silky elegant texture and ripe tannins. The best examples also reveal good integration of fruit and oak and attractive secondary notes of mushrooms and spices. The diversity of soils (clay, granite, shale, sandstone) also contributes to differing expressions of Pinot Noir, which some producers, like Anthony Hamilton Russell believe speak louder than clonal differences.

The following are the top Pinot Noirs (scored 90 and above) tasted for this report. The full evaluations of these wines can be found in the Tasting Notes and Ratings section of this report.

**Highly Rated (90+) Pinot Noir**

| |
|---|
| Bouchard Finlayson Galpin Peak 2010 Pinot Noir Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| Catherine Marshall 2010 Pinot Noir Six Barrels Reserve Elgin |
| Catherine Marshall 2010 Pinot Noir Eleven Barrels Elgin |
| Cape Chamonix 2009 Pinot Noir Reserve Franschhoek |
| Domaine Des Dieux 2010 Pinot Noir Josephine Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| Downes Family (Shannon) 2010 Pinot Noir Rockview Ridge, Elgin |
| Hamilton-Russell 2009 Pinot Noir Walker Bay Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| Hamilton Russell 2010 Pinot Noir Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| La Vierge 2010 Pinot Noir Hemel-en-Aarde |
| Newton Johnson Domaine 2010 Pinot Noir Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| Paul Cluver 2009 Pinot Noir |
| La Vierge 2010 Pinot Noir, Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde) |
| Vriesenhof 2007 Pinot Noir Stellenbosch |

# The Wine and Food Paradise of the Western Cape

The Western Cape is one of the world's most attractive tourist destinations for wine and food enthusiasts. Not only is the Cape well endowed with unusual natural beauty, it has an impressive tourism infrastructure of beautiful wineries, outstanding winery restaurants, comfortable hotels and well-trained professionals to help make a visit special.

HERMANUS WINE ROUTE R320

One can either drive or contract a private touring company that specializes in wine tourism. The Cape winelands has 18 organised wine routes, most within just a few hours' drive of Cape Town. These range from Constantia and Durbanville to Darling, Elgin, Stellenbosch, Paarl, Franschhoek, Robertson, Worcester, and more.

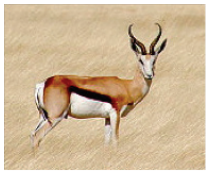
In Cape Town and in the towns of Franschhoek, Stellenbosch, Hermanus, and elsewhere, there are many special dining opportunities in fine restaurants with excellent chefs and eclectic wine menus. In the following sections we share some of what we learned about the wine and food paradise of the Western Cape.

## Cuisine of the Cape

South Africa's cuisine has many sources—the Dutch, British, Indian, indigenous African, Mozambique, and, especially, what is called Cape Malay, the foods and spices—cumin, cinnamon, coriander--brought by the Malaysians, Indone-

sians and thers whom the Dutch East India Company forcibly transported to the Cape. All of these exotic influences can be found today in the diverse dishes of South Africa—bobotie, curries, biltong (jerky), boerewors (literally, farmer sausage), bunny chow, biryani, samoosas, potjiekos, rusks, sosaties (kabobs), peri-peri, waterbloommetjies, etc. Bobotie—a cross between meatloaf and shepherd's pie made with dried fruit, ground beef, and egg on top and served with sambals, coconut, and chutney—is uniquely South African.

The braai, South Africa's take on the Argentine *parrillada*, is an essential element of the cuisine and culture. A wide variety of meats and seafood are cooked on the braai, made with dried vine stumps or equally dense, hot-burning wood. As with barbecue in the States, there are many versions of the braai. Have a look here for some recipes: http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/c958813#/c958813d/1



Another unique part of South African cuisine is the natural ingredients, from fresh seafood (kingklip, kabeljou, snoek, prawns and lobsters, West Coast oysters) to free range Karoo lamb, the African ostrich, and the plentiful wild game (warthog, wildebeest, and, especially, the many types of venison—kudu, springbok, impala, eland, etc).

### Platter's South African Wine Guide

Published annually for over three decades, the Platter's South African Wine Guide (generally abbreviated to just Platter's) ranks right up there with *Le Guide Hachette and Gambero Rosso's Vini d'Italia* as a comprehensive, reliable guide to the wines of a country. But the Platter Guide is far more than simply a scoring of wines. It offers an assessment of the wine industry, maps, and food and lodging recommendations for tourists interested in tasting and eating the best that South Africa has to offer in the wine country. For the South African wine tourist, it is an essential, all-in-one wine encyclopedia.

The Platter tasting panel, which is comprised of some of South Africa's leading tasters, is sometimes accused of having a South African palete, which wouldn't be surprising, but we find ourselves pretty much in agreement with most of Platter's wine ratings. Editor Philip van Zyl and publisher Andrew McDowall are to be congratulated on the just-released 2012 Guide.

## Fine Restaurants in Wine Country

While most tourists expect to find good wine in the Cape, they are pleasantly surprised by the quality of the food. Not only are the natural ingredients superb, but the cooking is sophisticated and the restaurants are located in beautiful settings with extensive lawns, majestic views of mountains, and vineyard surroundings. Many of these restaurants are located at the wineries themselves, perhaps the best collection of winery restaurants in the world. Some, like those at Steenberg (Catharina's) and Boschendal are located in 17th century colonial buildings, while others like La Motte are ultra-modern. And still others like the restaurants at Tokara, Haskell, and Jordan offer spectacular mountain vineyard views.

We were only able to sample a small number of the wide range of restaurants in the winelands on our visit. Some of the spectacular winery restaurants we tried include:

*Pierneef á la Motte Restaurant-Franschhoek*
La Motte winery's restaurant specializes in Cape Winelands cuisine, dating back to the 17th century and incorporating influences from South Africa's rainbow culture. The renowned chef Chris Erasmus presides here and serves exotic dishes such as bokkom (salted and dried fish), boerewors (farmer sausage) with 18th century-style Ketchup, as well as local specialties such Franschhoek trout and wood-roasted crown of chicken.

*Rust en Vrede Restaurant- Stellenbosch*
The restaurant at Rust en Vrede Winery offers a magnificent six-course prix fix menu with different wine pairings for each dish. Chef John Shuttleworth and his team offer elegant dishes from starters like green asparagus mousse to main courses such as roasted duck breast or springbok loin (pictured here) served with sweetbreads, parsnip, gooseberry and leeks.

*Jordan Restaurant-Stellenbosch*
Lunch or dinner cooked by chef George Jardine at the Jordan Wine Estate Restaurant is a treat. The scenery is spectacular, and the food is fresh, local and changes daily. Starters include pan roasted white asparagus with poached egg (pictured here) or tartar of Chalmar fillet, while main courses include False Bay Longfin Tuna or 12-hour braised pork belly.

*96 Winery Road Restaurant-Sommerset West*
You can experience superb dinning at this restaurant, which has a menu inspired by South African favorites and flavors from around the world. The cooking here is casual yet accomplished with choices of fresh seafood and steaks of free-range beef. And they do a great job with pork belly, too.

*Tokara Restaurant-Stellenbosch*
At 400 meters altitude, the Tokara Restaurant offers its guests dramatic mountain and vineyard views. Chef Richard Carstens prepares elegant dishes using local seasonal ingredients but employing some of the techniques of molecular gastronomy. You can dine à la carte or indulge in a seven-course chef's menu with such treats as mussels, line fish and crisp prawn with wakame rice, coconut and spiced tomato sauce or peppered springbok.

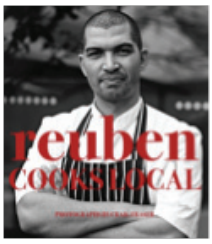
There are a multitude of excellent restaurants in Cape Town, Stellenbosch and even in the tiny town of Robertson that also offer extremely fine cuisine. Here are some we enjoyed:

*Belthazar Restaurant-Cape Town*

This is a multi-purpose restaurant on the waterfront in Cape Town which features an outstanding wine bar and grill. It is the largest "wine by the glass" wine bar in South Africa, and perhaps in the world. It serves 250 wines by the glass and has a wine list of up to 600 fine wines. The wines are stored in a designer Vinotheque with temperature and humidity control and served in Riedel glasses. The grill is outstanding as is the seafood, which includes Kingklip and linefish daily.

*Big Easy Restaurant and Wine Bar-Stellenbosch*
Stellenbosch is a university town and the home of the Big Easy Restaurant of renowned golfer/winery proprietor Ernie Els. It is the perfect place in town for good food and wine with a wide range of selections. We recommend the exquisite loin of eland.

*Reuben's Restaurant-Robertson*

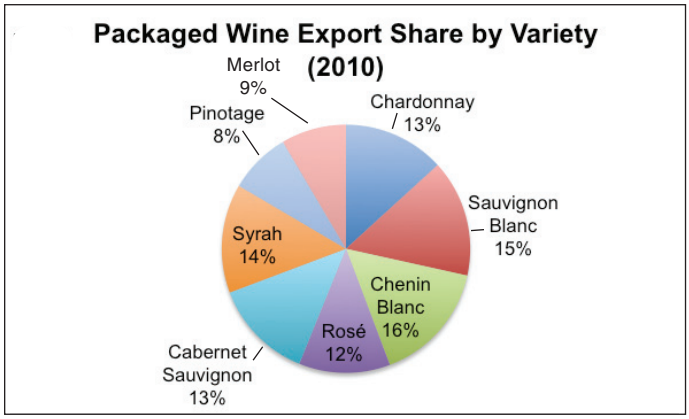



The Robertson Small Hotel is home to the cuisine of renowned chef Reuben Riffel, pictured here on the front of his new cookbook. Reuben is fast becoming the Wolfgang Puck of South Africa. The hotel dining room is intimate and offers delectable starters like lightly smoked Franschhoek trout carpaccio or chili salted squid with a sprout salad and lime mayonnaise. For a main course try braised and crisp pork belly served with chili ginger or the magnificent curry of lamb. A light crème brulée served with poached peaches was perfect for dessert.

# The Market for South African Wine

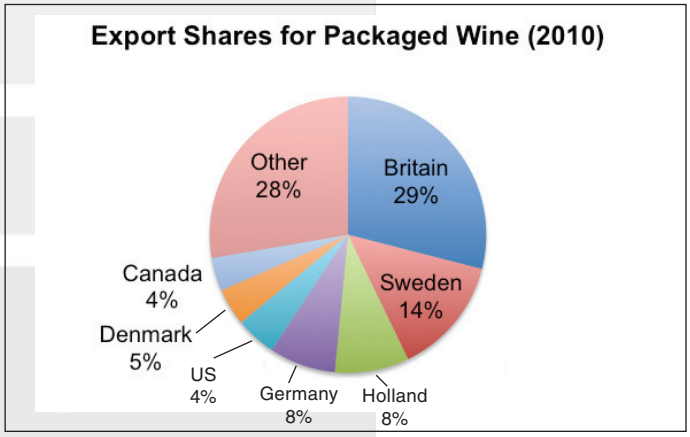
Wine is very important to the South African economy. Wine exports have increased almost 200 percent since 1999 and are almost 20 times larger than they were in 1992. Today wine represents more than 15 percent of total South African agricultural exports by value.

With 3.5 percent (763 million liters) of the world's total wine production in 2010, South Africa was the 7th largest producer of wine, sandwiched between Australia at 6th and Chile at 8th. Of total wine production, South Africa exports a little over half (54%), similar to Chile. And of total exports, 60 percent are packaged and 40 percent are sold in bulk. Since premium, packaged wines are the focus of this report, in the accompanying graph we show each important variety as a share of the total (excluding generic white and red blends). Unlike some countries (e.g. Argentina) that are dependent on one particular variety, South Africa's wine exports are highly diversified.




## Prospects for US Exports

The most important export markets for South African wine are in Europe. As shown in the chart, the top five European countries account for 64 percent of total South African exports of packaged wine, while the US accounts for just 4 percent, just slightly more than Canada. The US share of South African bulk wine exports is even smaller, just 2.4 percent.



The US imports almost a third of all the wine it consumes. South Africa's share is small—less than 2 percent of total US wine imports. This tiny share of the US market is both a problem and an opportunity.

The trajectory for sales of South African wine in the US is very positive, having increased 508 percent between 2001 and 2008, only slightly less than Argentina and considerably more than Chile's 27 percent increase. Still, South Africa today has less than one-quarter Chile's volume of exports to the US. Despite cost pressures and a strong Rand, South Africa clearly has an opportunity to increase its share of the US market.

The importance of the US market to South Africa is not just its size. Unlike most of Europe and South Africa itself, per capita and total wine consumption in the US continues to rise. Total consumption in the US now exceeds that of France. Furthermore, despite relatively high domestic wine production, US consumers purchase large amounts of imported wine. Young consumers, aged 21-33, are twice as likely as older consumers to purchase imported wine, and they're also more likely to purchase premium wine (>$20/bottle). Young consumers are an obvious target of a strategy to increase sales in the US.

However attractive the target, reaching the US consumer is not easy. There is a plethora of wine labels and 3 thousand wineries in California alone. It's difficult for a little known imported brand to get attention. Furthermore, as everyone recognizes, the US is a very complex market with each state setting its own distribution rules, effectively translating into 50 separate markets, each of which requires a slightly different marketing strategy. The size of each of these markets varies greatly—California consumes 53 million cases annually, Florida and New York consume about 24 million, but Colorado and Oregon consume less than 5 million. And some markets are growing much more rapidly than others—per capita wine consumption in Connecticut increased 136 percent from 2002-8, compared to 85 percent in Arizona and just 33 percent in Maryland.

The size and complexity of the US market requires wineries to undertake significant marketing efforts in order to have an impact. The fact that so many of South Africa's producers are small—73 percent process less than 500 tons of grapes, and 46 percent less than 100 tons—means their marketing budgets are small, also. To be successful in the US market, they need to increase the size of cooperative marketing efforts of the type WOSA does and, also, target marketing efforts on specific submarkets. Enhanced marketing will in turn encourage importers and distributors to increase the number of quality South African wines they carry. As we've noted earlier in this report, a surprising number of premium South African wines are not even imported to the US. At the time of this writing, several very good producers don't even have importers.

While much remains to be done to increase the sales of South African wine in the US, South Africa already has the best marketing tool of all. That is the impressive quality of its premium wine, as this report unequivocally confirms.

# South Africa Tasting Notes and Ratings

Don Winkler (l) Editor, and Mike Potashnik (r), Publisher, tasted more than 750 wines from South Africa for this report. The wines were tasted at the International Wine Review offices and on a trip to South Africa in November 2011. On that trip we were able to visit most of the key wineries in the Western Cape, meet their winemakers, and taste through their portfolios. We also had many interesting discussions about their wines, winemaking, and vineyards and enjoyed their hospitality at winery restaurants.

South Africa's wineries produce an impressive variety of wines at different price levels. For this report, we concentrated mainly on tasting premium wines with a retail price above $15, our goals being to inform readers of the high quality of the premium wines being produced in South Africa. A separate report on South African value wines will be issued separately in the near future.

One surprising finding from our tasting is the large number of high quality, premium South African wines that are not imported to the US. In some cases a producer has an importer, but that importer does not import the more costly, premium wines. In a surprising number of cases, high quality producers have no importer at all. In general, in the following tasting notes a price on a wine indicates that wine is imported, while the absence of a price indicates it is not.

The large number of wines tasted makes it impractical to include tasting notes for each and every wine. In what follows, we provide notes on selected wines for each producer. Other wines are simply listed with their scores. Subscribers may use the iWineReview Search function on our home page to obtain complete reviews of all wines. As usual, we list the appellation given by each producer on the label of each wine; when we have more specific information as to the source of the grapes that is indicated in parentheses next to the officially stated appellation.

The International Wine Review rates wines using the 100 point system. We do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. The ratings are:

| | |
|---|---|
| **95 and above** | **A wine of distinction** |
| **91-94** | **A wine of outstanding or superior quality** |
| **89-90** | **A wine of very good to excellent quality** |
| **87-88** | **A wine of good quality** |
| **85-86** | **A wine of fair or acceptable quality** |
| **84 and below** | **Not recommended** |

We commonly add a + to a point score to indicate our judgment that a wine is deemed to be of higher quality than its point score but is not at the next quality level. That said, we urge our readers to reader over our comments that help explain our ratings and provide more useful information on a wine than a simple number.

## A-B

**Almenkerk Wine Estate** This small Elgin winery produces very good Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and a Bordeaux blend from a 15 hectare vineyard. Established in 2004, this relatively new operation looks promising. No known importer in the U.S.

**Almenkerk 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin 88+** Loire like in its minerality and understated fruit on the palate, the Almenkerk Sauvignon Blanc promises something different with its ripe passion and stone fruit bouquet. Very pleasant drinking. Made from three different clones and spends nine weeks on the lees. **Almenkerk 2010 Chardonnay Elgin Valley 89** The Almenkerk Chardonnay has a leesy and flinty nose with melon and orchard fruit aromas. Fermented in 20% new oak barrels for 9 months, it offers a lightly fruited lush mouth feel and a long pleasing finish.

**Other Wines Tasted: Almenkerk 2010 Lace Elgin 88+**

**Anthonij Rupert Wines** This producer, the Rupert Family, has its home base on the historic L'Ormarins wine farm in Franschhoek but sources grapes from four vineyards in different parts of the Western Cape. The wines in the Anthonij Rupert Range are the flagship wines in their sizeable portfolio, and the two reviewed below are most impressive. (Anthonij Rubert died tragically in a car accident in 2001.) ***Importer:*** Terlato Wines, Lake Bluff, Illinois

**Anthonij Rupert 2006 Cabernet Franc Coastal Region ($85) 92+** This modern and stylish Cabernet Franc offers big fragrant aromas of blackberry, licorice, and smoke. These are followed by flavors of dried dark fruit, chocolate and lots of toasted oak and coconut. Lavish and international in style with an opulent palate, this wine sees extensive (18+ months) aging in new oak. **Anthonij Rupert 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Coastal Region (Franschhoek) ($65) 92** Like the Cabernet Franc, the Anthonij Rupert Cabernet Sauvignon

is a very successful, well-oaked, internationally styled wine showing nicely integrated, perfectly ripe black cherry and toasted oak. It's bold and lush with a rich, silky smooth feel and exceptional depth of flavor and showing fine tannins on the finish.

**Anwilka** is a joint venture between Bruno Prats, Hubert de Boüard from Bordeaux and Lowell Jooste of South Africa launched in 2005. Plantings total 40 ha of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz, and yields are 6 tons/ha. The winemaker is Jean du Plessis with inputs from Prats and de Boüard. The project has gotten off to a good start producing a classy Bordeaux blend. The wine is mainly sold through Bordeaux negociant Fidelis Wines.

**Anwilka 2008 Stellenbosch ($45) 91** The 2008 Anwilka is a blend of 48% Syrah, 41% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot. Fruit forward with aromas of fresh plum, mocha, and hints of roasted meat, the wine is medium weight and silky smooth on the palate with a long pleasant finish. **Very attractive**.

**Ataraxia Wines** This winery, founded in 2004 by the husband and wife team of Kevin and Hanli Grant, is producing some outstanding wines. Their operation consists of 50 hectares of prime vineyard land in the Hemel-en-Aarde area of Walker Bay with Kevin Grant, former winemaker at Hamilton Russell Vineyards, serving as winemaker. The wines are beautifully crafted with elegance and refinement. Looking forward to tasting Kevin's Pinot Noir. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co., Atlanta, GA

**Ataraxia 2009 Chardonnay Western Cape (Hemel-en-Aarde) ($40) 92** This is an excellent Chardonnay made in the rich, oak infused style and displaying superb balance of fruit, oak and acidity. Highly aromatic, it shows nuts and fresh and dried yellow stone fruit on the nose. The creamy palate reveals lees, honey, and light peach with notes of toasted oak. After 4 years in bottle, the 2007 vintage of this wine also remains surprisingly fresh and youthful. **Ataraxia 2007 Serenity Western Cape ($28) 91** This blend of unnamed varietals offers dark red fruit and cassis on the nose with notes of meat, savory herbs and violets. It is lush on the attack with concentrated fruit flavors and lots of toasty oak. Matured for 16 months in new and used oak, and aged for 20 months in bottle prior to release, the wine is beautifully balanced and lush in the mouth, finishing with charred oak, ripe round tannins and rich fruit flavors.

**Wines Also Tasted: Ataraxia 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape ($22) 89+**

**Avontuur Estate** Located on the southwestern slopes of the Helderberg in Stellenbosch, Avontuur Estate consists of 100 hectares of vineyards and a stud farm for thoroughbreds. The wines include a Premiere range and Avontuur Estate range which are well made by winemaker, Jan van Rooyen. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz Inc., Boca Grande, FL

**Avontuur 2004 Baccarat Stellenbosch ($38) 90** The Baccarat is an attractive Bordeaux blend with a dark red hue and aromas of cassis and loam. It is soft and supple on the palate with layers of black fruit, mushrooms, violets and chocolate. It also has ripe tannins and a long, fine finish. **Avontuur 2008 Cabernet Franc Stellenbosch 90+** This Cabernet Franc is a well-made wine, international in style, offering aromas of red berry fruit, sweet vanilla oak, and herbs. It has a nicely flavored palate with firm ripe tannins and a long finish. Aged for 10 months in 2nd and 3rd fill French oak. **Delicious.**

**Wines Also Tasted: Avontuur 2008 Minelli Pinot Noir Reserve Stellenbosch ($27) 89**

**Babylon's Peak Private Cellar** This small winery belonging to the Basson family is located in the Swartland. It produces good quality Chenin Blanc and Rhone varietals. Its Shiraz-Carignan and Shiraz, Mourvedre, Grenache blends are interesting. No known importer in the U.S.

**Babylon's Peak 2011 Chenin Blanc Swartland 88** This Chenin Blanc is sourced from estate dry-farmed old bush vines. It displays a lovely fresh fruit nose, with an intense showing of white and yellow stone fruit and white pepper. It has high acidity on the palate and is fairly tart and medium weight. The wine has a lean, mineral style that is herbal on the finish. **Babylon's Peak 2007 Syrah Swartland 89** The Syrah is the best of the wines tasted from this estate. It offers dark red fruit with herbal and meaty notes. While slightly reductive, it reveals good fruit concentration on the palate with medium weight and firm tannins on the finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Babylon's Peak 2009 Shiraz/Carignan Swartland 88; Babylon's Peak 2008 Shiraz/Mourvedre/ Grenache Swartland 88**

**Backsberg Estate Cellars** This family estate is owned and operated by Michael Back whose aim is to produce wines with a high level of drinkability. Backsberg cultivates 110 hectares of vineyards on the slopes of the Simonsberg Mountains, between Paarl and Stellenbosch. Winemaker is Guillaume Nell who joined in 2008. The Family Reserve White Blend and Family Reserve Red Blend are their flagship wines. ***Importer:*** Marquee Selections, Kansas City, MO

**Backsberg Estate Cellars 2009 Family Reserve White Blend Paarl ($40) 89+** The Family Reserve is a new blend of Chardonnay, Roussanne and Viognier, all wooded. The wine offers aromas of smoked almond and light honey vanilla oak notes. On the palate, it has a combination of ripe melon, stone fruit, and light honeyed oak notes with crisp acidity and a long finish. **Backsberg Estate Cellars 2010 John Martin Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Coastal Region ($19) 88+** The John Martin Sauvignon Blanc Reserve offers lovely passion fruit with a hint of asparagus on the nose.

It shows flavorful white fruit on the palate with prominent vegetal notes and high acidity on the finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Backsberg Estate Cellars 2005 Family Reserve Red Blend Paarl ($47) 87; Backsberg Estate Cellars 2010 Pinot Noir Elgin ($22) 88**

**Badenhorst Family Wines** These wines are produced on a 28 ha farm of dryland bush vines in the Paardeberg area of Swartland. The property is owned by Adi Badenhorst and family; he is the former winemaker at Rustenberg. The wines are very well crafted. Badenhorst Family Wines also produces value-priced wines under the Secateurs label. ***Importer:*** Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA

**Badenhorst 2009 White Blend Swartland ($42) 90+** This White Blend has a fresh, crisp fruit and herbal nose and a beautifully balanced, lightly flavored, elegantly structured palate of minerals, dried herbs and white-fleshed fruit. A blend of 29% Chenin Blanc, 23% Roussanne, 11% Viognier, 11% Chardonnay, 10% Grenache Blanc and lesser amounts of other cultivars aged 20 months in old casks and concrete tanks. **Badenhorst 2007 Red Coastal Region $42) 92** The Badenhorst Red is a delicious blend of Shiraz (80%), Mourvedre (10%), Cinsault (7%) and Grenache (3%). It is dark ruby in color and fragrant, offering red and black fruit aromas, with violets, spice and earth notes. It is savory on the palate with hints of garrique, and has a velvet texture, ripe tannins and a long finish. **A terrific wine.**

**Beau Joubert Vineyards & Winery** This estate is producing good varietal wines under a joint venture of the Joubert family with a group of US investors led by Andrew Hillard. Beau Joubert sources its grapes from 55 hectares of vineyards in the Bottelary Hills of Stellenbosch. The wines are well made and should improve further in the future. ***Importer:*** MetroWine Distribution, Stamford, CT

**Beau Joubert 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($15) 89** Pale platinum straw in color, this is an easy drinking wine showing flowers, juicy tropical fruit, and green pepper on the nose and a flavorful dry crisp palate on the finish. **Beau Joubert 2008 Merlot Stellenbosch ($17) 89** The Beau Joubert Merlot is a well made wine showing mushroom and iron notes in addition to earthy red fruit. It's a fairly straightforward wine but delicious, finishing with lingering red cherry flavors. **Beau Joubert 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($20) 87** The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon is a rustic wine with a medium ruby hue and a nose of cassis, plum and earth. The palate shows rich black fruit flavors but finishes with dry tannins. Needs more time in the bottle.

**Beaumont** This family-run winery is located in the village of Bot River in Walker Bay. It has been managed over the past two decades by Raoul and Jayne Beaumont whose mantra is to craft wines that are true to the unique terroir of Bot River Valley. The owners are passionate Pinotage producers, and their old vine Pinotage is first-rate. The same applies to their Hope Marguerite Chenin Blanc, which is barrel-fermented. Exciting wines are being crafted here. ***Importer:*** 34 South, Annapolis, MD

**Beaumont 2010 Hope Marguerite Chenin Blanc Walker Bay (Bot River ) ($27) 93** The Beaumont Hope Marguerite Chenin Blanc is a benchmark South African Chenin Blanc that exemplifies South Africa's success with this varietal. This is a charming wine, deeply flavored and focused. The nose shows ripe stone fruit with hints of vanilla cream and dried herbs. The palate is creamy, round and full, with a flinty mineral note on the finish. Fermented in 400 liter barrels, fruit and oak are beautifully interwoven. **Super value. Beaumont 2008 Pinotage Walker Bay (Bot River) ($25) 91** Wine enthusiasts who think they don't like Pinotage should definitely give this one a try. It shows red fruit, baking spice, and a light mocha note on the nose and beautiful purity and linearity of red raspberry and black fruit on the palate. The wine finishes clean with firm, ripe tannins and a very long finish. The cool climate of Walker Bay appears to bring out more of the Pinot Noir heritage of Pinotage. This one is absolutely delicious and a steal at the price.

**Wines Also Tasted: Beaumont 2010 Chenin Blanc Walker Bay (Bot River) ($16) 88**

**Bellevue Estate** This 151 hectare estate located in the Bottelary Hills has been owned by the Morkel family since 1861. The current owner, Dirkie Morkel, is the 4th generation on the farm. Dirkie's uncle P.K. Morkel planted the world's first commercial Pinotage vineyard at Bellevue in 1953; the winery will soon release a wine made from the original plantings. Winemaker Wilhelm Kritzinger led us through the tasting. Most of Bellevue's wine production is sold under third party labels. ***Importer:*** 57 Main Street Imports, Garden City, NY

**Bellevue 2009 Atticus Cape Blend Stellenbosch 88** The Cape Blend combines 50% Pinotage, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Petit Verdot. It offers dark cherry aromas on the nose with chocolate notes followed by a soft fruit forward attack. It is medium weight on the palate with a soft texture, round tannins and loads of oak and chocolate on the finish. **Bellevue 2011 Morkel Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch 89** This is a nicely flavored Sauvignon Blanc offering ripe passion fruit and kiwi on the nose with a mineral edge. On the palate it is well focused with good flavor intensity, a chalky mouth feel, and a firm flavorful finish. **Bellevue 2005 PK Morkel Tumara Stellenbosch 90** A Bordeaux style blend, the PK Morkel Tumara offers

loads of chocolate, smoke, and dark red fruit. It is full in the mouth with savory and earth notes on the palate and big tannins. It finishes very long with lingering black cherry and savory notes.

**Wines also Tasted: Bellevue 2009 Morkel Malbec Stellenbosch 88; Bellevue 2009 Morkel Pinotage Stellenbosch 88**

**Bellingham 2010 The Bernard Series Old Vine Chenin Blanc Coastal Region 91+**
Made from blocks of 45 and 35 year old bush vines in Paarl and Stellenbosch, this Chenin Blanc has a vibrant bouquet of honeycomb, spicy oak and tropical fruit followed by a rich palate of ripe yellow stone fruit, minerals, and nicely integrated smoky oak. Matured in oak barrels, 50% new. ***Importer:*** Cape Wine Ventures, Jacksonville, FL

**Beyerskloof** This historic Stellenbosch estate is owned and operated by Beyers Truter. It consists of 85+ hectares of prime vineyards devoted mainly to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinotage. The Beyerskloof ultra-premium Diesel Pinotage, (named in honor of Beyers' dog that passed away in 2008) and his flagship Faith, a Cape blend, are his finest wines. ***Importer:*** Total Beverage Solution, Mt. Pleasant, SC

**Beyerskloof 2009 Diesel Pinotage Stellenbosch ($80) 91** This blockbuster wine is big and rich. It has a dense, dark nose of violets, cedar, and cigar box. The palate is full, concentrated, and creamy showing black raspberry, licorice, cocoa, coconut, and vanilla. Fermented at high temperature and aged for 22 months in French oak, this is a great example of the power and glory of South Africa's Pinotage. **Beyerskloof 2010 Pinotage Western Cape ($13) 88** This popularly styled Pinotage offers dark red fruit on the nose and palate. It is an attractive, easy drinking wine that provides a good introduction to Pinotage in its lighter and uncomplicated style.

**Bilton Wines** Mark Bilton's boutique winery is located in the foothills of the Helderberg mountains in Stellenbosch. After replanting vineyards and introducing other improvements, Bilton is producing some noteworthy wines. The Sir Percy Bordeaux blend and the Bilton Cabernet Sauvignon are first class, and the Viognier and Merlot are not far behind. Rudi de Wet and Elizma van der Mescht produce the wines with assistance from consulting winemaker, Giorgio Dalla Cia. ***Importer:*** Southern Starz, Huntington Beach, CA

**Bilton Wines 2008 Viognier Stellenbosch 89** Unique winemaking by Rudolf de Wet and Elizma van der Mescht has created a very interesting wine, although it bears little resemblance to Viognier. The wine is fermented with the skins for about 20 days, then pressed into new barrels, 25% acacia, 75% new oak where it stays on the fine lees for 12 months. The result is a golden yellow wine showing honey, coconut and spicy oak on a creamy, glycerol palate, finishing with dry tannins. **Bilton Wines 2006 Sir Percy Stellenbosch 92** Bilton's 2006 Sir Percy is a delicious Bordeaux blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot and 17% Petite Verdot. It offers ripe dark plum, cassis and coconut notes. Aged for 22 months in new and used oak barriques, it is soft and flavorful on the attack showing sweet red and black fruit on the palate with earthy complexity and a long finish. **Bilton Wines 2006 The Bilton Stellenbosch 91+** The Bilton is a big and complex 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Dark ruby in color it offers aromas of ripe black fruit, pepper, bitter chocolate and loam. Aged for 36 months in 500% French oak barriques, it reveals an Amarone-like character with rich spicy black fruit, sweet oak, chocolate and violet notes. It has fine ripe tannins and a long lasting finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Bilton Wines 2007 Merlot Stellenbosch 89+**

**Bizoe 2009 Henrietta Western Cape ($30) 91**
The Henrietta is superbly balanced with an enticing floral character of roses and herbs and light smoke and a lush palate of exceptional length. Blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc matured in oak for 7 months. Importer: The Triton Collection, Little Rock, AR.

**Black Pearl 2008 Oro Paarl ($20) 87**
This garagiste winery has produced a solid red blend of 28% Shiraz and 72% Cabernet Sauvignon that shows lots of tangy, ripe red fruit. It's a flavorful wine with a candied character on the mid-palate and quite different from what one would expect from a blend of these two varieties. Importer: Southern Starz, Huntington Beach, California

**Boekenhoutskloof** Located in the Franschhoek Valley, Boekenhoutskloof has 20 hectares of vines of which 25% are planted to white varieties and 75% to reds. Without a doubt, this boutique winery is among the finest producers in South Africa. Under the direction of Cellarmaster Marc Kent and his team, the winery is experimenting with traditional winemaking methods and implementing organic and sustainable vineyard management practices. The wines reviewed here are all outstanding examples of the high quality of winemaking at Boekenhoutskloof. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL

**Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Semillon Franschhoek ($28) 91**
Among the finest and most elegant Semillons South Africa has to offer, this wine shows fresh green herbs and floral aromas and is very rich, flavorful and long on the palate with light acacia notes. Made from very low yielding, very old vines with the fruit whole bunch pressed, fermented cool in 100% new, medium toasted oak. **Very fine. Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Franschhoek ($47) 93** This superb single vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of pure dark red fruit, cassis and lightly toasted cedar. It is elegant on the palate and has a silky texture with a rich lush mouth feel. Aged for 27 months in new French oak barriques, it boasts soft round tannins and a clean long finish. A refined and beautiful wine. **Boekenhoutskloof 2009 Syrah Coastal Region ($47) 93** This is a magnificent

Syrah It is perfumed on the nose with dark red berry fruit, herbs, violets, and hints of loam and spicy oak. Aged for 24 months in barrel, it is beautifully balanced and has a long persistent finish. This wine can be consumed now but will improve with age. **Boekenhoutskloof 2010 The Chocolate Block Western Cape ($39) 92** The Chocolate Block is a blend of Syrah, Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Viognier. It reveals lovely minty/herbal dark red plum fruit on the nose and has a soft friendly fruit forward palate with fine tannins and good length. **A terrific wine.**

**Boschendal Wines** Winemaking at this estate dates back to 1685 when French Huguenot Jean le Long planted his first vines. Located in Franschhoek in the lower foothills of the Groot-Drakenstein and Simonsberg Mountains, this historic estate produces excellent Sauvignon Blanc, Shiraz and MCC sparkling wine. The grapes are sourced from 212 hectares of vines situated at different elevations and with different soil types. The estate produces wines under two main ranges: the Reserve Collection and 1685. Their MCC sparkling wines are very impressive, especially the MCC Grande Cuvee Brut, as are the Sauvignon Blanc and Shiraz in the Reserve Collection. ***Importer:*** Cape Wine Ventures (DGB), Atlanta, GA

**Boschendal 2011 1685 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($16) 89** The 1685 Sauvignon Blanc is uncomplicated, offering grapefruit citrus and guava on the nose and a softly-fruited tropical and citrus flavored palate. **Very good. Boschendal 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Durbanville 91** A blend of Somerset West and Durbanville fruit, this fresh-tasting Sauvignon Blanc shows passion fruit with grass notes on the nose and a refined, rich palate of ripe citrus, lime zest and minerals. Finishes very long. Our assessment of the 2009 vintage is very similar. **Boschendal 2010 1685 Chardonnay Western ($16) Cape 90+** The 1685 Chardonnay is a nicely crafted and balanced wine with light vanilla and honey oak on the nose and a suave palate of almond, melon, and light honey flavors. The mouth feel is creamy, finishing on a chalky note. Fermented in 70% oak, 30% stainless steel. **Boschendal 2009 Shiraz Reserve Coastal Region ($22) 91** The 2009 Shiraz Reserve is a delicious wine. Elegant and refined, it offers aromas of high toned blue fruit with toasted honey notes and violets. Aged for 18 months in used 500 liter barrels, it provides layers of fruit, loam and herbs on the palate and finishes long and highly satisfying. **Boschendal 2007 Grand Cuvée Brut Franschhoek ($30) 91** A 50/50 blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Gris, the Grand Cuvée is one of South Africa's best sparkling wines. Brioche and ripe fruit show on the nose and palate with a rich mousse and elegant mouth feel. Spends 3 years on the lees.

**Wines Also Tasted: Boschendal 2009 1685 Shiraz Coastal Region ($19) 88+; Boschendal 2009 Vin d'Or Coastal Region 91+**

**Bosman Family Vineyards.** Bosman is best known in South Africa for having one of the country's most important wine nurseries, although wine has been made on the estate since it was first granted to the French Huguenot Philip de Royan in 1699. The Bosmans settled on the farm in 1798 and resumed commercial winemaking in 2007. The winery sources its grapes mostly from estate vineyards in Wellington and Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley. We tasted the Bosman wines with winemaker Corlea Fourie. ***Importer:*** MJM Imports, Jericho, NY

**Bosman Family Vineyards 2010 Adama White Western Cape ($16) 90** The Adama white blend is a soft, fragrant and fruity wine. Honeyed aromas of summer melon and white peach are mirrored on a lush palate with hints of citrus, finishing crisply with an almond note. The estate fruit comes from Wellington and the Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley. A blend of 60% Chenin Blanc, 20% Chardonnay, 10% Pinot Grigio, 6% Viognier and 4% Semillon matured in large oak barrels, 10% new. **Bosman Family Vineyards 2009 Pinotage Wellington ($50) 89** This is a delicious Pinotage that boasts dark fruit and toasted oak flavors. Aged for 12 months in new French oak, it is soft and round on the palate with dark cherry, red plum and lots of sweet oak spice, round tannins and a long finish. Well done.

**Bouchard Finlayson** This boutique winery, started by Peter Finlayson and Paul Bouchard of Burgundy, is among the top wine producers in the Walker Bay region. As the first winemaker in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, Peter Finlayson is widely recognized as South Africa's Pinot pioneer. The estate consists of 22 hectares under vine with 50% devoted to Pinot Noir. Bouchard Finlayson follows meticulous vineyard practices with high density plantings as in Burgundy. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz Inc., Boca Grande, FL

**Bouchard Finlayson 2010 Chardonnay Kaaimansgat Crocodile's Lair Walker Bay ($28) 90+** The medium yellow gold Bouchard Finlayson Chardonnay Kaaimansgat Crocodile's Lair is a full-throttled California style Chardonnay with its extroverted ripe mango and tropical fruit and creamy, lush full volume palate. **Well done. Bouchard Finlayson 2010 Galpin Peak Pinot Noir Walker Bay ($45) 90** The Galpin Peak Pinot Noir is among the better Pinot Noirs being produced in South Africa today. It offers aromas of fresh raspberry and cherry on the nose followed by bold dark red fruit, vanilla and cedar flavors on the palate with a velvet texture, good acidity and a firm finish. The wine requires time to open up, but it is worth the wait. **Bouchard Finlayson 2010 Hannibal Walker Bay ($40) 90** Hannibal is an interesting blend of 52% Sangiovese and smaller amounts of Nebbiolo, Mourvedre, Barbera and Shiraz. Black cherry and plum aromas are complemented by notes of cassis and herbs. It is soft and velvet smooth on the attack with dark fruit flavors that are upstaged by oak. The wine has firm tannins with grip on the finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Bouchard Finlayson 2009 Chardonnay Sans Barrique Overberg ($25) 88; Bouchard Finlayson 2009 Galpin Peak Pinot Noir Walker Bay ($35) 89; Bouchard Finlayson 2009 Missionvale Chardonnay Walker Bay ($29) 89+**

**Buitenverwachting** This estate is located on east-facing slopes of the Constantiaberg Mountain, just south of Cape Town. The cool climate of this coastal area and decomposed granite vineyards (89 ha planted) contribute to Buitenverwachting's elegant Chardonnays and crisp Sauvignon Blancs. The estate also produces excellent Cabernet Franc. The wines also offer great value. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Buitenverwachting 2009 Chardonnay Constantia ($20) 91** An elegant barrel fermented Chardonnay exhibiting tropical fruit, marzipan, and toasted hazelnut on the nose and palate. It is beautifully balanced with nicely integrated fruit and oak flavors and lovely fruit and a smoky note on the finish. **Exceptional value.** **Buitenverwachting 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Constantia ($15) 88** This is an estate bottled fruity but bone dry Sauvignon Blanc. It is ripe and fruit forward with passion fruit, bell pepper and citrus and reveals a nice crisp finish. **Buitenverwachting 2010 Husseys Vlei Sauvignon Blanc Constantia ($15) 91** The Husseys Vlei Sauvignon Blanc offers a densely packed, juicy palate of minerals, gooseberry and citrus peel with good persistence of minerals on the finish. Made from a single vineyard of decomposed granite soil. **Exceptional value.** **Buitenverwachting 2006 Cabernet Franc Constantia 92** This 100% Cabernet Franc is among the finest bottlings of this varietal produced in South Africa. Old World in style, it offers complex aromas and flavors of dark berry fruit, smoke, roasted meat, dried herbs and pepper. Aged for 30 months in new French oak, it has a silky texture on the palate with prominent oak nuances but also with considerable elegance and refinement. **Exceptional value.**

**Wines Also Tasted: Buitenverwachting 2009 Maximus 89**

## C-D

**Camberley Wines** This boutique winery located in Stellenbosch is owned and operated by John and Gael Nel. It is an unpretentious winery producing very good wines. The Philosopher's Stone is a first-rate wine. We also like the Pinotage, which is well made and flavorful. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz Inc, Boca Grande, FL

**Camberley 2008 Philosopher's Stone Stellenbosch ($28) 91** The 2008 Philosopher's Stone is an attractive Bordeaux blend of 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, and 40% Merlot. It offers aromas of red and black fruit, smoke, lead pencil. cassis ad chocolate followed by a lush attack of ripe fruit, firm tannins and a very long finish. **Camberley 2008 Pinotage Stellenbosch ($43) 88+** This Pinotage exhibits ripe dark plum fruit, toasted oak, and chocolate on the nose. On the palate, it offers more dark fruit flavors with good balance, round tannins and a long finish.

**Cape Chamonix** This well established winery in Franschhoek produces a large portfolio of premium wines. Winemaking and vineyard management is under the direction of Gottfried Mocke. The three wines reviewed here are exemplary of the high quality of the wines being produced. The Pinot Noir Reserve is especially noteworthy. ***Importer:*** Knauth & Visser, Branford, CT

**Cape Chamonix 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch Franschhoek ($20) 90** This is a lovely Sauvignon Blanc with a dash of Semillon. It is yellow straw in color with light orchard fruit, flint and toasted oak. It reveals an elegant mouth feel with a chalky mineral finish of almond and lingering orange flower notes. **Cape Chamonix 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Stellenbosch ($30) 91+** The 2010 Chardonnay Reserve is an elegant wine revealing nectarine, hazelnut and smoke on a perfumed nose and creamy, well-oaked palate of superb underlying acidity. Needs another year in bottle to become fully integrated. 90% barrel fermented, 10% in Nomblat eggs. **Cape Chamonix 2009 Pinot Noir Reserve Franschhoek ($32) 91** The 2009 Chamonix Pinot Noir Reserve is among the finest Pinot Noirs produced in South Africa today. Sourced from high altitude vineyards, (500 meters above sea level) it is Burgundian in style with fragrant aromas of red berry fruit and toasted oak. It is complex and intensely flavored with a silky texture and a long earthy finish. The wine is fermented in open top fermenters where it also undergoes malolactic fermentation naturally and is aged in 60% new French oak.

**Cape Point Vineyards** Established in 1996 by investment banker Sybrand van der Spuy, Cape Vineyards is located on the Cape Peninsula at the confluence of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. This location is ideal for growing white varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Semillon, which are the focus of winemaking at this winery. In our tastings with the dynamic young winemaker Duncan Savage, we were awe struck by the high quality and originality of the wines he is crafting. ***Importer:*** Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA

**Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Cape Point ($30) 91** The 2010 Cape Point Sauvignon Blanc could have come from the Eastern Loire. It shows green figs, melon and hint of resin on the nose and ripe orchard and guava fruit with lees notes on the palate. Of good volume, this is a wine that fills the mouth, ending in a chalky finish. **Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve ($45) 92** This is the thinking man's/woman's Sauvignon Blanc. The nose is intricately woven of white flowers, guava, and grain, while the palate is similarly complex, balanced, and integrated. Very round and full, this is one of South Africa's most refined and delicious Sauvignon Blancs. That note of

grain comes through again on the persistent finish. **Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Isliedh Cape Point ($65) 92** The Isliedh is a wooded blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon. It's beautifully structured with a creamy, seductive mouth feel of tropical fruit and a persistent fruit and mineral finish. **Superb.**

**Wines Also Tasted: Cape Point Vineyards 2011 Splattered Toad Sauvignon Blanc Cape Point 88; Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Splattered Toad Shiraz-Cabernet Sauvignon Cape Point 88; Cape Point Vineyards 2010 Chardonnay Cape Point ($39) 89+**

**Catherine Marshall Wines** Winemaker Catherine Marshall is producing some delicious wine under her eponymous wine label established in 1996. The grapes for her wines are obtained from supporting growers in Elgin where she crafts Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Pinot Noir and other varieties. Her passion is clearly Pinot Noir, and she does a great job with it. In our tasting together, we enjoyed three of her Pinot Noirs. ***Importer:*** Blue Crane Imports, Chicago, IL

**Catherine Marshall 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin 90+** The fresh, delicious and fruit forward Catherine Marshall Sauvignon Blanc offers exotic passion fruit aromas with a note of lime skin and chalky minerals on the palate. Extended lees contact and multiple clones help lend complexity. **Catherine Marshall 2009 Pinot Noir Eleven Barrels Elgin ($40) 90** The Pinot Noir Eleven Barrels reveals ripe dark cherry fruit, mushrooms, and earth. It has a complex nose and a lush velvet mouth feel. It is soft and full on the palate with good acidity and balance but slightly less elegant than the Pinot Noir 6 barrels. **Catherine Marshall 2010 Pinot Noir Six Barrels Reserve Elgin 91** This cool climate Pinot Noir is light and delicate on the nose with red berry fruit, earth and toasted oak. It has a silky mouth feel with good complexity and balance and has a long refined finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Catherine Marshall 2010 Pinot Noir Elgin ($32) 88; Catherine Marshall 2009 Merlot Elgin 89**

**Cederberg** This estate has the highest vineyards (up to 1100m) in the Western Cape. Winemaker David Nieuwoudt crafts several distinctive wines in Cederberg's unique and isolated vineyards surrounded by the Cederberg Wilderness. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Company, Atlanta, GA & World Premiere Wines, Mooresville, NC

**Cederberg Private Cellars 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Cederberg ($23) 91** The Cederberg Sauvignon Blanc is nicely fruited and beautifully balanced with a creamy, full mouth feel. Aromas and flavors tend towards passion fruit with lime zest. **Cederberg Private Cellars 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Cederberg ($19) 89** This 100% Cabernet Sauvignon is a fruit forward offering with aromas of cassis, pencil shavings, chocolate and toasted oak. Aged in 80% new oak, it has a soft texture, medium weight, and it light on the palate with firm tannic grip on the finish. **Cederberg Private Cellars 2011 Chenin Blanc Cederberg ($20) 90** This lovely Chenin Blanc has a nose of stone fruit and minerals which are followed on the palate by touches of mango, peach and minerals. It is easy drinking and pleasurable with good concentration of fruit and a nice long finish. **Cederberg Private Cellars 2009 Merlot Shiraz Cederberg ($20) 91** The Cederberg Merlot-Shiraz blend offers fresh blackberry and cedar aromas with a touch of earth. A blend of 75% Merlot and 25% Shiraz, it spends 13 months in oak, 75% new and has delicate red fruit flavors on the palate with smooth and silky mouth feel and a persistent finish. **Excellent. Cederberg 2006 Brut Blanc de Blancs Cederberg 90+** This sparkler spends an impressive 48 months on the lees. It reveals a brioche nose and a mooth, refined palate of toast, nuts and melon with a note of flint. Finishes long and ripe. **Absolutely delicious!**

**Cirrus 2007 Syrah Stellenbosch ($30) 91+** This delicious Syrah is made from fruit of the adjoining Ernie Els Vineyard. It has an inky, complex nose of roast meat, chocolate, huckleberry, and blackberry with a serious, linear palate showing minerals and sweet fruit offset by fine tannins. No known importer.

**Wines Also Tasted: Cederberg Private Cellars 2011 Bukettraube Cederberg ($20) 88+; Cederberg Private Cellars 2008 Shiraz Cederberg ($30) 90**

**Colmant** Jean-Philippe Colmant moved from Belgium to Franschhoek to make sparkling wine. His MCCs are now among the very best being produced in South Africa. Unfortunately, they are not yet imported to the US.

**Colmant NV Brut Chardonnay Western Cape (Franschhoek) 91** This NV Brut Chardonnay is delicate with fine lemon citrus and freshly baked bread notes. Shows bracing acidity on the finish. Aged on the lees for 42 months with 15% of the base wine fermented in oak. **Colmant NV Brut Reserve Western Cape (Franschhoek) 91** Fresh with leesy notes, a fine mousse and delicate palate of minerals and green citrus zest, this is a first class New World sparkler. It's rich enough to enjoy on its own or with white meats. It's a 50/50 blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay aged on the lees for 30 months and 25% reserve wines from earlier vintages. **Colmant NV Brut Rosé Western Cape (Franschhoek) 89** One of the better South African rosé sparkling wines we tasted, the Colmant NV Brut Rosé shows beautiful balance and a finely flavored, nuanced palate of strawberry and cherry that finishes crisp and dry. It's a blend of 67% Pinot Noir and 33% Chardonnay matured on the lees for 24 months.

**Constantia Uitsig** The modern history of this estate began in 1988 when it was purchased by David and Marle McCay. Under their ownership Constantia Uitsig has become an outstanding tourist attraction and is producing high quality premium wines. The Constantia White is especially noteworthy, but the Semillon is also excellent. Andre Rousseau, viticulturist and joint winemaker, has played an impressive role in the development of this winery during the past decade. No importer.

**Constantia Uitsig 2010 Semillon Constantia 90** The 2010 Semillon is a well-balanced, fresh, nicely flavored wine showing dried herbs, lime citrus, and a hint of olive. Stainless steel fermented, then racked to 225 liter used barrels, and on the lees for 7 months with battonage, which contributes to the viscous, soft mouth feel. **Well done.** **Constantia Uitsig 2010 Constantia White Constantia 92** Just released at the time of tasting, the Constantia White is a magnificent wine that bears more than a passing resemblance to a top rate Bordeaux white. It's full-volumed and intensely flavored with notes of green figs, melon, herbs and white pepper, finishing with firm tannins. A blend of 60% Semillon and 40% Sauvignon Blanc aged 7 months in oak, this is a wine that requires time in bottle to fully develop. **Constantia Uitsig 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Constantia 88** This Sauvignon Blanc offers a grassy nose with ripe citrus and passion fruit. On the palate it shows good volume with balancing acidity, good minerality and a modest finish. **Constantia Uitsig 2008 Brut Blanc de Blancs Constantia 88+** This Chardonnay based MCC spends 36 months on the lees yet it still has a fresh fruity apple and citrus nose. The attack is rich with a soft, creamy palate that is delicious with bright fruit flavors.

**Creation Wines** This boutique winery was established in 2002 in the ward of Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge in Walker Bay. Its 22 hectares of vineyards are planted at 350 meters above sea level and benefit from the cool breezes of the nearby Atlantic Ocean. Vineyard management and winemaking are in the hands of JC Martin and Christoph Kaser. The wines are crafted in a modern state-of-the-art winery. The red wines we tasted from their portfolio are all very well made, but we liked most their Syrah Grenache blend. ***Importer:*** Cape Floral Importers, Charleston, SC

**Creation 2010 Pinot Noir Walker Bay 88** This is an earthy Pinot Noir with aromas of dark cherry and stem notes. It is silky but slightly tart on the palate with modest fruit and a good amount of tannic grip on the finish. **Creation 2009 Syrah Walker Bay ($18) 89+** The 2009 Syrah exhibits a dark ruby color and an aromatic nose of cassis, pure dark fruit, roasted meat and toasted oak. It is soft and elegant on the attack with good dark fruit concentration, juicy flavors, tannic grip and a long finish. **Creation 2009 Syrah Grenache Walker Bay ($18) 90** This blend of 80% Syrah and 20% Grenache offers aromas of blackberry fruit, black olives and sweet chocolate on the nose with nuances of roasted meat and charred oak. It is soft on the attack with an elegant mouth feel, but it has a rather big tannic finish that will benefit from additional bottle aging.

**Crystallum** This boutique wine operation was launched by brothers Andrew and Peter-Allan Finlayson in 2007. Andrew and Peter-Allan are third generation wine producers, sons of the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir pioneer, Peter Finlayson. Peter-Allan serves as winemaker. ***Importer:*** USA Wine West LLC, Sausalito, CA

**Crystallum 2009 Clay Shales Chenin Blanc Walker Bay 89** This medium yellow gold Chenin Blanc has a beautiful bouquet of sweet yellow peach and mango with hints of smoke and vanilla cream. It is refined on the palate showing superb integration and balance with lovely yellow fruit flavors, again with a hint of flint. It is easy drinking and of moderate complexity. **Crystallum 2010 Pinot Noir Cuvée Cinéma Walker Bay 88** This Pinot Noir is medium ruby in color and offers aromas of spicy plum, vanilla, wet loam and dried herbs. On the palate it reveals reductive dark fruit flavors with spicy and herbal notes and a long finish.

**Darling Cellars** A former cooperative, Darling Cellars has been managed as a private company since 1996 and consists of 20 shareholders who own a total of 300 hectares of vineyards. Abé Beukes and Welma Visser serve as winemakers. The wines reviewed here are mainly attractive white and red blends of Bordeaux and Rhone varieties. No known importer in the U.S.

**Darling Cellars 2010 Lime Kiln Darling 89+** This offering is an attractive blend of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Viognier. It reveals rich aromas of ripe lemon and waxy yellow fleshed fruit. On the palate, the flavors are nicely integrated and delicious and the mouth feel is pleasantly creamy with moderate acidity. The grapes are fermented separately in 300 liter barrels with no malolactic fermentation. **Darling Cellars 2009 Onyx Sauvignon Blanc Darling 89** The Sauvignon Blanc is solid yellow straw in color and displays aromas of green been and yellow citrus on the nose. On the palate it offers flavors of ripe stone fruit with nuances of lees and minerality. The wine is nicely balanced with good acidity and a long finish. **Darling Cellars 2008 Sir Charles Henry Darling 90** The 2008 Sir Charles Henry is an interesting blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. On the nose it boasts aromas of black fruit, resin, cola and smoky bacon. It has a fruit rich palate with notes of dried herbs, tobacco and milk chocolate. Aged for 12 months in 100% new oak, it shows good volume and a soft texture and sweet oak on the finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Darling Cellars 2001 Kroon Darling 90**

**David Wines** This Swartland winery is owned by David and Nadia Sadie and is based in Tulbagh. All the wines are made in a minimalist approach with wild ferments and natural malolactic fermentation, the use of older oak, maturation on lees, and no filtration. David and Nadia also make the Lemberg Wine Estate's wines. No known importer in the U.S.

**David 2011 Aristargos Swartland 88** This wine is a blend of Chenin, Viognier and Roussanne. It offers white and yellow fleshed stone fruit on the nose with an herbal fynbos note. It has a modestly fruited palate and is quite soft with a short finish. **David 2011 Chenin Blanc Swartland 88** David's Chenin Blanc reveals light notes of stone fruit on the nose with a pleasant palate of moderate stone fruit flavors and a dry firm finish.

**De Grendel Wines.** In contrast to most wineries in the Durbanville appellation, De Grendel is located on the western side of Tygerberg Hill overlooking Cape Town. The 110 ha of vineyards are high (350m) and within 7 km of the sea. Lead winemaker and Cape Winemasters Guild member Charles Hopkins (who previously worked at California's Dry Creek Vineyards, Graham Beck and Douglas Green) presented several vintages of his wines to us at the winery. ***Importer:*** MJM Imports Jericho, NY

**De Grendel 2011 Koetshuis Sauvignon Blanc Durbanville 91** Winemaker Charles Hopkins loves the New Zealand style Sauvignon Blanc, and it shows in the Koetshuis line. The 2011 Koetshuis reflects the warmth of the vintage with mostly passion fruit and grapefruit on an intensely flavored, lanolin tinged palate. The 2009 and 2010 vintages show more prominent notes of green grass and asparagus. No matter one's taste preference, this is an exceptional wine. **De Grendel 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Cape of Good Hope Tygerberg ($16) 90+** This is an elegant Sauvignon Blanc showing dried herbs, restrained citrus, and stony minerals on the nose. Abundant lime citrus, white stonefruit, and orchard fruit are beautifully knit together on a creamy palate that has a persistent, chalky finish. The De Grendel vineyards are 7 km from the Atlantic. **De Grendel 2007 Rubaiyat Durbanville 92+** The 2007 Rubaiyat is a blend of blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot from a very low yielding (2 ton/ha) 33 year old vineyard. Aged in new French oak for 18 months, it is a big dense wine with concentrated flavors, and is beautifully balanced with a perfect blend of red and black fruit, round firm tannins, velvet texture, and a long flavorful finish. Will improve further with age.

**Wines Also Tasted: De Grendel 2011 Rosé Durbanville ($10) 87; De Grendel 2011 Pinot Gris Durbanville 87; De Grendel 2009 Op Die Berg Pinot Noir Durbanville 89; De Grendel 2009 Shiraz Durbanville ($17) 89; De Grendel 2008 Merlot Cape of Good Hope Durbanville ($16) 90+**

**De Morgenzon** Established in 2003 by Wendy and Hylton Applebaum, De Morgenzon produces excellent Chenin Blanc and Syrah. The farm is situated on south facing slopes of the Stellenbosch Hills and consists of 91 beautiful hectares, of which 55 are planted to vines. De Morgenzon farms sustainably, and its winemaking is in the capable hands of Carl van de Merwe with support from Teddy Hall on producing Chenin Blanc. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**De Morgenzon 2010 Chenin Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch ($30) 92** The 100% barrel fermented Chenin Blanc Reserve is made from 40 year old bush vines and aged in 30% new French oak for up to 12 months. It has a perfume of light honeysuckle and essence of orange and a superbly balanced, fresh palate showing white fleshed stone fruit and minerals, finishing long with crisp acidity. **Delicious. De Morgenzon 2009 Chenin Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch ($30) 92** The 2009 Chenin Blanc Reserve is a complex, rich wine that reveals sweet stone fruit, orange blossom, and light notes of honey and toasted oak. It's round and creamy on the palate and pure and long on the finish with excellent acidity. While aged on the lees in 40% new French oak for 10 months, the oak is well integrated. **De Morgenzon 2005 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch 94** The medium dark gold 2005 is the maiden vintage of this wine, and tasting it seven years later shows how well South African Chenin Blanc evolves in the bottle. This is a superb, well-balanced and complex wine that has excellent depth and length and perfectly integrated acidity. Peach blossom, dried honeycomb, and oxidized notes show on the nose, while the palate reveals mostly fresh, ripe apricot and yellow peach. The best Chenin Blanc we've tasted from South Africa.

**De Toren** This estate is one of South Africa's finest. Its owners, Emil and Sonette den Dulk, make just two wines, Fusion V and Z, and they are both extraordinary. The 26-hectare estate is situated on high South-facing slopes of the Stellenbosch Hills and enjoys the cooling effect of continuous ocean breezes. The farm uses Infrared aerial Imaging to monitor ripeness and determine optimal dates for harvesting. Winemaking is by gravity and is managed by Albie Koch who has been with De Toren since the beginning. The first vintage was in 1999. Our tasting notes don't fully capture the exhilaration we felt tasting these wines with Emil den Dulk. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**De Toren 2009 Fusion V Stellenbosch ($50) 94** De Toren's Fusion V is among the finest Bordeaux blends produced in South Africa today. A combination of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc including small amounts of Malbec and Petit Verdot, it exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of black currant, eucalyptus, chocolate and toasted oak. Soft and elegant on the palate, with purity of fruit, it has a lush mouth feel and elegance with fine grained tannins on the finish. **De Toren 2009 Z Stellenbosch ($30) 93** The Z is another terrific wine crafted by De Toren. This one is a blend of predominantly Malbec with small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. It is richly aromatic with notes of red plum, raspberry, vanilla, and stewed tomato. It is soft and elegant on the palate with concentrated fruit flavors, vanilla, and spice, all of considerable depth. The wine tastes delicious now but should peak in about 5 years.

**De Trafford** This boutique winery is located at 380 m altitude on the slopes of Helderberg Mountain, south of Stellenbosch. It produces very small quantities of outstanding Syrah, red blends and single Bordeaux varietals. David Trafford, owner and self-taught winemaker, made the transition from being an architect to one of South Africa's top winemakers in just 10 years. His wines exhibit purity, power and elegance and are in great demand. ***Importer:*** Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA

**De Trafford 2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch ($32) 90+** The barrel fermented De Trafford Chenin Blanc is full and ripe on a creamy palate with prominent smoky, toasted oak. Tropical fruit and peach jam leap from the glass, and ripe stone fruit shows in the mouth and on the finish. Will become more harmonious with bottle age. **De Trafford 2009 Syrah Stellenbosch ($80) 93** The de Trafford Syrah reveals magnificent aromas of ripe blackberry and plum fruit with violet notes. Sourced from a single vineyard with steep terraces, the fruit is pure and delicious. **De Trafford 2008 Blueprint Shiraz Stellenbosch ($37) 91** The Blueprint Shiraz is fruit forward with a velvet texture and round, ripe tannins. Smoked meat, mocha and blueberry and crushed plum show on the nose, while the palate shows both depth and purity. The young fruit holds up well to the 21 months of oak aging. **De Trafford 2007 Elevation Stellenbosch ($98) 92+** This magnificent single vineyard wine consists of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot. 20% Syrah, and 13% Cabernet Franc. It displays an opaque ruby hue, concentrated dark red cherry and blackberry fruit, loam and dried herbs, and is rich and flavorful on the palate with notes of bitter chocolate and loam. Its soft round tannins and persistent finish add to the beauty of this wine.

**Wines Also Tasted: De Trafford 2008 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($80) 92; De Trafford 2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($80) 92+; De Trafford 2007 Merlot Stellenbosch ($30) 90+; De Trafford 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($45) 91; De Trafford 2005 M.P.V. Stellenbosch (Blaauklippen) ($35) 93**

**De Wetshof** This historic estate is owned and operated by Danie de Wet, who also serves as the winemaker. Trained in Geisenheim, the famous German wine institute, Danie focuses his winemaking on the noble white varieties: Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Danie uses advanced technology in the vineyard for irrigation management and employs the latest German cellar technology in the winery. During our visit we had a delightful and instructive tasting with Danie and thoroughly enjoyed his wines. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co

**De Wetshof 2009 Bateleur Chardonnay Robertson ($50) 92** The Bateleur Chardonnay is elegant and restrained with optimal balancing of oak and fruit. Flint and light citrus on the nose give way to a nuanced palate of minerals, light creamy oak, and understated fruit. The wine spends 12 months in lightly toasted, 90% new French oak. **De Wetshof 2009 The Site Chardonnay Robertson 91** The 2009 The Site Chardonnay is a single vineyard wine of optimally ripe fruit aged in medium toasted barrels (90% new) for 12 months. In the mouth it shows an expansive, velvety texture with interwoven flavors of lightly toasted hazelnut, ripe citrus, and smoke, finishing on a chalky mineral note. **De Wetshof 2011 Bon Vallon Chardonnay Robertson ($16) 89** This is a Chablis-like, un-oaked Chardonnay. It reveals citrus and minerals on the nose and has a rich stony palate with leesy pear and citrus fruit flavors and good acidity through to the finish. The wine is kept on the lees for 6 months after fermentation. **Great value. De Wetshof 2011 Limestone Hill Chardonnay Robertson ($18) 89+** This lovely un-oaked Chardonnay offers citrus and tropical fruit aromas that are carried over to the palate. The wine is full in the mouth and the palate has very bright clean and well-focused flavors with good purity and balance through to the finish.

**Domaine Des Dieux Wines** Owned by Sharon Parnell, this estate was established in 2004 and has 15.8 hectares of vineyards in Walker Bay and Elgin. Planting densities are high for South Africa at 5000 vines per hectare, coupled with low yields to produce high quality grapes. The estate specializes in an MCC called Claudia, which represents almost 60% of its production along with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah/Mourvedre. Domaine De Dieux's winemaker is Marc van Halderen, who also makes the wine at his own winery, La Vierge. No known importer in the U.S.

**Des Dieux 2007 Claudia Brut Elgin 89+** The Claudia Brut spends 36 months on the lees, and it shows on the bread dough nose. The palate is fruit rich and creamy but dry with lees notes, and there are light red cherry and toasted almond accents on the finish. **Very good! Des Dieux 2010 Pinot Noir Josephine Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge) 90+** The Pinot Noir Josephine is a lovely fruit forward wine that combines aromas of red berries, toast and a little spice. On the palate it offers a velvet texture and concentrated red fruit flavors with round firm tannins and a long finish. An elegant wine from three vineyards of sand and decomposed granite, it shows the promise of Pinot Noir in Walker Bay. **Des Dieux 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge) 90.** This Sauvignon Blanc is grassy in style with pungent aromas of citrus. It is creamy on the attack and has a nicely focused palate of fruit, green beans, figs and minerals. **Well done.**

**Diemersdal Wine Estate** This estate has been making wine since the 1800's. Located in the Durbanville Wine Valley, it enjoys excellent soils and the influence of the Atlantic Ocean for making premium wines. Diemersdal produces several varieties but is widely recognized as one of South Africa's finest producers of Pinotage. Thys Louw is winemaker. Knauth &Visser, Branford, CT

**Diemersdal 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Eight Rows Durbanville 89** This is a fresh, flavorful wine made from a selection of rows from a single vineyard. The wine shows assertive green fruit and green beans with a honeyed mouth feel and a note of minerals. **Diemersdal 2010 Pinotage Reserve Durbanville 92** The 2010 Pinotage is a beautiful wine and one of the finest Pinotages made in South Africa. It offers attractive dark plum fruit and toasted oak aromas. These are followed by dark red fruit, violet and vanilla nuances. The wine also sports soft round tannins and a persistent finish A delicious elegant Pinotage.

**Downes Family (Shannon Vineyards)** This winery is situated in the Elgin Valley within the Kogelberg Biosphere. The winery is owned by Stuart and James Downes of Irish ancestry; the wines are made by neighboring winemakers Nadia and Gordon Newton Johnson in their cellar in Hemel-en-Aarde. The wines are sourced from 12 different vineyard parcels that benefit from the area's high altitude and cool climate growing condition. The winery specializes in Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Merlot and is experimenting with Semillon and Viognier. The Mount Bullet Merlot is a stand out. ***Importer:*** Southern Starz, Huntington Beach, CA

**Downes 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Sanctuary Peak Elgin ($20) 90+** The Sanctuary Peak is Sauvignon Blanc done in the fresh, crisp style with ripe citrus with grassy notes and a chalky mineral finish. The influence of Semillon is apparent in its ripe, lanolin character. **Downes 2010 Pinot Noir Rockview Ridge Elgin 91** This Pinot Noir offers ripe dark juicy fruit flavors with toasted oak and smoky notes. Aged in 30% new French oak for 10 months, it is nicely structured with good purity and flavor concentration, round tannins and a long finish. Mainly sourced from Dijon clones 113, 115, 667, and 777. **Downes 2009 Mount Bullet Merlot Elgin ($80) 92** The Mount Bullet 100% Merlot offers inky red, blue and black fruit on the nose. It is silky and lush on the palate with richly flavored fruit sourced from 5 different Merlot clones. The wine is powerful yet approachable with a complex palate and fine tannins on the finish. One of the best Merlots we tasted in South Africa.

## E-G

**Eagles' Nest** This relatively new 12 hectare Constantia estate is producing outstanding wines right out of the gate. This is probably due to its favorable high altitude location near the ocean and the winemaking skills and passion of its winemaker, Stuart Botha. The wines from Eagles' Nest are cool climate in style, exhibiting refinement, elegance and balance. It is already among the finest boutique wineries of the Cape. No known importer in the U.S.

**Eagles' Nest 2010 Shiraz Constantia 92** This cool climate Shiraz is outstanding. Grown at high altitude, it shows high toned red and black fruit flavors with spice and cedar notes. On the palate it is beautifully balanced and refined with soft round tannins and a long persistent finish. **Eagles' Nest 2008 Verreaux Constantia 91** The Verreaux (African Black Eagle) is a blend of 93% Merlot and small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Sourced from the best block of Merlot on the farm it displays an elegant nose of black and red fruit that is ripe, rich and flavorful. A lovely wine with great intensity of flavor. **Eagles' Nest 2010 Viognier Constantia 91+** This is South Africa's most seductive Viognier, in our opinion. Showing a lovely honeysuckle perfume, it offers a suave, spicy palate of concentrated white and yellow stone fruit with integrated acidity. The extended hang time of cool Constantia contributes to the complexity of the wine. About 75% barrel fermented with 25% done in stainless steel to preserve acidity.

**Edgebaston** David Finlayson is the owner and winemaker at this family hillside farm known as Woodlands near Stellenbosch. David gained his winemaking experience at Peter Lehmann in Australia, Te Mata in New Zealand and Chateau Margaux in Bordeaux. He also served as winemaker at Glen Carlou, which his father, Walter, previously owned. The wines of this estate are all well-made and of high quality--Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Shiraz. ***Importer:*** Southern Starz, Huntington Beach, California

**Edgebaston 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($25) 91** The Edgebaston Cabernet Sauvignon is a nicely made wine with aromas and flavors of blackberry fruit, cassis, toast and spice. It is well-balanced and delicious on the palate with a silky smooth velvety texture, ripe tannins and a long finish. **Edgebaston 2008 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($19) 90** The Edgebaston Chardonnay is excellent value! A nicely balanced wine, it has a honeysuckle and dried herb nose, a round, creamy palate of orchard fruit, and brisk acidity on the finish. **Very well put together.**

**Wines Also Tasted: Edgebaston 2006 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($25) 88**

**Ernie Els** The world-renowned golfer, Ernie Els, is owner of this magnificent 72-hectare estate situated on the slopes of the Helderberg Moutain in Stellenbosch's Golden Triangle. The winery produced its maiden vintage in 2000 with winemaker, Louis Strydom, at the helm. Currently, the winery produces outstanding Bordeaux varietals and red blends that combine power and elegance. We were pleased to be able to taste these wines with Louis. Without question, Ernie Els is among South Africa's finest producers. ***Importer:*** Terlato Wines, Lake Bluff, IL

**Ernie Els 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($25) 91** This dark ruby Cabernet Sauvignon boasts aromas of lead pencil, cassis and smoked meat with notes of charred oak. On the palate, it shows nice purity of black fruit with well integrated oak. It has fine round tannins and persistent flavors on the finish. **Ernie Els 2009 Proprietor's Blend Stellenbosch ($38) 92** The youthful 2009 Proprietor's Blend combines 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Shiraz and other Bordeaux varieties. It offers lead pencil, red cherry accents, cedar and a touch of eucalyptus on the nose. It is rich tasting and opulent in the mouth showing great purity and elegance through to the finish. **Ernie Els 2008 Proprietor's Blend Stellenbosch ($40) 92** The 2008 Proprietor's blend consists of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Shiraz and a small quantity of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot. It provides a richly aromatic nose of blackberry fruit, pomegranate, and hints of forest floor. It is pure and sweet on the attack with gobs of fruit and cedar. Layered and elegant, it has firm, ripe

tannins and a long, long finish. **Ernie Els 2007 Signature Stellenbosch ($95) 94** The magnificent 2007 Signature is a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Shiraz, and small amounts of Malbec and Petit Verdot. Aged for 20 months in French oak (except for the Malbec and Petit Verdot), it offers intense aromas of black currant, lead pencil, red cherry, and a touch of eucalyptus. It is lush on the palate and explosive in the mouth showing a judicious use of oak and fine grained firm tannins. It finishes with lingering ripe cassis fruit flavors.

**Wines Also tasted: Ernie Els 2006 Signature Stellenbosch ($95) 93; Ernie Els 2010 Big Easy Stellenbosch ($20) 89**

**Fable Vineyard** For this boutique winery wine is about storytelling, and the team here want their wines to tell a story of the place, the land and the people of Tulbagh where they are located. Their vineyards of shale are situated at the foothills of the Witzenberg Mountains where the jackal bird circles and bobbejaan (baboons) play. They take a minimalist approach to winemaking and follow biodynamic principles and sustainable approaches in the vineyard. The three wines reviewed here are outstanding examples of the wines being crafted at this special place owned by investor Charles Banks, (Terroir Capital) and former proprietor of California's Screaming Eagle. No known importer in the U.S.

**Fable 2010 Jackal Bird Coastal Region 91** This is a lovely white blend of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and several other white Rhone varieties. The grapes are sourced from old vine vineyards in Swartland, Stellenbosch and the voor Paardeberg. Yellow straw in color, the wine offers fragrant aromas of white peach and Bosc pears with a hint of honeysuckle. Aged in oak for 10 months, it has a creamy mouth feel with a medley of pure fresh fruit flavors and a long dry finish. **Fable 2009 Lion's Whisker Coastal Region 91** A blend of 79% Syrah and 21% Mourvedre, this dark ruby fruit-forward offering boasts flavors of plum and spicy nuances. Aged for 22 months in 500L barrels, it is soft on the palate with good balance , firm tannins and overall pleasant drinking qualities. This wine will benefit from cellaring over the next few years. **Fable 2009 Bobbejaan Western Cape 88** A 100% Syrah, made from estate grapes, the bobbejaan displays aromas of sweet and fresh black cherry with a hint of herbs and a touch of minerals or resin. The wine is soft on the attack with a lightly fruited mid-palate, firm tannins and a lengthy finish.

**Fairview** This winery is one of the Cape's earliest farms, developed by French Huguenot Steven Verwey at the turn of the 17th century. Today, Fairview is one of South Africa's most successful wineries due to the entrepreneurship and vision of Charles Back II. Under the direction of affable, Anthony de Jager, Fairview is producing some excellent premium wines of Shiraz, Viognier and Pinotage. It is also at the forefront of producing top value wines with its Goats do Roam series. We thank Anthony for the very enjoyable tasting. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL

**Fairview 2010 Viognier Paarl ($20) 89** The 2010 Viognier is a very pleasant wine revealing nicely concentrated ripe white peach on the nose and palate with clean flavors and harmonious acidity. About half barrel, half tank fermented. Very good value. **Fairview 2010 Pinotage Viognier Coastal Region ($20) 89+** This is a fresh, fruit forward and aromatic offering with aromas and flavors of dark plum. Light and feminine on the palate, it provides a delicious drinking experience with somewhat firm tannins on the finish. **Fairview 2009 Eenzaamheid Shiraz Paarl ($37) 90** This cool climate Shiraz is grown on vineyards facing the Atlantic. Showing plum and blue fruit with herbs, this offering is soft on the attack with a velvet texture. It is medium weight with good intensity of fruit flavor. The tannins are soft and round, and the finish is long. **Fairview 2008 The Beacon Shiraz Paarl ($37) 91** The Beacon Shiraz stands above the other wines reviewed here. It offers aromas of blackberry fruit with notes of pencil shavings, fresh garden herbs, and a bit of coconut. Sweet toasted oak continues on the attack with lots of up front fruit, chocolate notes, finishing long with dark red fruit. The grapes for this lovely wine were sourced from dry-farmed hilltop bush vines. **Fairview 2009 Primo Pinotage ($29) 90+** This Pinotage is fruit forward and fragrant with plum, dark cherry and light toast aromas. It is soft on the attack and has a velvet texture and flavors of cherry, coconut, chocolate and notes of loam. It has beautiful up front flavors, fills the mouth and has round ripe tannins on the finish.

**Fleur du Cap** Fleur du Cap is a popular brand belonging to the Distell Group headquartered at Die Bergkelder in Stellenbosch. The grapes for these wines are sourced from vineyard blocks in the Cape Coastal region and are produced in a fruit forward and approachable style. Winemaking at Fleur du Cap is directed by Andrea Freeborough who was recognized as South African Woman Winemaker of the Year in 2010. The Fleur du Cap wines are delicious and are great values. ***Importer:*** Maisons Marques & Domaines, Oakland, CA

**Fleur du Cap 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Limited Release Unfiltered Western Cape ($19) 90+** Made from a blend of fruit from the coastal regions of Darling and Agulhas, this is a superb Sauvignon Blanc done in the Loire style. It shows a perfumed nose of delicate flowers and white stone fruit, a creamy, soft mouth feel and good acidity on a crisp finish. **Excellent. Fleur du Cap 2009 Merlot Unfiltered Stellenbosch ($20) 90** Smoke, touch of cacao and dark red fruit on the nose. Lush on the attack and on the palate, mouthfilling with fresh red fruit and nice firm tannins on the finish. The fruit comes from two vineyards--one in the Bottelary Hills and one in Somerset West. Matured for 16 months in French oak. **Fleur du Cap 2010 White Blend Unfiltered Western Cape 90+** The White Blend is a delicious mix of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Semillon, and Viognier. It's delicate and fragrant with grassy notes on the nose. The palate shows a melange of apricot, white peach, and melon with a green bean note. It's creamy in texture with good length on the finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Fleur du Cap 2009 Semillon Unfiltered Coastal Region (88+)**

**Glen Carlou** This winery, which is part of the Hess Family Estates, is located in the northern foothills of the Simonsberg Mountain in Paarl. It has a 125 hectare farm and 70 hectares in vineyards. Vineyard management and winemaking are at a very high level at this estate. The winemaker is veteran Arco Laarman, and he is assisted by Bertus van Zyl. Glen Carlou produces wine in three ranges: Prestige, Classic, and Contemporary. The ultra premium Prestige wines we tasted are all first-class; the Classic wines are also well-made and good value. ***Importer:*** The Hess Collection, Napa Valley, CA

**Glen Carlou 2010 Chardonnay Paarl ($16) 90** The 2010 Chardonnay is a small step up from the 2009 vintage, which was also very good. This offering displays fragrant tropical and orchard fruit on the nose with hints of butterscotch and cedar. Aged for 10 months in French oak, it finishes clean and fresh tasting. **Glen Carlou 2010 Chardonnay Quartz Stone Paarl ($45) 91+** The Chardonnay Quartz Stone is a naturally fermented, single vineyard wine showing buttered citrus aromas and flavors. The palate is rich and fleshy with juicy acidity. Aged in 100% new oak for 11 months. **Glen Carlou 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Gravel Quarry Paarl ($45) 91** The 2007 Gravel Quarry Cabernet Sauvignon, is a powerhouse classic, showing cassis, lead pencil, and tea leaves. Mouth filling and soft on the palate, it has a lush, velvet texture and a long, flavorful finish. Aged 18 months in new French oak. The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon which we also tasted is equal in quality to the 2007 vintage.

**Wines also Tasted: Glen Carlou 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Gravel Quarry Paarl ($45) 91; Glen Carlou 2009 Chardonnay Paarl ($16) 89; Glen Carlou 2008 Grand Classique Paarl ($20) 89**

**Glenelly Cellars** This Stellenbosch estate situated on the slopes of the Simonsberg Mountain is owned by the amazing 85-year old May-Eliane de Lencquesaing, previous owner of Chateau Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande. The estate consists of 128 hectares, 60 initially planted mainly with red varieties. The soils are decomposed granite with a deep clay base. Luke O'Cuinneagain, formerly with Chateau Angelus and Rustenberg, took over as winemaker in 2007 with Adi Badenhorst serving as consultant. A new state-of-the-art winery was opened in 2009. The Glenelly wines we've tasted have been impressive. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Glenelly 2007 Grand Vin Western Cape ($25) 90** The Glenelly Grand Vin is Old World in style with a nose of tobacco, cedar and underbrush and a full-bodied, full-flavored palate of nicely integrated oak, dark berries, and mocha. Beautifully structured. A blend of 44% Syrah, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot and 1% Petit Verdot. The fruit is sourced from the southern slopes of the Simonsberg. **Glenelly 2007 Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot Western Cape 90** This Shiraz-based blend offers refined dark red fruit aromas with notes of lead pencil and cedar. It is lush on the attack with nicely integrated black and red fruit and notes of black pepper, cacao, and coffee. A beautiful, easy drinking wine. **Glenelly 2010 The Glass Collection Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($18) 89** This is a flavorful, fresh and nicely balanced wine showing brisk acidity and notes of orchard fruit. Easy drinking and uncomplicated.

**Wines Also Tasted: Glenelly 2008 Lady May Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($50) 89+**

**Graham Beck Wines** This highly successful winery was established in 1983 when the late Graham Beck purchased Madeba farm outside the Western Cape town of Robertson with the goal of establishing a world-class winery. Today, Graham Beck is one of the finest producers of MCC and still wines in South Africa. Cellarmaster Pieter Ferreira is one of reasons for the success of Graham Beck Wines. ***Importer:*** Maritime Wine Trading Collective, San Francisco CA

**Graham Beck 2009 Bowed Head Chenin Blanc Coastal Region (Paarl) ($28) 92** This barrel fermented wine is an excellent example of the heights the Chenin Blanc grape reaches in South Africa. It shows a highly aromatic nose of honeysuckle and fresh and dried apricot and peach that carries over to a richly concentrated, creamy and layered palate complemented by racy acidity. This wine is made from dry-farmed, 40+ year old Paarl vines and is aged in 400L oak barrels for 7 months. We far prefer this to the 2008 we also tasted. **Graham Beck 2011 Pheasant's Run Sauvignon Blanc Coastal Region 92+** The Pheasant's Run Sauvignon Blanc presents a rich perfume of passion fruit and grapefruit peel with a floral accent. It's dense and rich with intense passion fruit and lychee flavors on a creamy palate finishing long with flinty minerality. The fruit is predominantly Weatherstation clone from the Darling area. **Graham Beck 2007 Ad Honorem Stellenbosch ($65) 93** The Ad Honorem is one of South Africa's elite red blends. It reveals a hugely aromatic nose of blackberry, dark chocolate, sandalwood and violets and a profound palate that is deep, layered, and ends with fine, ripe tannins. Made of 72% Cabernet Sauvignon and 28% Syrah fruit from two Stellenbosch vineyards and aged in new oak for 27 months. This wine has improved since we last tasted it over a year ago. **Graham Beck 2005 Prestige Cuvée Clive Robertson 91+** With a nose of fresh croissant, fine bubbles, and an intensely flavored and creamy palate, this elegant wine is the flagship for Graham Beck. It spends 5 years on the lees and 1 year on cork prior to release. A blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Pinot Noir.

**Wines Also Tasted: Graham Beck 2009 The Ridge Syrah Robertson ($21) 92; Graham Beck 2007 Coffeestone Cabernet Sauvignon Robertson 91; Graham Beck 2008 Blanc de Blancs Robertson 91; Graham Beck 2005 Brut Zero Western Cape 90+**

**Groot Constantia** Groot Constantia Estate was the first wine-producing farm in South Africa, established by Cape Governor Simon van der Stel in 1685. Its vineyards are situated in one the Western Cape's ideal grape-growing sites exposed to the cool breezes from the Atlantic. Boela Gerber, winemaker over the past decade, has contributed to improvements in the vineyard and the winery. The estate produces wine in two ranges: Gouverneurs range and Groot Constantia range. The Gouverneurs Reserve blend is first-class. Groot Constantia also makes the superb Grand Constance, one of the finest sweet wines in the world today, which we review in our special article on the Sweet Wines of South Africa. ***Importer:*** Indigo Wine Group, Venice, FL

**Groot Constantia 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Constantia ($20) 89** This Sauvignon Blanc with 6% Semillon offers spicy passion fruit and orange rind on the nose. These are followed by ripe stone fruit, passion fruit and minerals on the palate. The wine has good acidity and a slightly astringent finish. **Groot Constantia 2009 Gouverneur's Reserve White Constantia 90+** The Gouverneur's Reserve is New World in style offering delicious, up front tropical fruit and lush and flinty toasted oak. Semillon-based, it's full in the mouth with good, bracing acidity. **Groot Constantia 2009 Gouverneur's Reserve Red Constantia 91** The Gouverneur's Reserve Red is a beautifully balanced, fresh wine showing spicy fruit upfront and an elegant, silky palate with fine, ripe tannins. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Malbec aged in 85% new oak.

**Groote Post Vineyards** This historic 18th century farm is located on the Cape's West Coast in the Darling appellation. It boasts unique, cool climate conditions for producing excellent fruit. It was established by Peter and Nick Pentz on 126 hectares on the upper slopes of the Darling Hills overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Originally known for its Sauvignon Blanc, Groote Post today also produces very good Chardonnay and Shiraz. Lukas Wentzel serves as winemaker. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz, Boca Grande, FL

**Groote Post 2009 Chardonnay Reserve Darling 90+** The 2009 Chardonnay Reserve is made from low-yielding vines producing small berries at 400 m above sea level. The medium dark gold wine shows aromas of tropical fruit, smoke and nuts with a silky palate of ripe citrus and stone fruit, finishing very long. **Groote Post 2009 Shiraz 90+** The 2009 Shiraz has an opaque ruby hue with lots of fresh fruit and earth on the nose. Aged for 15 months in French and American oak, it offers excellent balance and acidity, soft round tannins and a long rich tasting finish, showing the benefits of the cool growing conditions of the Darling district. **Groote Post 2009 Pinot Noir Darling 87+** The 2009 Pinot Noir offers red plum and cherry aromas that are mirrored on the palate which is slightly tart and thin. Aged in 500 L barrels helps retain the fruit, but this is still rather rustic stylistically.

**Wines Also Tasted: Groote Post 2010 Riesling Darling 88+; Groote Post 2009 Pinot Noir Darling 87+**

## H-L

**Hamilton Russell Vineyards** This 175-hectare estate is located in the cool maritime Hemel-en-Aarde Valley appellation just behind the old fishing village of Hermanus. The estate specializes in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Tim Hamilton Russell founded the estate in 1975 and turned over management to his son Anthony Hamilton Russell in 1991. The estate vineyards are planted on 50+ hectares of stony shale soils which were identified through extensive soil research carried out by Anthony in the mid-1990s. Hamilton Russell is among the very best producers of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in South Africa today offering wines of elegance, flavor and refinement every bit as good as those produced in Burgundy. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL

**Hamilton Russell 2010 Chardonnay Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) ($32) 93** The 2010 Chardonnay is a refined, elegant wine of considerable complexity and depth. Rich melon, pear, citrus and flinty minerals all show on the nose and palate with a persistent chalky finish and lingering aftertaste of pure fruit. **Hamilton Russell 2010 Pinot Noir Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) ($44) 93** The 2010 Pinot Noir is the 30th vintage of this wine produced by this outstanding estate. Rich and flavorful with red fruit, earth, spice and violets, it displays big flavors on the palate with a soft texture and overall elegance. It is nicely balanced and structured with good acidity and a firm finish. A great wine to celebrate three decades of winemaking. **Hamilton Russell 2009 Pinot Noir Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) ($44) 92+** The 2009 Pinot Noir offers a complex bouquet of red cherry, minerals, mushrooms and earth. It displays good volume in the mouth with red berry fruit, tobacco and cedar all beautiful integrated. It is a generous and delicious wine with firm tannins and a persistent finish.

**Hartenberg Estate** The Hartenberg Estate produces some of the most distinctive high quality wines in South Africa. Located in the Bottelary Hills in Stellenbosch, the estate consists of 99 hectares of vineyards comprising nine different soil types and many different aspects and microclimates. The winemaking team is headed by the highly talented and affable Carl Schultz, who has been with Hartenberg since 1993. The Hartenberg single varietals and blends are distinguished by their amazing purity, nuance, and balance. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz Inc. Boca Grande, FL

**Hartenberg 2008 Ecurie ($20) Stellenbosch 91** The Ecurie is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (48%), Shiraz (44%), Merlot (6%), and Pinotage (2%). It's a refined, pure and flavorful wine with aromas of toasted oak, cassis, and mushroom. The velvet textured palate is refined, layered

and similarly richly flavored with notes of tobacco, black fruit, and forest floor. **Hartenberg 2006 Gravel Hill Shiraz Stellenbosch ($178) 94** Gravel Hill is a first-class single vineyard Shiraz and one of the finest we have tasted in South Africa, or anywhere else. Sourced from iron rich rocky gravel soils, it reveals an opaque ruby color with blackberry fruit and very rich and complex mineral notes on the nose. It is ripe on the palate with lush fruit flavors, toasted oak and chocolate. It is full in the mouth with silky soft tannins, excellent balance and a long finish. Magnificent. **Hartenberg 2007 Merlot Stellenbosch (Bottelary) ($46) 91+** One of South Africa's very best Merlots, this is a refined, complex, lush wine with layers and layers of flavors--earth, bacon fat, herbs, loam, red fruit. There are also hints of mint on the nose. Beautiful. **Hartenberg 2007 The Stork Shiraz Stellenbosch ($94) 92** The Stork is a single vineyard Shiraz that exhibits an enticing nose of ripe cassis, braised meat, and warm spicy vanilla oak. A silky palate adds a dried plum character to the mix, yielding rich, layered flavors. Finishes dry with a charred oak note. Aged 26 months in new French oak. **Hartenberg 2007 The MacKenzie Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot Stellenbosch ($94) 95** The MacKenzie Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot is a superb Bordeaux blend sourced from the finest grapes of the Hartenberg estate. The wine reveals pure red and black fruit aromas, lead pencil and toast on the nose. Aged in 100% new French oak for 24 months, it offers a velvet smooth texture, silky tannins, and perfect balance of fruit and oak. Wines don't get much better than this.

**Wines Also Tasted: Hartenberg 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($29) 90; Hartenberg 2009 Weisser Riesling Stellenbosch ($16) 89; Hartenberg 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($36) 92 ; Hartenberg 2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($30) 89+; Hartenberg 2007 Estate Shiraz Stellenbosch ($35) 90**

**Haskell Vineyards** Nestled in the Helderberg Mountains of Stellenbosch, Haskell Vineyards is producing small quantities of superb red varietals and blends. Established by Preston Haskell in 2002, the winery cultivates 16 hectares of vineyards situated on warm, north-facing slopes of granite rocks. Winemaker Rianie Strydom conducted our tasting, and we were very impressed with all of her wines. ***Importer:*** GOS International, Jacksonville, FL

**Haskell Vineyards 2009 Haskell II Stellenbosch 90+** Haskell II is a blend of 50% Shiraz, 42% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Mourvedre. It is a lovely and refined wine showing dark cherry and violets on the nose. On the palate it is soft and lush on the attack, very flavorful and balanced with fine tannins and a very long finish. **Haskell Vineyards 2008 Aeon Syrah Stellenbosch 93** Haskell's Aeon Syrah offers a lovely nose of rich dark fruit, roasted meat, black pepper and violets. It boasts a lush fruit forward palate of high toned red and black fruit, soft round tannins and excellent balance. **Haskell Vineyards 2007 Haskell IV Stellenbosch 92+** Haskell IV consists of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, and 5% Cabernet Franc. The wine is elegant, linear and beautifully focused with black fruit, violets and toasted oak. It is lush on the attack with concentrated red and black fruit, minerals and fine grained tannins. First released in 2010, it is a tight wine at present and made for the long haul.

**Iona** This family winery in Elgin was established in 1997 by Andrew and Rozy Gunn. Their vineyards are located 420 meters above sea level and close to the Atlantic Ocean, giving them a cool climate for growing grapes. The farm was named Iona after an island off the West Coast of Scotland where the Gunns trace their ancestry. Their vineyards are meticulously managed, and their winemaking is modern and experimental. We liked all three of the wines tasted from their portfolio. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz, Inc Boca Grande, FL

**Iona 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin ($20) 90+** This cool climate Sauvignon Blanc has its own, unique style. A fruity perfume of tangerine-accented passion fruit shows on the nose, while the well-fruited palate is more serious with minerals and crisp acidity. Stylistically, the wine is a tantalizing hybrid of the Old and New Worlds. **Iona 2009 Chardonnay Elgin ($22) 90+** This is an extroverted wine with an effusive nose of marzipan, honey and mango, a soft, lush attack, and layers of rich, ripe fruit on the palate. It has a creamy texture and good acid balance. About 60% is barrel fermented in 20% new oak and aged in oak for 11 months. **Iona The Gunnar Elgin 91** This Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Petit Verdot exhibits charm with power. Violets and a seductively soft attack are married to spicy toasted and high toned dark red fruit to yield a most satisfying drink.

**Jardin (Jordan) Wine Estate** Gary and Kathy Jordan are proprietors of this highly successful Stellenbosch winery. While the wines of Jordan are widely known within South Africa, in the US they go by the name of Jardin to prevent confusion with California's Jordan Winery. Jordan cultivates 146 hectares of vineyards in Stellenbosch and produces outstanding wines in all categories. We had a most enjoyable tasting with Gary and Kathy at their renowned restaurant. ***Importer:*** World Premiere Wines, Mooresville, NC

**Jardin 2009 The Outlier Sauvignon Blanc Elgin ($16) 90+** The Fumé Blanc-styled Outlier Sauvignon Blanc shows flint and toasted oak on the nose and dense gooseberry flavors on the palate, finishing on a pleasing tannic note. Made from a 400 m high single vineyard in Elgin and aged 9 months in barrel. **Jardin 2009 Nine Yards Chardonnay Stellenbosch (Bottelary) ($41) 91** The Nine Yards Chardonnay is a full, ripe, richly oaked wine that still manages to show elegance and purity. It reveals flint and rich, buttery lemon on the nose and on the attack with a palate of sweet stone fruit nicely integrated with the new French oak. The wine is matured sur lie for 12 months in French oak barriques. **Jardin 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch (Bottelary) ($16) 90** The Sauvignon Blanc is made of tank-fermented Stellenbosch fruit revealing riper guava and Cape gooseberry

with a whiff of banana. It's fully flavored, lush and ripe on the palate. **Delicious. Jardin 2008 Syrah Stellenbosch ($21) 90+** This Syrah exhibits blackberry fruit on the nose with charred oak and earth aromas. On the palate, it offers a sweet lush attack with a velvet texture with lots of coconut and cream notes, round tannins and a long finish.

**Other Wines Tasted: Jardin 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($21) 87+; Jardin 2010 Mellifera Noble Late Harvest Stellenbosch (Bottelary) ($26) 91; Jardin 2011 Chameleon Dry Rosé Stellenbosch ($12) 88**

**Joubert-Tradauw 2009 Syrah Tradauw ($40) 88** This medium dark ruby Syrah is quite an earthy wine showing ripe red plum, cedar and forest floor notes. It shows its youth with dry, somewhat hard tannins that should soften with time. Natural yeasts are used in fermentation, and the wine is aged about two years in 35% new oak. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co. Atlanta, GA

**Julien Schaal** These two Syrahs by the young Frenchman Julien Schaal, who regularly travels to South Africa from Alsace, are crafted in partnership with winemaker Paul Cluver. They are well made and we look forward to future releases. A Chardonnay tasted in barrel was quite good; a Riesling is also on the way. No known importer in the U.S.

**Julien Schaal 2010 Syrah Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) 91** The Syrah from Walker Bay displays a nose of dark berry fruit, loam, meat and smoke. On the palate it shows sweet and abundant dark red fruit with violets, firm tannins, and a long finish. A very fine offering that is quite elegant in character. **Schaal-Cluver 2010 Shiraz Elgin 90** This Syrah is sourced from Paul Cluver's own estate vineyards in Elgin. Only bottled for three months when we tasted it, the wine was still coming together showing good blackberry fruit and cedar. It has a lush velvet palate with ripe tannins and a lengthy finish. A very promising wine.

**Kaapzicht Estate.** This fine estate has 160 ha of dry-farmed vines in the Bottelary Hills with views of Table Mountain. Its flagship wines are sold under the Steytler family label. Winemaker Danie Steytler is a member of the Cape Winemaker's Guild. He's assisted by son Danie Jr., who gave us a tour of the vineyards. ***Importer:*** Knauth & Visser, Branford, CT & Fairest Cape Beverage Co

**Kaapzicht 1997 Pinotage Reserve Stellenbosch 91+** This old bush vine wine from 1997 was aged in 100% new French oak and still maintains its freshness. A magnificent wine with great purity of flavor, very ripe and delicious flavors, and dark blackberry fruit. It is lush and juicy with soft round tannins and a long finish. **Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Pentagon Stellenbosch 92+** The Steytler Pentagon is a blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Merlot. It offers black fruit and bitter chocolate on the nose and is beautifully focused on the palate with ripe and linear fruit black flavors complimented with firm silky tannins and a long finish. **A super wine. Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Pinotage Stellenbosch ($47) 91+** This Steyler Pinotage is sourced from old bush vines. It displays inky dark red and black fruit on the nose with smoke notes. It is sweet on the attack showing dark plum flavors with coconut and spice. Aged in 100% new French oak (Terransaud), it shows refinement and elegance with a silky texture, soft tannins, good volume and balance, and a long finish. **Kaapzicht 2007 Steytler Vision Cape Blend Stellenbosch ($53) 92** Opaque ruby, this Cape Blend is composed of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Pinotage and 15% Merlot. It is light and elegant in style and beautifully balanced with dark red cherry fruit. It has a soft and silky mouth feel with lovely texture showing the benefits of blending Pinotage, if done well.

**Wines Also Tasted: Kaapzicht 2001 Steytler Vision Cape Blend Stellenbosch 91**

**Kanonkop Wine Estate** This estate is situated on the lower slopes of the Simonsberg Mountain in Stellenbosch. It consists of 125 hectares, of which 100 are planted to vine. The soils of decomposed granite and clay, cool sea breezes and long growing seasons provide ideal growing conditions for their wines, especially red varieties. Kanonkop is best known for its outstanding Pinotage and Paul Sauer red blend. On our visit, we were treated to a vertical tasting of Kanonkop Pinotage from as far back as 1989 and were impressed with how well these wines are aging in the bottle. Our favorite was the 1999 Pinotage made for the Cape Winemakers Guild auction. Kanonkop is clearly one of South Africa's finest producers of Pinotage. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Kanonkop 2005 Paul Sauer Stellenbosch ($43) 94** Paul Sauer is a magnificent blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot and 15% Cabernet Franc. It is light and elegant on the palate yet reveals remarkable intensity of flavor. Aged for 24 months in New French oak and in the bottle for a year before release, it is beautifully integrated and balanced with flavors of dark cherry, bitter chocolate, and cracked pepper. It also has soft round tannins and a long finish. Paul Sauer was a pioneer premium wine first made in 1951. **Kanonkop 2009 Pinotage Stellenbosch ($35) 92** Medium ruby. This is a youthful, ripe and delicious Pinotage. It shows aromas of brambly red berry and plum fruit on the nose. On the palate, it offers fresh pure concentrated fruit flavors with a silky mouth feel, firm round tannins and a persistent finish. Give it time. A benchmark Pinotage! **Kanonkop 2006 Pinotage Black Label Stellenbosch 93** The Black Label Pinotage is an outstanding example of the variety at its very best. Opaque ruby in color, it boasts aromas of pure ripe plum with sweet blackberry and cedar notes. It is soft and elegant on the palate with concentrated dark plum flavors, minerals, tar, and toasted oak. A very generous and savory wine.

**Wines Also Tasted: Kanonkop 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 91**

**Kanu Private Cellars and Vineyards** Kanu wines are produced on the Goedgeloof farm located in Stellenbosch. In 1997 the Goedgeloof farm was purchased by Hydro Holdings (former owners of Mulderbosch Vineyards), and the new owners revitalized the estate, building a state-of-the-art cellar and making other improvements. The Kanu brand (Kanu is a mythical bird of promise) was launched at this time with winemaker and Chenin Blanc guru, Teddy Hall. Since 2003 Kanu has been made by winemaker/cellermaster, Richard Kershaw. Kanu is best known for its Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Shiraz offerings. Two excellent wines from their premium wine range are reviewed here. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Kanu 2007 Chenin Blanc KCB Stellenbosch 92** Deep yellow gold, the Chenin Blanc KCB is fermented in wood. It has a vibrant bouquet of honey, ripe yellow peach and orange peel with notes of rich vanilla oak. The palate is soft, lush, and unctuous with layers of fresh ripe mango, beeswax, and orange essence. Finishes dry despite the 11.5% residual sugar. Absolutely delicious. **Kanu 2005 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($24) 90** This Shiraz is a big earthy wine with lots of dark blackberry fruit, charred oak and loam on the nose and palate. It is soft on the attack with big flavors on the palate, slightly dry tannins and an overall rustic character.

**Keermont Vineyards** Mark and Monica Wraith moved to this lovely part of the Western Cape in 2003 and in 2005 began adding to the vineyard which had already yielded excellent wines made by David de Trafford. They now have a 27 hectare steep hillside vineyard. 2007 was the first vintage for the winery and winemaker Alex Starey. The quality of the wines is generally outstanding. The future is surely bright for Keermont. ***Importer:*** Kysela Pere et Fils, Winchester, VA

**Keermont 2010 Terrasse Stellenbosch ($27) 91** The fresh, floral medium yellow straw Terrasse is a fruit forward wine showing good complexity and density of stone fruit on a lush, round palate. Beautifully structured and long on the finish. A blend of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, and Viognier fermented with wild yeast for 10 months in barrel and neither fined nor filtered before bottling. **Keermont Vineyards 2008 Estate Blend Stellenbosch ($40) 91** The Estate blend is crafted from old low-yielding parcels (2.7tons/ha) of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. On the nose it offers fresh aromas of red berries, plum and blackberries with notes of blackcurrant. Aged for 24 months in 1-2 year old oak barrels, it is fruit rich, soft on the palate, and mouth filling with firm ripe tannins on the finish. **Keermont Vineyards 2007 Red Blend Stellenbosch ($43) 90** This red blend of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 20% Syrah sees 35 months of aging before release, including 20 months in second fill French oak. It has an Old World bouquet of cedar, earth, and cassis. It offers a balanced, medium weight palate that is complex and earthy, finishing with firm tannins and a red cassis note. It's hard to believe this is a first vintage. **Keermont Vineyards 2009 Syrah Stellenbosch ($40) 90** The Syrah boasts fruity aromas of blackberry and blueberry with notes of violets and chocolate. Aged for 20 months in used French oak, it reveals gorgeous fruit on the palate and finishes with a pure blueberry and violet note. Very easy to drink.

**Wines Also Tasted: Keermont Vineyards 2010 Fleurfontein Stellenbosch 91**

**Ken Forrester** This estate is owned and operated by Ken Forrester, an outstanding producer and the chairman of South Africa's Chenin Blanc Association. Ken's estate is nestled at the base of the Helderberg in Stellenbosch and is one of the oldest wine farms in the Cape. Ken Forrester began operations in 1994 and produces three tiers of wines: the best value "Petit" range, the "Ken Forrester" range, which is grown in the estate vineyards, and a premium, limited-production "Icon" range. All of Ken Forrester wines are excellent; the FMC is in a class by itself. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Ken Forrester 2010 Chenin Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch ($15) 91** It's unbelievable that a wine of this quality can be sold at such a low price. Medium yellow gold in color, it's a beautifully balanced, lush wine with excellent integration of peach and apricot nectar with oak and a hint of flint. Finishes clean with a pleasing tannic edge. It spends 10 months in 400 lt French barrels, 20% new. **Ken Forrester 2009 FMC Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch ($65) 92+** Consistently one of the best Chenins produced in South Africa, this is the 10th vintage of the FMC. The dry-farmed fruit comes from an organic, single vineyard of 40 year old vines with extremely low yields of just 2 tons/ha. The palate has a waxy texture, rich and deep flavors of hazelnut and peach/apricot marmalade, finishing with great length and bright acidity. This is our favorite of the FMC vintages we've tasted—fruit and wood seem better integrated, and the lower (7g/l) residual sugar makes for better balance. **Ken Forrester 2007 The Gypsy Stellenbosch ($65) 91** This Grenache (70%), Shiraz (26%), Mourvedre (4%) blend is rich and complex with beautifully integrated oak and interesting earth notes. The grapes are fermented separately and later blended. The wine sees a lot of oak—12 months in new oak followed by 12 months in used barrels—but the fruit can handle it.

**Klein Constantia Estate** This historic estate began producing wine in the Cape in 1689. After years of neglect it was acquired by the Joste family, which restored the estate to its former glory, including extensive vineyard re-plantings. After three decades of restoring the property, the Jostes have sold the estate to foreign investors. The estate is best known for producing Vin de Constance, one of the finest dessert wines on the planet, which is reviewed here. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Klein Constantia 2005 Vin de Constance Constantia ($50) 93** Deep yellow gold. Made of Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains (Frontignan), Vin de Constance is a rich, power-

ful wine both aromatically and palate-wise with excellent balancing acidity and an invigorating and persistent finish. Pineapple, mango, peach jam and dried apricot all make their appearance. Fermented in a combination of stainless steel and oak and aged in 500 liter barrels for four years.

**Kleine Zalze Wines** This family owned winery located 3 km outside Stellenbosch forms part of the De Zalze Wineland and Golf Estate. They produce a large portfolio of premium wines including two Chenin Blancs which we tried at a tasting kindly organized by South Africa's Chenin Blanc Association. No known importer in the U.S.

**Kleine Zalze Wines 2011 Chenin Blanc Bush Vines Stellenbosch 88** This Chenin Blanc offers aromas of lovely light yellow peach and minerals. Steely in style, it reveals moderate complexity on the palate with fresh clean fruit flavors and good acidity. **Kleine Zalze Wines 2011 Chenin Blanc Vineyard Selection Stellenbosch 90** The Chenin Blanc Vineyard Selection is a step up in quality. Medium yellow in color, it exhibits honey and ripe apricots on the nose with an unctuous mouth feel with ripe yellow peach fruit and herbs. A delicious wine of complexity and nuance.

**KWV** Originally a cooperative of South African wine and grape farmers, today KWV is a private holding company and one of South Africa's leading wine and spirits producers. Based in Paarl, the company sources grapes from different agricultural regions and produces a very wide range of wines. Our tasting with Chief Winemaker, Richard Rowe, focused on KWV's Mentors range. ***Importer:*** KWV Ltd., Louisville, KY

**KWV 2010 The Mentors Grenache Blanc Paarl 91** Grenache Blanc isn't common in South Africa, but it does well in a hotter climate like Paarl. This delightful wine shows perfumed orange blossom, yellow melon and light oak and orchard fruit aromas and flavors. It's full in the mouth with a chalky mineral finish and well integrated oak. **Very well done. KWV 2010 The Mentors Chardonnay Elgin 89** The Chardonnay is produced mainly from Elgin fruit and reveals aromas of banana skin, green mango and acacia. Fermented in 300 L French oak, it offers lovely lemon citrus and melon on the palate with excellent weight and balance. **KWV 2009 The Mentors Petit Verdot Stellenbosch 89** This wine has an inky purple hue with aromas of bitter chocolate, plum, and essence of black raspberry on the nose. It is soft and velvet-like on the palate, full and generous with firm tannins on the finish.

**Other Wines Tasted: KWV 2009 The Mentors Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch 88+; KWV 2009 The Mentors 2009 Pinotage Western Cape 88**

**L' Avenir Vineyards** In 2005 Frenchman Michel Larouche acquired this Stellenbosch estate that was best known for its excellent Chenin Blanc and Pinotage. He later merged his company with the French wine group Jeanjean, part of the large French wine group Advini. The estate has 55 hectares under cultivation and produces wines in two ranges: Icon (Grand Vin) and Platinum. The winemaker is Tinus Els who has links to Chablis, Languedoc and Chile. The wines we tasted were all well-made, and we especially liked the Grand Vin Pinotage. ***Importer:*** Wilson Daniels, St. Helena, CA

**L' Avenir 2007 Grand Vin Pinotage Stellenbosch ($28) 91** This Grand Vin Pinotage is an attractive wine with lovely aromas of ripe dark red berries, plum and cedar notes. It is silky and lush on the palate, and finely flavored with good concentration and overall elegance. It has firm tannins with a long finish so give it time to show its depth and complexity. **L' Avenir 2009 Pinotage Stellenbosch ($18) 90** This Pinotage offers aromas of black raspberry and wood spice. These are followed by a lush fruit forward attack and a nicely weighted palate of clean red fruit with herbal notes and a firm long finish.

**La Motte** This historic French Huguenot property in Franschhoek was acquired in 1970 by the late Dr. Anton Rupert, an industrialist and global businessman. Today the property consists of 80 hectares of irrigated vines. Grapes are also purchased from Walker Bay, Darling, Paarl, and Wellington. The La Motte vineyards have been overseen by leading viticulturalist Pietie le Roux since 1986. The Cellarmaster is Edmund Terblanche. The wines we tasted at the winery were excellent. A very impressive portfolio! The restaurant is also first-class. ***Importer:*** Kysela Pere et Fils Winchester, VA

**La Motte 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Pierneef Walker Bay (Bot River) 93** The organically grown Pierneef Sauvignon Blanc is one of the finest Sauvignon Blancs we've tasted from South Africa, or anywhere in the New World for that matter. It's perfectly balanced, just the right amount of acidity, nicely perfumed and vibrant on the palate. There's superb concentration of passion fruit, citrus peel, and minerals, with a persistent intense finish. Beautiful. **La Motte 2009 Shiraz Western Cape 91** This is a Rhone-like Syrah, cool climate, very aromatic with a ripe round mouth feel and dark blackberry fruit. Aged for 14 months in 100% New French oak 300L barrels it has a bold New World mid-palate with soft lush peppery fruit and a long refined finish. A lovely wine. **La Motte 2008 Shiraz Grenache Stellenbosch 92** This La Motte blend of Shiraz and Grenache, and a small amount of Mourvedre, is rich and flavorful offering dark earthy-like black cherry and plum aromas and flavors. It is rich and dense on the palate with outstanding flavor of dark berry fruit. It also has a soft texture and round tannins that make it very approachable. **La Motte 2008 Shiraz Viognier Pierneef Western Cape 92** Made since 2003, this wine is crafted by co-fermenting 11% Viognier kept in the fridge with 89% Shiraz (more skins

than fruit). The result is a rich, savory feminine wine with perfumed fruit and white pepper, a soft elegant texture and a long, long finish. The grapes are sourced from Elim, Walker Bay and Franschoek.

**La Vierge 2010 Noir Pinot Noir Hemel-en-Aarde Valley 90** This lovely fruit forward Pinot Noir offers red raspberry and cherry fruit on the nose with light earth notes. On the palate it shows pure cherry fruit, roses and raspberry indicative of whole bunch fermentation, long maceraton, and aging in Burgundian oak, 30% new. The wine is light and fruity with firm tannins and outstanding purity and balance on the finish. No known importer in the U.S.

**Lammershoek** Paul and Anna Kretzel own this vineyard and winery, which they purchased in 1995. The property is situated on the slopes of the Paardeberg in Swartland, an area gaining recognition for excellent winemaking in South Africa. The soils here are deep decomposed sandstone, granite and clay, and the temperature has a large diurnal variation. Lammershoek practices natural and minimalist winemaking. Craig Hawkins is in charge of winemaking and does an outstanding job with Chenin Blanc, based on our tastings. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co. Atlanta, GA

**Lammershoek 2010 Chenin Blanc Swartland ($23) 90+** The Lammershoek Chenin Blanc is a fine wine of unusual complexity and refinement at this price. It offers a dry palate of significant weight and purity showing a fruit cocktail of stone fruit, guava, and lees with impressive persistence of fruit and minerals on the finish. Made from the small, concentrated berries of 40-50 year old, organically dry-farmed bush vines. As with the 2008 that we tasted earlier, the wine is quite Loire-like. **Lammershoek 2010 Roulette Blanc Swartland ($33) 89+** This intriguing blend of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Viognier and Clairette Blanc displays floral and herbal aromas with a cured lemon note. The palate shows delicate flavors with mineral notes. We preferred the richness of the 2009 vintage that we tasted previously. **Lammershoek 2010 Syrah 88** This 100% Syrah offers highly aromatic and fruity red plum aromas that are mirrored on the palate with high acidity. Made with 40-45%whole clusters in big concrete tanks and open wood fermenters and then aged in small barrels and concrete tanks, it has good dark fruit freshness and flavor with round tannins and a long finish.

**Land of Hope 2010 Chenin Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch (Helderberg) 89** This is a delicious, ripe and richly styled Chenin Blanc with a creamy palate and aromas of ripe tropical fruit with peach and white pepper also appearing on the finish. Made from old vine, free run juice fermented on the lees in barrels (20% new) for 11 months. The oak is beautifully integrated. ***Importer:*** Barclay's Wine, Elgin ID.

**Le Bonheur Wine Estate** This 70-hectare estate is situated on the slopes of Klaputs Hill in Stellenbosch. The homestead originally served as a resting place for travelers between Cape Town and Paarl. The cellarmaster/winemaker/viticulturalist is Sakie Kotze. The red wines at this estate are noteworthy. ***Importer:*** Maisons, Marques & Domaines, Oakland, CA

**Le Bonheur 2009 Tricone Reserve Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) 91** The Tricone Reserve is a youthful blend of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Syrah and 30% Cabernet Franc. It displays black fruit with a distinctly herbal character on the nose and has a velvet texture and excellent balance and complexity on the palate with notes of Asian spices. A delicious wine that had only been recently bottled when we tasted it. **Le Bonheur 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) ($22) 89+** The Bonheur Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits cassis with notes of black currant and cedar. It is soft and round on the palate with ripe fruit and a touch of chocolate. It is nicely concentrated and shows good balance and finesse on the finish. **Le Bonheur 2007 Prima Estate Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) ($16) 88+** The Prima Estate is a blend of 68% Merlot and 32% Cabernet Sauvignon. Medium dark ruby in color, it offers aromas of red and black fruit, cedar and spice. It has a softly textured palate, good balance, firm tannins and a long finish.

**Le Riche Wines** This winery located in the Jonkershoek Valley in Stellenbosch was founded by Etienne le Riche in 1996. Having served as winemaker at Rustenberg Estate for 20 years, Etienne loves and respects Cabernet Sauvignon and has been devoted to producing wines that are true expressions of the grape in the Stellenbosch region. His wines are sourced from various vineyards and are consistently elegant and refined. We had the good fortune to taste three of his recent releases with Etienne and his son Christo during our visit. The three wines reviewed here are all first rate. No known importer in the U.S.

**Le Riche Wines 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 90+** The 2009 Le Riche Cabernet Sauvignon is a young elegant wine that offers aromas of sweet blackberry, black pepper and hints of cherry on a slightly closed nose. Aged for 18 months in oak, it has lovely fruit and minerals on the plate with soft round tannins. **Le Riche Wines 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch 92** The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon is a barrel selection of the top vineyards in an excellent vintage. Aged for 24 months in 70% new oak, it is elegant and flavorful showing black and red cherry fruit, minerals, spice, cedar and bitter chocolate on the palate, excellent balance and acidity, and a long refined finish. **Le Riche Wines 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch 93** The 2007 Le Riche Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve is one of the finest Cabernet Sauvignons of another excellent vintage. It is refined and elegant exhibiting pure red and blackberry fruit aromas and intense flavors with light toast. Aged for 18 months in French oak

barriques, it has a soft round mouth feel, excellent balance with good acidity and a long finish.

**Lemberg** This small wine estate is situated in the heart of the Tulbagh Valley in Swartland. Established in 1978 by winemaker Janey Muller, it produces small quantities of Pinot Noir, Pinotage, Viognier and other varietals. David and Nadia Sadie are currently making the wines at Lemberg Wine Estate. The wines reviewed here are a small sample of their portfolio. No known importer in the U.S.

**Lemberg 2010 Pinotage Swartland 88** The Lemberg Pinotage is a fruit forward easy drinking wine offering fresh red berry fruit with generous oak and vanilla flavors. It is a very approachable and easy drinking wine. **Lemberg 2011 Viognier Tulbagh 89** This Viognier offers aromas of fresh pear and white peach. It has an up front fruitiness that is fresh and effusive. It's barrel fermented sur lie in old 500 liter barrels and was bottled only a few weeks when we tasted it.

**Lomond** This Distell farm is one of a handful of pioneer wine farms in the Cape Agulhas District, one of the coolest parts of the Cape winelands. Located 8 km from the ocean, its vineyards are exposed to the cool breezes from the ocean that allow the grapes to ripen slowly. The area offers a diversity of wine growing conditions and unique fynbos, South Africa's indigenous vegetation. The wines are tasty and offer good value. No known importer in the U.S.

**Lomond 2010 Sugarbush Savuignon Blanc Cape Agulhas 91** Beautifully balanced and intricately flavored, this is an outstanding Sauvignon Blanc. There's lovely density of grapefruit citrus on the palate with chalky minerals and a very long finish. Taut and focused. **Lomond 2010 Snowbush Cape Agulhas 89** This is an attractive blend of 52% Sauvignon Blanc, 27% Semillon, 20% Novellle, and 1% Viognier. The wine offers flavors of green apples with a touch of cedar. It has excellent mouth feel and a long dry crisp finish. **Lomond 2009 Pincushion Sauvignon Blanc Cape Agulhas 88+** This 2009 Pincushion Sauvignon Blanc is young and restrained with delicate aromas and flavors. While fresh and crisp, it appears less concentrated and more straightforward than the 2007 vintage which was also tasted. **Lomond 2007 Pincushion Sauvignon Blanc Cape Agulhas 90** Ripe and fragrant, the 2007 Pincushion offers aromas of green citrus, melon and tropical fruit. It is dry and crisp with round concentrated flavors and shows good acidity and a crisp lingering finish.

# M-R

**Meerlust** This estate is among South Africa's oldest and is an architectural jewel. The pride of the Myburgh family since 1756, today it consists of 110 hectares of vineyards and produces Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Pinot Noir. Its flagship wine is Rubicon, a rich and powerful blend with great aging potential that was first launched in 1980. ***Importer:*** Maisons Marques & Domaines, Oakland, CA

**Meerlust 2007 Rubicon Stellenbosch ($36) 91+** The 2007 Rubicon is a blend of 74% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot and 11% Cabernet Franc. It offers aromas of black and red fruit with notes of lead pencil and roasted meat. Spending 20 months in French oak (70% new), it boasts layered and spicy dark fruit flavors on the palate, cedar, round, slightly dry tannins and a long finish. A wine of power and elegance.

**Miles Mossop Wines** These wines are crafted by Miles Mossop, the young, talented winemaker at Tokara Winery. Miles' winemaking philosophy is to "source grapes from exceptional vineyards, pick them at the correct time and help guide them through the natural process of winemaking." The three wines reviewed here are beautifully made and consistent with his philosophy. The wines are named after his three children. Miles insists that future wines will be named after other relatives. No more children! ***Importer:*** Knauth & Visser, Branford, CT

**Miles Mossop Wines 2007 Kika Stellenbosch ($29) 92** Kika is creamy, rich and packed with ripe stone fruit with bright botrytis notes. Excellent acidity lifts the finish, leaving the sensation of only moderate sweetness. The wine is 100% Chenin Blanc from a vineyard that is always affected by botrytis. Fermented in one year old 400L barrels for about 7 months with Sauvignon Blanc lees added when racking to give additional freshness. RS 158 g/l **Miles Mossop 2009 Saskia Stellenbosch ($29) 91+** The Saskia, made from 33 year old dry farmed Chenin Blanc in Stellenbosch and Viognier from the Swartland, is a fruit forward, ripe wine with a perfumed nose of orange blossom and peach. It has a lush palate, rich in fruit, honey blossom and orange peel, and finishes with a rich lanolin top note. A blend of 71% Chenin Blanc and 29% Viognier harvested in three pickings and fermented with natural yeast in 400L barrels (mostly old wood). The wine includes some botrytis and raisined fruit for complexity. **Miles Mossop Wines 2007 Max Stellenbosch ($29) 91** The Max is a blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Petit Verdot and 19% Merlot sourced from different low-yielding dry-farmed vineyards in Stellenbosch. Dark ruby purple in color, the wine offers black fruit with violet notes on the nose. Aged for 22 months in oak (40% new) it provides lush ripe fruit with black olive, dark chocolate, and smoke. The wine is nicely balanced on the palate with lingering flavors on a light finish.

**Mischa Wine Estate** Kelpie and Yvonne Barns established this family estate in 1947. The estate, which is named after Yvonne's former dance partner at the Ballet Russe in Paris, is located outside of the town of Wellington. Today, Mischa is managed by the third Barns generation, and Andrew Barns serves as winemaker. ***Importer:*** Southern Starz Huntington Beach, California

**Mischa Estate Eventide 2008 Shiraz Wellington ($17) 87+** This is a pleasant wine to drink with good fruit and nice balance. But the wine is also suffused with caramel oak. If you like this style, you'll love this wine. **Mischa Estate Eventide 2009 Viognier Wellington ($17) 88** The Eventide Viognier is an easy drinking wine with a floral nose of honeysuckle and orange blossoms and a soft, creamy palate of ripe peach accented by a note of bracing acidity on the finish. It's difficult to find a Viognier this good at this low a price.

**Morgenhof** This estate is situated on the slopes of the Simonsberg mountain outside Stellenbosch. Established by the French Huguenots who arrived in the Cape in the 1680s, the estate is owned today by Anne Cointreau of the great Cognac producers of France. Jacques Cilliers serves as winemaker. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz, Inc. Boca Grande, FL

**Morgenhof 2004 Estate Stellenbosch ($37) 92** The Estate is a blend of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot and small amounts of Cabernet Franc and Malbec. It is an aromatic wine offering hints of cassis, charred oak, and bitter chocolate on the nose. On the palate it is highly refined, revealing black fruit, espresso coffee, minerals, and black pepper with good weight, round tannins and a long finish. **Morgenhof 2007 Merlot Stellenbosch ($28) 90** This Merlot has a dark ruby color and aromas of loam earth, black fruit and savory notes. It is a juicy wine, very flavorful with good concentration and balance, soft round tannins and a firm finish.

**Wines also Tasted: Morgenhof 2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch ($19) 89+; Morgenhof 2009 Mint Haven Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($25) 89**

**Morgenster Estate** This 300-year-old wine estate in Somerset West is currently owned by Italian industrialist Giulio Bertrand who purchased it in 1992. The cellar master/winemaker is Henry Kotzé, and consulting winemaker is Pierre Lurton. Morgenster produces Bordeaux blends and Italian varietals. The Morgenster Bordeaux blend is first-rate; the Italian wines remain to be tasted. The estate is also a producer of olive oil. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co. Atlanta, GA

**Morgenster 2006 Morgenster Stellenbosch ($70) 95** The 2006 Morgenster is a blend of 32% Merlot, 33% Cabernet Franc and 35% Cabernet Sauvignon. It offers raspberry, blackberry, cedar, earth and mushrooms on the nose. It boasts a densely flavored palate of lush ripe fruit with a velvet texture, excellent structure and soft round tannins. It is an impressive wine with great aging potential and today is still fresh and fruit rich.

**Wines Also Tasted: Morgenster 2005 Morgenster Stellenbosch 93**

**Mulderbosch** Founded in 1989, Mulderbosch consists of a 48 ha farm in the Bottelary ward of the Stellenbosch Hills. Twenty-six hectares are planted to vines on decomposed granite and shale soils. Mulderbosch has established its reputation as a top quality Sauvignon Blanc producer, although based on our tastings, it also produces excellent Cabernet Franc and a Bordeaux blend called Faithful Hound. Mulderbosch and its sister winery Kanu Vineyards were recently acquired by Terroir Capital LLC of Santa Barbara, California, which should bring about some changes. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Mulderbosch 2009 Chenin Blanc Small Change Western Cape ($29) 90+** The Chenin Blanc Small Change is intense and exotic with concentrated stone and tropical fruit married to richly toasted, smoky oak. High residual sugar (15 g/l) and some botrytised grapes add to the uniqueness of the wine. Made from the fruit of a single vineyard of 50+ year old bush vines. **Mulderbosch 2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch ($14) 90** The Chenin Blanc is a very good wine and a superb value. Medium yellow straw in color, it offers up very fragrant notes of guava and stone fruit with light smoke notes and a clean, well-balanced palate that shows some tropical fruit that persists through to the finish. Aged four months in new oak and sweetened with a small amount of late harvest Sauvignon Blanc Late harvest. This is a very well made wine and one of the best Chenin Blancs we've tasted in this price range. **Mulderbosch 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($21) 89** Very clean and well made, this is the perfect Sauvignon Blanc to accompany nice, sealike oysters on the half shell. The wine has just enough white pepper and fresh green beans on the nose to lend interest and a flavorful, herbaceous palate, finishing with good length. **Mulderbosch 2006 Faithful Hound Stellenbosch ($22) 91** The Faithful Hound is a rich and complex Bordeaux blend of considerable character. The nose is ripe with aromas of forest floor, tobacco and mocha-scented oak. It has a full-bodied, expansive and savory palate that is ripe and fleshy. The finish is long and redolent of sweet loam earth. Aged 18 months in 40% new French oak. This is a great wine for wild game. Great value!

**Wines Also Tasted: Mulderbosch 2011 Chenin Blanc Western Cape ($21) 89; Mulderbosch 2005 Shiraz Western Cape ($35) 89; Mulderbosch 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($21) 89; Mulderbosch 2007 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($21) 89+**

**Mullineux Family Wines** Chris and Andrea Mullineux operate this boutique winery in Swartland that produces outstanding artisanal wines. The grapes are sourced from a group of vineyards offering dry farmed old bush vines and other expressions of Swartland fruit. Chris Mullinex follows a non-interventionist approach to winemaking. Mullineux Family Wines are their premium wines. Kloof Steet is the entry level range ***Importer:*** Kysela Pere et Fils, Ltd Winchester, VA

**Mullineux 2010 White Blend Swartland ($28) 93** This is a superb, old vine (40 - 60 years), Rhone style white blend showing a perfumed nose and a superbly textured palate revealing minerals, flint, lanolin, and understated fruit. Superbly made and elegant. Blend of 80% Chenin Blanc, 10% Viognier, 10% Clairette Blanche. **Mullineux 2009 Syrah Swartland ($33) 92** The 2009 Syrah boasts a rich and meaty nose, albeit somewhat closed. It is sourced from six different vineyards and vinified separately using 20% whole clusters. Aged in 10% new oak for a year, it reveals rich black berry fruit, spice, and black olive on the palate. It is beautifully balanced with round firm tannins, good acidity and a fine finish. It is ready to drink now but will improve with age.

**Wines Also Tasted: Mullineux 2009 Kloof Street Swartland Rouge Swartland ($20) 89; Mullineux 2011 Kloof Street Chenin Blanc Swartland ($20) 88+**

**Nabygelegen** This estate dating back to the 18th century is located in the heart of the Bovlei Upper Valley just outside Wellington. It is currently owned by UK investor James McKenzie who has been rebuilding the facilities including a modern winery. The Estate consists of 17.5 ha of vineyards, the oldest blocks planted in 1940. Soil and climate conditions are favorable for winemaking but also challenging as Wellington has a hot climate. The winery sells its wines under two labels: Nabygelgen Private Cellar and Snow Mountain. ***Importer:*** The Artisan Collection, New York, NY

**Nabygelegen 2010 Lady Anna Wellington ($19) 90** Velvet soft yet fresh and crisp, the Lady Anna is a colorfully flavored wine that can pair with a wide array of foods. A blend of Chenin Blanc (77%), Sauvignon Blanc (15%), and Semillon (8%), it shows elements of each with notes of fleshy tone fruit and tangy lime zest with a slightly oily finish. Super value. **Nabygelegen 2006 Seventeen Twelve Wellington ($42) 90** This red blend of Merlot 60%, Cabernet Sauvignon 34%, and Petit Verdot 6% is fruit forward and friendly, but it also has notes of undergrowth and forest floor on the palate, finishing long and flavorful with nice firm, ripe tannins and good acidity. A very good wine. **Nabygelegen 2009 Snow Mountain Syrah Western Cape ($42) 90** This Syrah offers black cherry and red plum aromas and flavors. Aged for 22 months in oak, it is soft and round on the palate with good fruit concentration, soft tannins and a long finish. It is a delicious easy drinking wine.

**Other Wines Tasted: Nabygelegen 2009 Scaramanga ($27) 88+; Nabygelegen 2009 Chenin Blanc Wellington 89; Nabygelegen 2009 Snow Mountain Pinot Noir Western Cape 88**

**Nederburg** This estate, originally established in 1791 by German immigrant Philippus Wolvaart, has become one of South Africa's major producers. Today's winemaking team led by cellarmaster Razvan Macici produces a wide range of cuvees, including experimental varieties. The wines reviewed here are samples from our tastings of their top Ingenuity range, Manor House range 2 Centuries, and Winemaker's Reserve. The quality overall is good, and the Ingenuity wines and the Noble Late Harvest are special. ***Importer:*** Dreyfus Ashby, New York, NY

**Nederburg 2010 Ingenuity White Blend Western Cape 90+** The Ingenuity White Blend is a showy wine of extravagant, ripe fruit and rich toasted oak. Aromas of honey, almond and lightly toasted oak give way to a round, creamy palate of fruit and roasted nuts. A blend of 25% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Chardonnay, 15% Chenin Blanc, 15% Semillon, and smaller amounts of Novelle, Riesling, Gewürztraminer and Viognier. **Nederburg 2007 Ingenuity Red Blend Western Cape 91** The Ingenuity Red is a fruit forward blend of 45% Sangiovese , 45% Barbera, and 10% Nebbiolo. It exhibits cherry compote aromas and flavors of sweet red fruit and oak spice. Aged in 500L barrels, It is dry on the mid-palate with firm tannins and acidity on the finish. The fruit is sourced from Darling, Durbanville and Paarl. **Nederburg 2009 2 Centuries Sauvignon Blanc Coastal Region 89** 2 Centuries is a wooded Sauvignon Blanc that spends 14 months in used barrels. It shows citrus and herbal aromas and flavors with a nice rich mouth feel from the malo. Well-integrated oak. Made from Elim fruit. **Nederburg 2007 2 Centuries Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 89** A well-made offering, this Cabernet Sauvignon displays aromas of lead pencil and dark red fruit. Aged for 30 months in 300L French oak barrels, it show nice concentration of fruit with chocolate notes. It has nicely integrated oak, firm dry tannins and a long finish. **Nederburg 2010 Winemaster's Noble Late Harvest Western Cape 91** The yellow gold Winemaster's Noble Late Harvest shows very ripe, concentrated apricot and pear nectar with light notes of botrytis. Absolutely delicious, with enough acidity to balance the spectacularly high residual sugar. A blend of 80% Chenin Blanc and 20% Semillon and Gewürztraminer, this is an age worthy wine. RS 240 g/l.

**Wines Also Tasted: Nederburg 2011 Manor House Sauvignon Blanc Coastal Region 88; Nederburg 2009 Manor House Shiraz Coastal Region 87**

**Neethlingshof Estate** This large estate in Stellenbosch consists of 376 ha, of which a third is set aside for conservation. The current winemaker is De Wet Viljoen who took over in 2003 after two vintages at Kendall-Jackson's La Crema cellar in California. Neethlingshof boasts a range of premium red and white varietals and a special Short Story Collection, which pays tribute to the estate's philosophy and history. The delicious Caracal Bordeaux blend, Owl Post Pinotage, and Maria Late Harvest Riesling are from this collection. The estate's Premium wines are also very well made. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co. Atlanta, GA

**Neethlingshof Estate 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch 89+** The 2011 Sauvignon Blanc is floral and tropical in style with honeysuckle, guava, and kiwi aromas and flavors. It has a nice fresh, crisp attack, a nicely balanced palate, and a clean, long finish. **Neethlingshof Estate 2009 The Caracal Stellenbosch ($29) 91** This Bordeaux blend has rich and concentrated red and black fruit flavors. It has a soft texture, excellent balance, and a long fruit-rich finish. A delicious wine to accompany meat dishes. **Neethlingshof Estate 2011 The Maria Stellenbosch 92** The medium amber noble late harvest Riesling reveals a complex palate with interesting flavors of pear and dried and fresh apricot with a quite assertive botrytis note. It shows excellent acid balance. Beautiful. **Neethlingshof Estate 2010 The Owl Post Pinotage Reserve Stellenbosch 91** This youthful Pinotage Reserve is elegant and refined and shows a cool climate character. It displays red plum and light smoke and is nicely focused on the palate with pure fruit flavors, soft round tannins and a long finish. Not a complex wine but a delicious one.

**Wines Also Tasted: Neethlingshof Estate 2010 Gewurztraminer Stellenbosch 88; Neethlingshof Estate 2010 Malbec Stellenbosch ($20) 88**

**Neil Ellis Wines** Over the past several decades Neil Ellis has had the objective of producing wines expressive of their terroir and to rank among South Africa's finest producers. From all accounts, he has been highly successful in building his family enterprise. Presently his son Warren, who we met during our visit, is sharing responsibilities as winemaker and viticulturalist. A large portion of the grapes for Neil Ellis Wines are purchased from growers under long term contracts. The wines reviewed here are from the winery's Premium range and are of very good quality. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL

**Neil Ellis 2010 Groenekloof Sauvignon Blanc Darling (Groenekloof) ($18) 90** The 2010 Sauvignon Blanc from the Groenekloof part of Darling shows the flint and lees notes we also found in the similarly rated 2009 vintage. The palate is fresh and flavorful, showing grapefruit citrus and a topnote of mint, finishing with a lift of lime. Made from 20 year old bush vines located about 5 km from the sea. **Neil Ellis 2010 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($20) 90** This Chardonnay provides aromas of ripe orchard fruit and light vanilla oak. On the palate it offers ripe apples with a full mouth feel, (no malo) crisp acidity, and minerals, and a finish of moderate length. **Neil Ellis 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($20) 90** The 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of lead pencil with leafy forest floor accents. It is soft on the attack with nicely flavored black fruit and cedar, firm tannins and a slightly astringent finish.

**Other Wines Tasted: Neil Ellis 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Groenekloof 90+; Neil Ellis 2009 Pinotage Stellenbosch ($19) 89**

**Newton Johnson Wines** This winery is owned and managed by the Newton Johnson family and is based near the seaside town of Hermanus in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, 135 kilometers from Cape Town. Dave and Felicity Johnson entered the wine industry in the 70's, and Dave went on to become one of the country's first Cape Wine Masters. The first Newton Johnson wines were made in 1997 with the involvement of sons Bevan and Gordon. The winery has two environmental friendly vineyard properties totaling 158 hectares. Gordon and Nadia Newton Johnson, husband and wife, craft the wines. We are impressed with the high quality of all the wines and are especially enthusiastic about their Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. ***Importer:*** The Country Vintner, Oilville, VA

**Newton Johnson 2009 Chardonnay Overberg (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) 91** The 2009 Chardonnay Overberg comes from the Kaaimansgat vineyard, located about 80 km inland and one of the highest (700 m) vineyard sites in the Cape. It shows a sumptuous nose and ripe and expansive palate of ripe mango, toasted hazelnut, and a note of caramel. Finishes with nice tannic grip. **Newton Johnson 2010 Pinot Noir Walker Bay (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley) ($28) 91+** This Pinot Noir offers aromas of cherry, raspberry and toast. On the palate the wine is soft and round showing good concentration of dark cherry fruit flavors. It has a velvet texture, round firm tannins and a long finish. **Newton Johnson 2008 Full Stop Rock Walker Bay Hemel-en-Aarde-Valley 90+** This is an attractive blend of 94% Syrah, 3% Grenache and 3% Mourvédre. It is rich in red fruit with nicely integrated oak, excellent balance and soft round tannins. It reveals elegant spicy and savory fruit and has layers of flavor and interesting secondary notes with a long savory finish.

**Nico van der Merwe Wines** This winemaking enterprise reveals the talents of Nico van der Merwe who counts 22 vintages as winemaker at Saxenburg Winery. Since 1999 Nico has been building his own label while working at Saxenburg. The grapes for his wine are sourced from different vineyards in Stellenbosch and elsewhere. The quality of Nico van der Merwe Wines is very high and the Mas Nicolas Red is a stand out. ***Importer:*** 34 South Annapolis, MD

**Nico van der Merwe 2011 Sauvignon Blanc – Semillon Robertson 91+** This wine manages to combine a fruit rich palate with a sense of elegance and refinement. The flavors are a tantalizing blend of tropical and citrus fruit, well-structured with a firmly tannic finish. Delicious. **Nico van der Merwe Wines 2007 Mas Nicolas Stellenbosch 91+** Mas Nicolas is an elegant blend of 54% Cabernet Sauvignon and 46% Shiraz. Dark ruby in color, it offers pure black fruit and smoky aromas on the nose. Aged for 14 months in 100% French oak, it has ripe fruit flavors, a soft texture, round silky tannins, and a very long finish. A flavorful and super elegant wine. **Nico van der Merwe Wines 2007 Syrah Stellenbosch 90** Nico's Syrah offers pure ripe plum and meat notes on the nose with hints of dark chocolate, mocha and sweet charred oak. Aged for 12 months in 225L American oak, it shows good intensity of flavor with a velvet smooth texture but needs more time in the bottle to soften the tannic grip on the mid-palate and finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Nico van der Merwe Wines 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot/ Cabernet Franc Stellenbosch 88**

**Nitída Cellars Durbanville** Nitida is a small family farm located in Durbanville owned by Bernhard and Peta Veller since 1990. Winemaking is under the direction R.J. Botha. The winery has a large portfolio of wines, although half of their production is Sauvignon Blanc. During our visit we had the opportunity to taste through their extensive portfolio and were most impressed with the Coronata white blend and the Shiraz. About 60% of the production is sold at the cellar door. No known US importer.

**Nitída 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Durbanville 88+** Winemaker R.J. Botha looks for tropical flavors in his Sauvignon Blanc, so he leaves the canopy open beginning in December. He also does cofermentation with different yeasts to gain complexity. The wine is fresh and crisp with tropical nuances. It is well balanced and easy drinking. **Nitída 2010 Coronata Integration Durbanville 90** This 60/40 blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon has a lime zest nose and a soft, creamy mouth feel of grapefruit, honey and lingering flavors of lime. It's fresh and crisp with good acidity and mineral notes. **Nitída 2010 Shiraz Durbanville 90** The Shiraz shows cinnamon, cracked pepper, huckleberry and chocolate on the nose and palate and offers a sweet attack of fresh dark red fruit. The spicy flavor of this wine would go well with coriander and barbecue. Perhaps, at last, a wine for Mexican food.

**Wines also Tasted: Nitída 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Durbanville 88; Nitída 2010 Calligraphy Durbanville 89+**

**Oak Valley** This estate occupies 1786 hectares of land in the Elgin Valley devoted to fruit orchards, flowers, and wine grapes (48 ha). Owner Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen's great grandfather was the first to plant apples and pears in Elgin and built the area's first winery in 1908. Modern winemaking began in 1985 focusing on cool climate varietals such as Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. The wines are made by Pieter Visser with cellar space rented at Paul Cluver Wines. The quality of the wines we tasted during our visit was very high. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Varieties, Inc. Dublin, VA

**Oak Valley 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin 90+** The 2010 Sauvignon Blanc is a tightly structured, balanced wine of delicate aromas and flavors. Citrus, dried herbs, and green beans all put in an appearance on this elegant wine. Owner Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen also showed us the excellent 2007 vintage of the same wine, which we found to be riper and better integrated, due in part to additional bottle age. **Oak Valley 2010 Chardonnay Elgin 91+** The ripe and golden Oak Valley Chardonnay has a richly flavored silky palate showing rich apricot and orange peel with a very long, flinty mineral finish. Barrel fermented for 10 months in 35% new oak, this Chardonnay has a style all its own.

**Orange River Cellars 2010 Straw Wine Northern Cape 91**
Beautiful golden amber in color, this is a creamy smooth wine with lots of ripe sultanas and stone fruit and just a hint of crème brûlée. Beautifully balanced. Best served well chilled. Air dried grapes are fermented and aged in used barriques. Orange River Cellars is South Africa's single largest wine producer, selling about 40 percent under its own label. ***Importer:*** DRG Imports, NJ

**Ormonde Private Cellar 2008 Theodore Eksteen Darling 90**
This Rhone blend shows smokey bacon reductive aromas and has a well-structured palate with good fruit concentration showing red fruit notes and a satisfying mouthfeel. The Shiraz (65%) and Grenache (35%) are fermented and aged separately in new French oak for 12 months, then blended and aged another 6 months. That's lots of oak, but the fruit can handle it. Ormonde is a grower turned winemaker and doing well at it. No known importer.

**Painted Wolf 2009 Guillermo Pinotage Swartland ($19) 90**
The Guillermo Pinotage is an easy drinking, fruit-driven wine of good depth and complexity. It has enough immediate popular appeal to succeed in a wine by the glass program while at the same time offering earth and herbal notes and the firm, ripe tannins needed to accompany food. Aged 14 months in American and French oak, this wine made from dry farmed, basket pressed fruit is a winner. Painted Wolf makes a wide range of wines, including the highly regarded Lekanyane white blend that we did not taste. ***Importer:*** Southern Starz, Huntington Beach CA

**Paul Cluver Wines** Located in the cool-climate Elgin Valley, this family-owned and operated winery has been in the Cluver family since 1896. Its vineyards are located within the 2000+ hectare UNESCO World heritage site, the Kogelberg Reserve. The wines reviewed here are part of Paul Cluver's portfolio of cool climate wines and are excellent examples of fine winemaking. The wines are all exceptional values! ***Importer:*** World Premier Wines, Mooresville NC

**Paul Cluver 2010 Chardonnay Elgin ($21) 92+** The Paul Cluver Chardonnay is an exceptionally fine wine. It's rich and toasty with fresh mango tropical fruit, minerals, and flint notes. Superbly balanced with a rich, long finish. Fermented in French oak, about half new, with about half the wine also going through malo. An exceptional value. **Paul Cluver Riesling Close Encounter Elgin ($16) 91** The best Riesling we've tasted from South Africa, the Close Encounter is a lovely wine. Very fresh and intensely fruity, it shows honeyed apple aromas and flavors with mineral notes. High natural acidity keeps this wine tasting fresh and dry despite quite high residual sugar. A great wine for spicy Asian fare. **Paul Cluver 2009 Estate Pinot Noir Elgin ($21) 91** The 2009 Estate Pinot Noir offers a medium ruby color with aromas of red cherry on the nose and intense red cherry on the palate with minerals and good acidity. The wine is nicely focused with light earth notes and moderate complexity. Made from 20 year old vines, 80% the 113 clone.

**Plaisir de Merle** This Distell owned winery has had considerable success with its line of fairly priced single varietal wines. Niel Bester has been the winemaker since the beginning in 1993, and Château Margaux director Paul Pontallier previously served as consultant. ***Importer:*** Dreyfus Ashby & Co.

**Plaisir de Merle 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Paarl ($26) 88+** This dark ruby Cabernet Sauvignon is dark ruby in color with aromas of black currant and toast that are mirrored on the palate. The wine is soft on the attack with a velvet texture, ripe round tannins and a long finish. **Plaisir de Merle 2008 Shiraz Paarl ($30) 88+** This is an easy drinking wine with a perfumed nose of cherry licorice and a medium weight, dry palate that puts the focus on pure red fruit. Done in a popular style that should be a real crowd pleaser.

**Pongrácz 2003 Desiderius 90+** This is one of South Africa's finest tasting sparkling wines. It's a blend of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir that spends an astounding 87 months on the lees. The result is a beautiful and subtle wine showing freshly baked bread, cured lemon and lightly toasted almond aromas and a delicately flavored, very fine palate. The winemaker is Elunda Basson. **Very, very good.** No known US importer

**Post House Vineyards** Hermann Gebers established Post House Vineyards in 1981 on a farm between the towns of Somerset West and Stellenbosch. He later systematically planted vines on 45 hectares of the foothills of the Helderberg Mountains with the aim of producing high quality wine from lean soils. He also chose to follow minimalist winemaking techniques. As our tastings show, he has had considerable success in achieving his goals, and today winemaker Nick Gebers continues to produce excellent wines. ***Importer:*** Terry Seitz Inc, Boca Grande, FL

**Post House 2009 Penny Black Stellenbosch (Helderberg) ($29) 93** This blend of Shiraz, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and other varieties is dark ruby to the core and offers ripe blackberry fruit and plum aromas. It has an elegant palate of lush concentrated fruit flavors, soft round tannins and a long richly flavored finish. **Post House 2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($25) 90** Earthy, charred oak, and blackberry are featured on the nose of this Shiraz. The palate is firmly tannic, but the wine has a nicely polished quality with both savory and fruit flavors. **Post House 2009 Missing Virgin Stellenbosch (Helderberg) ($29) 90** The Missing Virgin is a blend of Pinotage (70%) and Petit Verdot (30%). The wine has good tannic grip and needs more time in bottle, but it is deliciously flavored with notes of violets, graphite, and bitter chocolate. An internationally styled wine.

**Raats Family Wines** Raats specializes in crafting Loire varieties Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc. Bruwer Raats is currently owner and winemaker of the company, which was established with his brother and father in 2000. The winery sources grapes from old low-yielding vines in vineyards in Stellenbosch, Paarl, Durbanville and the Paardeberg area. The wines are all exceptionally well-made. The Raats Cabernet Franc is at the very top among South African producers. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics New York, NY

**Raats 2009 Chenin Blanc Family Stellenbosch ($25) 90+** Subtle oaking and dry-farmed, low yielding vines combine to yield a superbly balanced and integrated wine. Smoke, peach nectar, hazelnut and honeycomb on the nose and creamy palate combine to yield a rich, lush, and delicious wine. **Raats 2008 Cabernet Franc Stellenbosch ($30) 91+** Lovely flavors of blackberry fruit, herbs and earth with lightly charred oak are revealed on the nose These aromas are mirrored on the palate with mouth filling flavors of black fruit, wet earth and autumn leaves . The wine has ripe tannins and a long fruit rich finish.

**Raka 2008 Biography Shiraz Overburg (Klein Rivier) 90+** The Raka Biography Shiraz is pure and delicious. Spicy cedar and roasted meat show on the nose, followed by an attack of delicious red plum and vanilla, finishing with very approachable tannins. A nice purity of red fruit runs through it. Very, very good. This Dryer-family winery produces a wide range of excellent wines, but this was the only one we tasted.

**Remhoogte** This boutique winery located on Simonsberg mountain was a collaborative project with the world-renowned viticulturalist Michel Rolland. It owns 33 hectares of vines on mountain slopes in heavy clay soils. The vines are densely planted at 2,800 vines/ha. Excellent Merlot, Pinotage, and Shiraz are produced by winamaker Chris Boustred. ***Importer:*** Domaine Select, New York, NY

**Remhoogte 2006 Estate Wine Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) 91+** Peppery red plum aromas give way to a rich, red fruit and sweet oak palate that is soft and round. We love the elegance and mouth feel of this wine. A blend of Merlot (40%), Cabernet Sauvignon (23%), Syrah (22%), and Pinotage (15%). **Remhoogte 2009 Merlot Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) 89** The Merlot is a spicy, ripe wine offering aromas of cigar box, earth, and red plum fruit. Minerals and blue fruit also make an appearance on the smooth palate. Aged 24 months in French oak. **Remhoogte 2007 Merlot Reserve Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) 91** A significant step up from the regular Merlot, the Reserve offers excellent complexity and depth of dark fruit, earth and chocolate on a velvet smooth palate. The nose is similarly spicy with dark red fruit and chocolate aromas. Matured 22 months in 80% new French oak.

**Wines Also Tasted: Remhoogte 2009 Valentine Shiraz Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) 89**

**Reyneke** The Reyneke label was created in 1998 when Johan Reyneke Jr. took over the farming activities from his mother and produced the first wines on the family farm. The 40 ha farm is adjacent to the De Toren vineyards in the Bottelary Hills. Since he began farming, Johan has moved from conventional to organic farming and today is the only winery in South Africa that produces certified biodynamic wines with the assistance of winemaker Rudiger Gretschel. Johan's wines are works of art by a true artisan/craftsman. They are high quality and unique expressions of their terroir. ***Importer:*** The Indigo Wine Group Venice, FL

**Reyneke 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($28) 91** The Sauvignon Blanc has a serious aromatic profile of chalky minerals, citrus and high toned tropical fruit. A lovely viscous mouth feel graces the palate, finishing cleanly with mineral persistence. Made from biodynamic grapes fermented in used barrels, which lend texture but no overt oak flavor. **Reyneke 2010 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch ($35) 91** With his biodynamic vineyards and Numblot egg, Reyneke follows a somewhat different drummer. This shows in his Chenin Blanc. This wine is not about over the top oak and sweet, jam-like fruit. Rather, it's understated, refined, and balanced. Pineapple and tropical fruit put in their appearance, but it's purity and delineation that define the wine. **Reyneke 2010 Capstone (Cornerstone) Stellenbosch ($28) 90+** Capstone (in the US, Cornerstone in South Africa) is an attractive blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. If offers black currant fruit on the nose with a soft texture on the palate. Still young, it reveals big tannins and needs time to open in the glass. It has excellent balance and structure and will improve with time in the bottle. **Reyneke 2008 Reserve Red Stellenbosch ($75) 94** The Reserve Red is a big elegant, terroir driven wine revealing concentrated fruit, minerals, and beautifully integrated oak on a big, round palate that ends with firm tannins, sweet spice and rich oak on a very, very long finish. A blend of 90% Syrah and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, it is richer and more refined than the regular Syrah bottling. An amazing wine that's well worth the price. **Reyneke 2010 Reserve White Stellenbosch ($50) 92+** The Reyneke Reserve White is one of South Africa's most complex, elegant, and interesting Sauvignon Blancs. The nose shows flint, honeysuckle and tangerine notes, while the palate is clean with light citrus and minerals and good tannic grip. Stylistically, the wine is a hybrid of New and Old World Sauvignon. Grapes from different vineyard sites are fermented separately, with different oak (but all fine-grained 300 liter barrels) and battonage regimes.

**Wines Also Tasted: Reyneke 2010 Syrah Stellenbosch 90**

**Rietvallei Wine Estate** This family-owned estate in Robertson was acquired by Alwyn Burger in 1864. Until 1970 the only wine produced on the estate was Red Muscadel. In 1981 the estate produced its first Chardonnay after purchasing a new wine cellar with cold fermentation facilities. The estate today consists of 370 hectares, of which 180 are planted, predominantly with white varieties. The current winemaker is Kobus Burger. The wines reviewed here are from their Special Select and Classic Estate Range. The quality of the Select Range wines is excellent and the Classic Range wines aren't far behind. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Varieties, Inc Paris, KY

**Rietvallei Wine Estate 2011 Classic Estate Range Natural Chardonnay Robertson 88+** This is a nicely crafted unwooded Chardonnay (with a dash of Viognier) kept on the lees for 4 months. It offers ripe orchard fruit aromas and a very soft palate with juicy fruit flavors. It is nicely balanced with good acidity and is a pleasure to drink. **Rietvallei Wine Estate 2010 Special Select Range Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape (Lutzville) 89** Made from grapes sourced from Lutzville on the cool West Coast, this Sauvignon Blanc is quite herbaceous, showing green asparagus on the nose. While quite straightforward in terms of aroma and flavor, the wine has a delicious, soft, almost creamy mouth feel. **Rietvallei Wine Estate 2008 Special Select Range Estéanna Robertson 91** Medium dark ruby in color, this rich tasting Bordeaux blend consists of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Cabernet Franc, and 6% Petit Verdot. Aged in 100% new French oak for 24 months, it boasts pure dark fruit and red plum flavors with notes of cedar. It is well balanced and quite elegant with layers of flavor and a long finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Rietvallei Wine Estate 2009 Classic Estate Range Cabernet Sauvignon Robertson 88+; Rietvallei Wine Esate 2008 Muscadel 1908 Robertson 91; Rietvallei Wine Estate 2010 Red Muscadel Robertson 88**

**Rijk's Private Cellar/Rijk's Estate** Rijk's Private Cellar is a boutique winery that began operations in May 1996 with the first wine released in 2000. It is a family winery owned by Neville Dorrington who named his winery after Rijk Tulbagh, governor of the Cape in the 18th century. Pierre Wahl has been in-charge of wine-making since 2002, and he crafts some of the finest wines in South Africa. His wines are generally elegant and complex with good concentration of flavor. Rijk's Estate specializes in red wine production from Tulbagh. ***Importer:*** The Artisan Collection New York, NY

**Rijk's 2009 Chenin Blanc Touch of Oak Coastal Region (Tulbagh) ($40) 90** With touches of orange blossom and melon on the nose and reticent stone fruit flavors on the palate, this wine falls in the understated and balanced category of Chenin Blanc wines. Despite the name, there's nothing over the top about this wine. It's focused wtih bright acidity, finishing clean with integrated flavors. **Rijk's 2007 Pinotage Reserve Coastal Region ($72) 92** This is a savory Pinotage offering aromas of dark red fruit, forest floor and cacao on the nose. It is lush and full in the mouth revealing a complex flavor profile of blackberries, earth, and herbs. A serious well made wine with meaty and roasted flavors, round tannins, and a long finish. **Rijk's 2007 Estate Syrah Tulbagh ($82) 91** The Estate Syrah displays a dark ruby red color with a black cherry and herbal fynbos nose. Co-fermented with Viognier and aged for 20 months in 40% new French oak 40L barrels, it reveals a silky mouth feel with purity of flavors, round tannins and persistence on the finish. **Rijk's 2007 Estate The Master Tulbagh ($80) 90+** The Master is a blend of 50% Syrah, 20% Mourvedre, 13% Pinotage, 8% Carignan, 5% Tinta Amarela, and 4% Viognier. It is matured separately for 20 months in 40% new 300L French oak barrels and then blended. It is ripe and delicious showing blackberry fruit and vanilla on the nose that is mirrored on the palate. The fruit is nicely concentrated on the palate with excellent balance, round tannins and a long finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Rijk's 2008 Private Cellar Chenin Blanc Barrel Fermented Tulbagh ($40) 89+; Rijk's 2005 Private Cellar Shiraz Coastal Region (Tulbagh) ($50) 92; Rijk's 2009 Touch of Oak Shiraz Coastal Region ($40) 89; Rijk's Reserve Chenin Blanc Barrel Fermented Tulbagh ($60) 91; Rijk's 2007 Private Cellar Pinotage Tulbagh 90**

**Robertson Winery** This winery located in Robertson Valley was formed in 1941 by a group of grape grower families. From humble beginnings the winery became the third largest in South Africa under winemaker Pon van Zyl, who retired in the 1984. Since then, Bowen Botha has helped Robertson and its forty member families to become a global wine brand. ***Importer:*** Indigo Wine Group Venice, FL

**Robertson Winery 2010 Retreat Sauvignon Blanc Robertson ($17) 89** The Retreat Sauvignon Blanc is a very easy drinking wine. It shows ripe passion and citrus fruit aromas and flavors, has moderate acidity, and finishes with good length and a flinty mineral note. Excellent value. **Robertson Winery 2007 No 1 Constitution Road Shiraz Robertson ($30) 89** This Shiraz exhibits a dark ruby color and aromas of dark cherry with notes of chocolate and loam. It is sweet on the attack showing bright cherry and dark berry fruit with oak on the palate. Aged in French and American oak for 30 months, it shows ripe tannins and a medium long finish. We found the 2006 vintage of this wine quite similar.

**Ross Gower 2008 Pinot Noir Brut Elgin 89** Light rose tinted copper in color, this is a straightforward bubbly rosé with aromas of light cherry and a round palate of yeast and light red fruit notes finishing bright and dry. Spends 18 months on the lees.

**Rudera Wines** This estate is a partnership between the husband and wife team of Johan and Elbie van Vuuren and Riana Hall, who co-founded Rudera in 1999. Adele Swart, a graduate of Elsenburg, is the talented winemaker; she has also worked in Santa Barbara, CA. The Chenin Blanc wines are especially noteworthy. ***Importer:*** DRG Imports, NJ

**Rudera 2009 Chenin Blanc Robusto Stellenbosch 91** The Chenin Blanc Robusto is extroverted in both aroma and taste, offering up honeyed, charred oak and ripe mango and peach fruit on a pleasantly fat and creamy palate. Grapes are sourced from a 35 year old single vineyard of bush vines, and the wine is aged 11 months in oak, 50% new. **Rudera 2009 Chenin Blanc de Tradisie Stellenbosch 88** This Chenin Blanc reveals fresh citrus, stonefruit and flint on the nose with an overlay of cedar. On the palate, the cedar dominates the fruit and the palate is slightly dry. **Rudera 2002 Chenin Blanc Robusto Stellenbosch 92+** Does South African Chenin Blanc age well? Gold straw in color, this ten year old wine maintains a fresh yellow peach, acacia, and light vanilla nose. It offers a full, creamy palate with excellent acidity and a ripe, layered stone fruit palate reminiscent of an aged Austrian Grüner Veltliner with integrated notes of light toasted oak, finishing long and dry with chalky minerality and good flavor intensity.

**Rudi Schultz 2008 Syrah Stellenbosch ($30) 89** Rudi, the winemaker at Thelema, also makes this wine on his own. The 2008 Syrah has a lovely aromatic nose showing dark cherry-plum, vanilla, and earth. It's sweet and lush on the attack with a soft palate, finishing with sweet vanilla oak notes. Importer: Cape Classics, NY, NY

**Rust en Vrede** Owned by Jannie Engelbrecht since 1977 (today, run by his son Jean), the old estate has been revived and become one of South Africa's finest red wine producers. The wines are New World in style, very ripe with pure fruit flavors, good oak integration and round tannins. While all the wines are well done at this estate, the Rust en Vrede Estate blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz is especially noteworthy. The wines are very fairly priced. The Rust en Vrede Restaurant is also spectacular. ***Importer:*** Terlato Wines, Lake Bluff, IL

**Rust en Vrede 2007 1694 Classification Stellenbosch ($110) 92** The 1694 Classification is massively full and lush with palate staining intensity. A blend of 58% Syrah and 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, it reveals black and red fruit, pencil shavings, chocolate, coconut, and a lovely mineral purity on the finish. Pairs superbly with the loin of lamb served at the super stylish Rust en Vrede Restaurant. **Rust en Vrede 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($25) 91** Rich and mouthfilling, this wine is made of six different clones, each vinified separately. Black raspberry, chocolate, tobacco and fynbos all put in an appearance in this focused but ripe wine. **Rust en Vrede 2007 Estate Stellenbosch ($45) 93** This is a big shouldered, lush wine showing sweet black fruit, earth, tobacco and espresso coffee. It has rich, velvet like palate of beautiful purity and elegance. Round tannins show on a long finish. A mix of Cabernet Sauvignon (61%), Shiraz (30%), and Merlot (9%).

**Wines Also Tasted: Rust en Vrede 2011 Roussanne Stellenbosch 90; Rust en Vrede 2008 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($27) 89+; Rust en Vrede 2009 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($27) 90+; Rust en Vrede 2008 Estate Stellenbosch ($45) 91+**

**Rustenberg** This family estate managed by Simon Barlow has a well-deserved reputation for producing high quality wines. Located in Stellenbosch, its vineyards are situated on the slopes of Simonsberg and the Helderberg. The vineyard management and winemaking are meticulous, and the wines reveal considerable intensity of flavor, balance and length. Rustenberg produces wines in two ranges: Site Specific and Regional. The magnificent Peter Barlow Cabernet, the Syrah and the Five Soldiers Chardonnay are all in the Site Specific range. The John X Merriman is a terrific wine from the Regional range as are several others. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics New York, NY

**Rustenberg 2009 Five Soldiers Chardonnay Stellenbosch (Simonsberg) ($38) 91** The single vineyard Five Soldiers Chardonnay is lush yet refined with light honey and orchard fruit flavors that are beautifully integrated with the oak, despite the relatively assertive oaking regime--15 months in 70% new oak. Finishes long with fine tannins. **Rustenberg 2007 Peter Barlow Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($50) 93** The Peter Barlow100% Cabernet Sauvignon boasts aromas of blackberry cedar, and charred oak on the nose. Aged for 22 months in 100% French oak, it is soft and lush on the attack showing a rich mouth feel, ripe black fruit, minerals and very fine grained tannins and a persistent finish. The Peter Barlow is clearly one of the top Cabernets produced in South Africa. **Rustenberg 2009 John X Merriman Stellenbosch ($20) 92** The John X Merriman is a blend of 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties. Dark ruby in color, it is a fresh fruit forward wine that fills the mouth but is also elegant on the palate. It is finely textured with good balance, round gripping tannins and a long finish. Offered at an unbelievably low price. We like the 2009 vintage even more than the excellent 2007 and the very good 2008. **Rustenberg 2009 Syrah Stellenbosch 92** The 2009 Syrah displays Inky black fruit with violets, minerals and a meaty notes on the nose. These are followed by a lush mouth feel and a palate of nicely integrated pure blackberry fruit ad sweet oak. The wine is beautifully textured with considerable depth and a very long finish.

**Wines also Tasted: Rustenberg 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape ($18) 88+; Rustenberg 2011 Roussanne Stellenbosch 91; Rustenberg 2010 Unwooded Chardonnay Coastal Region 88+; Rustenberg 2010 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($20) 89; Rustenberg 2010 Schoongezicht Stellenbosch 89; Rustenberg 2009 Merlot Stellenbosch 89; Rustenberg 2009 RM Nicholson ($20) Stellenbosch 88+; Rustenberg 2007 John X Merriman Stellenbosch ($20) 91+; Rustenberg 2010 Straw Wine Coastal Region 91**

## S-Z

**Sadie Family Wines** Eben Sadie is the winemaker behind the wines of this operation in the Swartland. He is also the recognized leader of a group of young winemakers in the Swartland who are committed to producing authentic, handcrafted wines that reflect their terroir. Eben, himself, produces two wines that are benchmarks of winemaking in South Africa. His white cuvée called Palladius is a blend of seven different grapes from dry-farmed vineyards situated on nearby Paardeberg Mountain. Eben's red cuvee is called Columella and is a fresh and flavorful wine sourced from seven leased vineyard parcels from across the Swartland. The wine consists mainly of Syrah with small amounts of Mourvèdre. Old Vine Chenin Blanc and Grenache are also crafted at Sadie Family Wines and are first-class. ***Importer:*** A&B Imports Seattle, WA

**Sadie Family Wines 2010 Palladius Swartland ($70) 93** The Palladius offers a symphony of flavors on a seamless and refined palate. Made from 30-50 year old vines with basket pressing, and 18 months on the full lees all contribute to an exceptional and exceptionally well-balanced wine. Waxy yellow fruit and honeycomb and tropical and stone fruit all meld together. The wine is a blend of 10 different varieties, including Chenin Blanc, Grenache Blanc, Viogner, Roussane, and Marsanne. Almost as good as the spectacular 2008 Palladius, Platter's wine of the year.

**Sadie Family Wines 2009 Columella Swartland ($85) 93** The 2009 Columella is a delicious blend of 80% Syrah and 20% Mourvedre. Aged for 15 months in new French oak, it is a ripe and beautifully balanced wine with pure dark fruit flavors, elegance and refinement. It has perfect structure for long aging, round tannins and a long satisfying finish. **Sadie Family Wines 2010 Skurfberg Old Vine Chenin Blanc Swartland 91** The medium dark gold Skurfberg Old Vine Chenin Blanc is quite unlike any other South African Chenin Blanc. Made from a 600 meter high single vineyard of 65-85 year old vines in the Olifants River area, it is Loire like in its expression of terroir. Eschewing flashiness, the palate is deep and delineated and very dry with vibrant acidity and crisp tannins. Flavors tend to quince and ripe stone fruit.

**Other Wines Tasted: Sadie Family Wines 2008 Palladius Swartland 94; Sadie Family Wines 2008 Columella Swartland ($85) 91**

**Saronsberg** This small winery is located in the Tulbagh Valley. It was established in 2002 by owner Nick van Huysteen and cellarmaster Dewaldt Heyns. Saronsberg specializes in Rhone varietals and produces exceptionally good Shiraz and Viognier. ***Importer:*** New England Wine and Spirits, West Haven CT

**Saronsberg 2009 Dewaldt Heyns Chenin Blanc Swartland 90+** This wine is ripe and fruit forward with impressive purity and balance. It reveals peach and nectarine, lemon peel, and honeyed, spicy oak harmoniously assembled and accented by a crisp, bright finish. Made from 38 year old bush vines. **Saronsberg 2008 Full Circle Tulbagh 91** The Full Circle is a blend of 83% Shiraz with small amounts of Grenache, Mourvédre and Viognier. It offers attractive aromas of red fruit and pungent spicy herbs. On the palate it reveals a soft mouth feel with beautiful pure fruit and a good deal of finesse. It has firm tannins and a sweet-fruited finish. The wine was sourced from very low-yielding vineyards (4 tons/ha). **Saronsberg 2008 Shiraz Tulbagh 91+** The 2008 Shiraz is a delicious fruit forward wine displaying savory black and red fruit aromas. It has a soft attack with pure ripe fruit flavors and notes of coffee and chocolate. It is a very easy drinking approachable wine with ripe round tannins and a long finish. **Saronsberg 2010 Viognier Tulbagh 91+** This is one of the finest Viogniers produced in South Africa. It offers perfumed stone fruit aromas with notes of jasmine. It is flavorful on the palate with bright acidity, good weight and nice complex finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Saronsberg 2008 Shiraz Viognier Tulbagh 90**

**Saxenburg** A family farm since 1693, German immigrant Joachim Sax planted the first vines here in 1701. Located in Stellenbosch, Saxenburg has 90 hectares of vineyards on fertile, decomposed granite and red gravel soils. It also enjoys cool maritime ripening conditions. Winemaking has been under the direction of veteran cellarmaster Nico van der Merwe since the founding of the winery in 1990. The winery has two main ranges, the Private Collection and Limited Release. The Select Shiraz is first-rate; the wines in the Private Collection vary in quality. ***Importer:*** MJM Global Brands Jericho, NY

**Saxenburg 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Private Collection Stellenbosch ($16) 90** The Saxenburg Sauvignon Blanc reveals lime citrus and freshly cut grass on the nose. It offers generous flavors of fresh citrus and herbs on a nicely delineated palate, showing minerals and high natural acidity (6.7 g/l) on the finish. Made from low-yielding (5 tons/ha) vines and given extended lees contact. **Saxenburg 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Private Collection Stellenbosch ($20) 91** The Private Collection Cabernet Sauvignon has an opaque ruby robe and aromas of black currant fruit, spice, and cedar. On the palate it displays concentrated black fruit flavors with more cedar, and a warm alcoholic finish. The wine is still young and needs time to settle down. **Saxenburg 2006 Shiraz Select Stellenbosch 93** The Shiraz Select is Saxenburg's top red wine made only in the best years. It is dark ruby in color and highly aromatic with loads of blackberry fruit, black pepper and sweet cedar. Aged in French and American oak for 18-24 months, it shows lovely dark fruit flavors, excellent balance, and overall refinement on the finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Saxenburg 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Private Collection Stellenbosch 89; Saxenburg 2006 Shiraz Private Collection Stellenbosch ($20) 90; Saxenburg 2008 Merlot Private Collection Stellenbosch ($20) 88; Saxenburg 2008 Private Collection Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($24) 89; Saxenberg 2009 Private Collection Pinotage ($20) 88**

**Scali** This small property is located in the Paardeberg Mountains near Paarl. The fifth generation of the De Waal family, Willie and Tania de Waal, are the current owners. While most of their grapes are sold to other producers, Willie and Tania make small quantities of excellent Pinotage and Syrah. ***Importer:*** Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA

**Scali 2006 Pinotage Paarl (Voor-Paardeberg) ($35) 92** This is a lovely fruit forward wine offering aromas and flavors of ripe red plum, black cherry, toasted oak and spice. It has a soft texture and is elegant on the palate with round tannins and a long finish. A beautifully balanced wine, showing freshness and good acidity. **Scali 2006 Syrah Paarl (Voor-Paardeberg) ($40+) 90** The Syrah offers aromas of dark fruit with herbs, violets and forest floor on the

nose. On the palate it is soft and lush with black cherry notes and chocolate, round tannins and a good firm finish.

**Sijnn** This is talented winemaker David Trafford's special project based in the wine ward of Malgas. It involves producing wines from Rhone and warm-weather lesser-known Portuguese varieties such as Touriga Nacional and Trincadeira. The white blend is stunning, while the red is interesting but not in the same league as De Trafford's Syrah offerings. ***Importer:*** Boutique Wine Collection Philadelphia, PA

**Sijnn 2009 White Swellendam (Malgas) ($36) 91** A mix of Chenin Blanc and Viognier, this is one of the best South African white blends we've tasted. It's complex and mineral like in its bouquet and flavors and beautifully balanced with just the right amount of honeyed, toasted oak and good acidity. Marzipan, flint, honey, hazelnut, and dried stone fruit all take a bow in this delicious wine from South Africa's most exotic terroir. **Sijnn 2009 Sijnn Swellendam (Malgas) ($40) 88+** The Sijnn is a blend of Shiraz, Mourvedre, Trincadeira and Touriga Nacional, reminiscent of the Douro. It offers a fresh red fruit-forward nose and a light-bodied palate of dark plum fruit that is approachable and easy drinking with firm round tannins on the finish.

**Simonsig** The Malan family's winemaking dates back to 1688 when the first Malan arrived in South Africa. In 1953 descendant and modern wine pioneer Frans Malan planted vines in the foothills of the Simonsberg Mountain outside Stellenbosch that became the nucleus of the Simonsig Estate. From then to the present Simonsig has been producing good quality premium wines and Cap Classique. Today, Simonsig comprises 211 hectares and produces a wide variety of wines. Their Cape Blend and Pinotage Redhill are outstanding. ***Importer:*** Quintessential Wines Napa, CA

**Simonsig 2009 Chenin Blanc Chenin Avec Chêne Stellenbosch ($35) 90+** The Chenin Avec Chêne is a lush, fruit forward wine showing smoked almonds, yellow peach and notes of dried orange peel and chalky minerals. It is dry on the finish. Matured in 400L French oak for 11 months. **Simonsig 2006 Frans Malan Cape Blend Stellenbosch ($35) 91** The Frans Malan Cape Blend combines 64% Pinotage, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties. It offers a rich and fruited nose with savory dark red berries. Aged for 14 months in oak (60% American), it has a lush and velvet smooth palate and clean straightforward flavors. Delicious. **Simonsig 2008 Tiara Stellenbosch ($35) 90** The Tiara is a blend of 74% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Petit Verdot. Aged in 68% new oak for 19 months it displays pleasant aromas of black currants and cassis, moderate concentration of fruit, tobacco and earth on the palate with dry tannins on the finish. **Simonsig 2008 Pinotage Redhill Stellenbosch ($32) 91** Simonsig's Pinotage Redhill is sourced from low-yielding bush vines from two blocks of their estate vineyard. It is a beautiful wine, elegant and refined, revealing dried red berries and plum with light toast. Aged in French and American oak for 16 months, it is lush and velvet-like on the palate with good complexity and length. **Simonsig 2005 Cuvée Royale Blanc de Blancs Stellenbosch 90+** With six years on the lees, the Cuvée Royale is Simonsig's tète de cuvée. It shows lightly toasted almond, bread dough and hints of orange and lemon zest on the nose. It has a rich, creamy mousse and lemon citrus and almond flavors with a delicious, fresh finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Simonsig 2011 Sunbird Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape 88; Simonsig 2009 Kaapse Vonkel Brut Rosé Western Cape ($22) 87; Simonsig 2008 Syrah Merindol Stellenbosch ($37) 88; Simonsig 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Labyrinth Stellenbosch ($22) 89+; Simonsig 2010 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($20) 88+; Simonsig 2007 Chardonnay Aurum Stellenbosch 89+**

**Sir Lambert 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Lamberts Bay ($16) 91** A fascinating wine with a real saline, oyster shell character to it. An exotic nettle nose gives way to ripe citrus, black currant leaf, and minerals on the palate. Superb balance. We prefer this over the 2009 vintage. Sir Lambert is a joint venture involving Diemersdal Estate. ***Importer:*** Knauth & Visser, Branford, CT

**Solms Astor 2010 Vastrap Cape Blend Western Cape ($19) 87** An unusual blend of 60% Chenin Blanc, 23% Semillon and 17% Riesling, but it works with herbal notes on the nose and muted green apple on the palate embellished by bracing acidity. The high percentage of Chenin in the blend doesn't show through. ***Importer:*** Worthwhile Wine Co., Atlanta, GA

**South Hill Vineyards 2008 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin ($16) 88** The South Hill Sauvignon Blanc presents an intriguing bouquet of ripe grapefruit with a spicy tangerine accent. It feels round and creamy in the mouth with enough acidity to ensure freshness but without harshness. Very good value. ***Importer:*** Southern Starz Huntington Beach, California

**Southern Right Winery** This winery is an extension of Hamilton Russell Vineyards, which is owned and operated by Anthony Hamilton-Russell. Whereas Hamilton Russell Vineyards specializes in Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, Southern Right was founded in 1994 with the aim of producing cool climate Pinotage and Sauvignon Blanc. In 1998 a 113-hectare farm in Hemel-en-Aarde Valley was purchased as a home for Southern Right Winery. The two wines reviewed here are fine examples of cool climate winemaking with the benefits of long hang time, especially for Pinotage. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL

**Southern Right 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Walker Bay ($16) 90** The 2011 Sauvignon Blanc delivers effusive ripe passion fruit on the nose with loads of ripe citrus and passion fruit on the palate with a light green edge. The wine is well balanced with a dry crisp finish. **Southern Right 2009 Pinotage Hemel-en-Aarde Valley ($22) 90+** This is a delicious Pinotage exhibiting aromas of savory red and black-

berry fruit and earth with a velvet soft palate. Crafted in a fresh popular style, the wine is delicious to drink with its berry like qualities, toasted notes and dry finish.

**Spice Route Winery** This winery was founded in 1997 by Charles Back owner of Fairview Winery in Paarl. Spice Route sources its grapes from predominantly dry farmed bush vines in Malmesbury in Swartland and trellised vines in Darling 8km from the Atlantic. Both the Chenin Blanc and the Chakalaka blend are excellent, and the other wines are also well made by winemaker, Charl du Plessis. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Inc. Birmingham, AL

**Spice Route 2009 Chakalaka Swartland ($22) 91** This is an attractive blend of 37% Syrah, 21% Mourvedre, 18% Carignan and small amounts of Petit Sirah, Grenache, and Tannat. It offers aromas of dark plum and Asian spices with hints of earth and smoky oak. It is soft and lush on the palate with layers of flavor, round tannins, and a long finish. **Spice Route 2009 Chenin Blanc Swartland ($18) 90** There's a nice spice and smoky oak element to the nose of this barrel fermented wine made from old bush vines. This carries through to the palate with added notes of honey, toasted nuts, and dried yellow peach. The wine finishes long with crisp acidity. A very good, well balanced oaked Chenin Blanc.

**Wines Also Tasted: Spice Route 2008 Pinotage Swartland ($23) 89; Spice Route 2009 Viognier Swartland ($23) 89**

**Spier** This pioneer winery of the Cape has been in operation since the 18th century. Its current owner is entrepreneur and art enthusiast, Dick Enthoven, who acquired the property in 1993 and set about preserving the estate's historic buildings and constructing a new state-of-the art wine cellar. Spier has a large portfolio with its top tier of Frans K. Smit, followed by 21 Gables and Private Collection of super premium wines for the export market. Frans K. Smit, Cellarmaster, is the empresario directing the winemaking at this top estate. ***Importer:*** Indigo Wine Group, Venice, FL and Specs, Houston, TX

**Spier 2010 Chenin Blanc 21 Gables Coastal Region ($24) 91** The 21 Gables Chenin Blanc seamlessly offers vibrant aromas; rich and nuanced flavors of quince, guava, peach and a note of marzipan; and a long finish with fine tannins. Sourced from mostly dry-farmed Durbanville fruit that is aged 14 months in 400L barrels, about 50% new. Excellent value. We liked the 2009 vintage of this wine [then called Chenin Blanc Private Collection] even more. **Spier 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Private Collection Stellenbosch ($24) 89+** The Cabernet Sauvignon Private Collection exhibits an opaque ruby hue and is very fruit forward with red fruit aromas and flavors with hints of black fruit in the balance. It shows terrific purity of flavor and balance with light tannic grip. **Spier 2009 Pinotage 21 Gables Stellenbosch 92** The Pinotage 21 Gables is a terrific dry-farmed wine showing an opaque ruby color with aromas and flavors of red plum. It has a velvet smooth mouth feel and is very elegant with richness of flavor, beautiful balance, and perfect integration of fruit and oak. One of the best single varietal Pinotages tasted for this report. **Spier 2008 Pinotage Private Collection Stellenbosch ($24) 90+** Spier's Pinotage Private Collection has an opaque ruby color and dark red fruit and toasted oak on the nose. Aged for 18 months in barrel, with a selection and re-blending at 14 months, it has a soft texture and a fruit profile, not unlike Merlot, with concentrated red berries and plum flavors. The grapes are sourced from a single vineyard at an altitude of 140 meters that faces the Atlantic. **Spier 2005 Frans K Smit Stellenbosch ($99) 94** This iconic wine is a Bordeaux blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, and Petit Verdot with small amounts of Syrah. Medium dark ruby in color, it is surprisingly fresh in light of the fact that it spends almost three years in barrel and two years in bottle before release. It is silky smooth on the palate, with tremendous concentration, perfect integration of oak, grace and richness throughout. It is soft and elegant like a Rioja gran reserva although it is more intensely black fruited in character. A magnificent wine.

**Wines Also Tasted: Spier 2011 Creative Block 2 Coastal Region (Darling) ($18) 88; Spier 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Private Collection Coastal Region (Durbanville) ($20) 90; Spier 2009 Shiraz Vintage Selection Western Cape ($18) 89; Spier 2009 Pinotage Savanha Naledi Paarl 90**

**Springfield Estate** Set in the Robertson Valley, Springfield Estate is owed and operated by Abrie and Jeanette Bruwer, fourth-generation wine farmers. The Bruwers believe in producing wine as naturally as possible with minimal intervention. The wines are all hand crafted with native yeasts and are site specific to reflect the estate's terroir. These are all terrific wines, well made and delicious. ***Importer:*** The Country Vintner, Ashland, VA

**Springfield Estate 2011 Life from Stone Sauvignon Blanc Robertson ($21) 90** This attractive Sauvignon Blanc is very aromatic and offers ripe passion fruit on the nose. It is ripe and full-bodied, almost unctuous on the palate with flavors of citrus and passion fruit and a light grassy note. The wine is tank fermented and spends six months on the lees. **Springfield Estate 2006 Methode Ancienne Chardonnay Robertson 92** Like the Wild Yeast Chardonnay, the Methode Ancienne Chardonnay undergoes a very long fermentation (4-5 months) and also has extended time (12 months) on the lees. In addition, the Methode Ancienne is matured in 70% new oak for a year. The result is an exceptional wine with a suave creamy palate, restrained fruit, and precise finish. All told, this is an elegant and subtly flavored wine. **Springfield Estate 2009 Wild Yeast Chardonnay Robertson 90+** Abrie Bruwer makes the 2009 Wild Yeast Chardonnay unlike any other Chardonnay in South Africa, or perhaps anywhere, today. The wine shows ripe, stony tropical fruit aromas and flavors with chalky mineral notes and excellent sugar/acid balance. What's surprising in a wine this rich is that it sees no oak. It's made naturally, with

wild yeast, given some skin contact and then fermented a long time and kept on the primary lees for 13+ months in underground concrete tanks more than a hundred years old.

**Wines Also Tasted: Springfield Estate 2004 Methode Ancienne Cabernet Sauvignon Robertson 91**

**Stark-Condé Wines** This small family-owned winery is located in Jonkershoek Valley in Stellenbosch. Its vineyards total 40 hectares of decomposed granite and are situated at an altitude of 150 to 600 meters. The vineyards have been managed for 20 years by Pieter Smit, and José Condé has served as winemaker. The winery crafts small quantities of wine in different ranges. The two reviewed here are from their Stark-Condé range and are very good. ***Importer:*** Vineyard Brands, Inc. Birmingham, AL

**Stark-Condé 2008 Syrah Stellenbosch ($27) 90+** This is a lovely elegant wine with attractive dark plum, chocolate, and pepper and toasted oak on the nose. Aged for 22 months in small French barriques, it is soft on the attack, beautifully balanced and has a long finish. Nicely polished. **Stark-Conde 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($27) 90** This delicious Cabernet Sauvignon is blended with 7% Merlot and small amounts of other Bordeaux varieties. It is fermented and aged separately for 18 months in 40% new, 300L French oak and then blended and aged another 4 months in the same barrels. It is bottled unfined and unfiltered. The fruit comes from four different vineyards in Jonkershoek, the Bottelary Hills, and the Helderberg.

**Steenberg Vineyards** Steenberg is a first-class winery located in the old wine producing region of Constatia. It consists of 62 hectares of vineyards from 60 to 180 meters in altitude which provide outstanding cool climate grapes for its portfolio of white and red wines. The whites exhibit crisp, fresh, and herbaceous qualities with notable minerality. The reds are elegant and refined. Winemaker JD Pretorius and the team at this estate are producing exciting wines. ***Importer:*** Maritime Wine Trading Collective San Francisco, CA

**Steenberg 2009 Magna Carta Constantia 92** The rich and flavorful Magna Carta is a blend of Sauvignon Blanc (59%) and 41% Semillon. The Sauvignon Blanc is not oaked but is left on the gross lees for 12 months; the Semillon is barrel fermented and then racked to stainless steel. The result is a rich but nuanced palate. A beautiful wine. Slightly better than the 2007 vintage of the same wine. **Steenberg Vineyards 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Constantia 91** The stainless steel fermented, single vineyard Sauvignon Blanc Reserve has an especially creamy, voluptuous mouth feel from extended lees contact. It shows quite ripe citrus and green apple fruit with notes of asparagus and ashes and has moderate acidity. **Steenberg Vineyards 2010 Semillon Constantia 91**; The 2010 Semillon is a highly stylized wine showing ripe fruit and well-integrated vanilla oak finishing on a crisp mineral note. The palate is creamy, smooth, balanced and delicious. Not quite as good as the 2009 vintage. **Steenberg Vineyards 2010 1682 Brut Chardonnay Western Cape 90** The bouquet of this excellent sparkler reminds one of fresh lemon tart with a shortbread crust. The palate is delicate and refined with crisp, fresh fruit notes. Very pleasant.

**Other Wines Tasted: Steenberg Vineyards 2007 Magna Carta Constantia 91; Steenberg Vineyards 2009 Semillon Constantia 91+; Steenberg Vineyards 2009 Red Blend Private Cellar Series Constantia ($18) 89; Steenberg Vineyards 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Private Cellar Series Constantia ($22) 89+; Steenberg Vineyards 2008 1682 Brut Pinot Noir Western Cape 89+**

**Stellekaya Winery** This boutique winery located in Stellenbosch specializes in the production of red wines. It sources fruit from neighboring vineyards and vinifies its wines in an old renovated brandy cellar near Stellenbosch town center. Ntsiki Biyela of Zululand and one of just 15 black winemakers in South Africa serves as resident winemaker. We joined Ntsiki for dinner during our visit and tasted the three wines reviewed below. Ntsiki loves Sangiovese. ***Importer:*** Fairest Cape, Santa Ana, CA

**Stellekaya Winery 2008 Hercules Stellenbosch ($25) 88+** This blend of Sangiovese, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon shows attractive red cherry fruit and toasted oak on a lush, soft palate with a persistent finish. **Stellekaya Winery 2007 Orion Stellenbosch 89** The flagship wine of Stellekaya, this is a rich, ripe Bordeaux blend matured in 100% new oak barriques. Oak aromas and flavors of chocolate, coconut, and vanilla overwhelm the dark cassis fruit at this early stage of the wine's evolution. Best to cellar this wine for a couple of years to let it all meld together. **Stellekaya Winery 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($25) 89** This is our favorite Stellekaya wine. It's smoky on the nose and velvet smooth on the palate with lots of dark red fruit that runs from the bouquet to the aftertaste. The wine is matured in 60% new barrels for 20 months.

**Stellenzicht** One of the pioneer wineries of the Cape, Stellenzicht is located in the heart of the Golden Triangle, the premier growing area in Stellenbosch. It produces excellent Semillon, Syrah and Pinotage under two labels: a specialty label and a Golden Triangle label. Winemaking is under the direction of the talented cellarmaster Guy Webber. ***Importer:*** Grapevine Distributors, Mount Pleasant, SC and Classic Wine Importers, Boston, MA

**Stellenzicht 2009 Golden Triangle Pinotage Stellenbosch 91** This is a lovely dark ruby Pinotage offering aromas and flavors of black raspberry, cedar and herbs. Aged for 17 months in French, American and Hungarian oak, it offers a creamy mouth feel and a refined elegant palate with red berries and plums and a spicy long finish. **Stellenzicht 2006 Rhapsody Stellenbosch 92** Rhapsody is an attractive

blend of 50% Syrah and 50% Pinotage. It exhibits a black fruit character with notes of coffee, chocolate, spice and toast. Sourced from the best barrels of the Gold Triangle and Plum Pudding vineyards, it is aged for 16 months in 300L French, American and Hungarian oak, and offers succulent red fruit flavors, oak spice and elegance, with big tannins on the long finish. **Stellenzicht 2009 Semillon Reserve 90+** The Semillon Reserve is a rich, well-oaked wine with a creamy palate showing good depth of flavor. Olive oil, waxy yellow fruit, and herbs carry the day here, along with a good dose of honeyed oak. Barrel fermented and aged 9 months in 500L barrels.

**Wines Also Tasted: Stellenzicht 2008 Shiraz Golden Triangle Stellenbosch 88**

**Sterhuis** This Bottelary Hills family winery began operations in 1980. The Kruger family has carried out extensive re-plantings and infrastructure upgrading which appear to have been successful. The wines are crafted by the young talented winemaker Johan Kruger, originally from Durbanville. The Sterhuis MCC and white wines are tasted here. No known importer in the U.S.

**Sterhuis 2008 Blanc de Blancs Stellenbosch 90** This is a fruit forward, ultra-brut MCC showing notes of lemon citrus and brioche. The bubbles are fine and the palate creamy, but the lack of dosage lends an austere note. The base wine is fermented in old barrels for 6 months; spends 26 months on the lees in bottle. Very, very good. **Sterhuis 2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch 91** This is a rich, buttery Chardonnay with toasted hazelnuts on the nose. It has a rich and ripe palate, nicely weighted, with good acidity and flavors of lees, mango, and light toasted oak. A delicious offering. **Sterhuis 2008 Astra White Stellenbosch 91+** The Astra White offers a round and creamy, elegant palate of understated fruit and minerals and a crisp, nicely structured finish. It shows a perfume of orange blossoms, almond and lightly toasted oak. The wine is a blend of 2/3 Sauvignon Blanc with equal additional portions of Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay. The wines are fermented separately, aged 12 months on the lees, racked off the lees, blended, and then the blend is brought back to the original lees for another 6 months.

**Stony Brook 2006 Stony Brook Ghost Gum Cabernet Sauvignon Franschhoek 91+** Winemaker Nigel McNaught has crafted an exceptional, single vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. It reveals an intensely perfumed nose with lead pencil and dark red fruit notes. Full and lush on the attack, the palate is superbly concentrated with vanilla oak and coconut notes complementing the rich fruit. The wine is matured for 30 months in new French oak.

**Strandveld 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Elim 92+** This is an exceptional, single vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, clearly one of the best we've tasted from South Africa. It's a beautifully balanced wine with lovely fresh fruit flavors and lingering minerality. Minerals and green citrus flavors show on the nose. **Superb.**

**Sumaridge Wines** Located in the Upper Hemel-en Aarde Valley of the Walker Bay region, Sumaridge produces excellent wines that benefit from high altitude vineyards and the cool climate breezes of the ocean. Gavin Patterson serves as winemaker and viticulturalist. The Epitome, a Cape Blend, and Maritimus, a white blend, are both first-class wines. No known importer in the U.S.

**Sumaridge 2008 Epitome Hemel-en-Aarde Valley 91** Epitome is a delicious Cape blend of 60% Syrah, 30% Pinotage and 10% Merlot. Medium ruby in color, it offers aromas of red plum and toasted oak on the nose. Aged in oak for 18 months, it reveals good purity and intensity of fruit on the palate with toasty oak, round tannins and high acidity on the long finish. **Sumaridge 2010 Maritimus Hemel-en-Aarde Valley 90** The Maritimus is a white blend of 65% Sauvignon Blanc, 26% Chardonnay, 6% Semillon and 3% Viognier. It exhibits a nicely fruited and floral nose with aromas of orange and white peach with a light sweet vanilla note. It has a moderately creamy palate, excellent balance, and a pleasant finish. Easy to drink and enjoy.

**Teddy Hall Wines** This small boutique winery was launched in 2006 by Teddy Hall, who pursued his winemaking passion, scuttling a career as a broker. After studies at the University of Stellenbosch and work at Kanu and other cellars, he began producing his own wine, starting with Chenin Blanc, another passion, and moving on to other varieties. His Chenin Blanc remains his strongest wine at the moment, but others are close behind. ***Importer:*** Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

**Teddy Hall 2010 Dr. Jan Cats Chenin Blanc Reserve Stellenbosch 90+** Barrel fermented and aged in oak (35% new) for about a year, the Dr. Jan Cats Chenin Blanc Reserve shows spicy vanilla oak, melon, quince and ripe pear on the nose and palate. It has a creamy feel and finishes long and spicy. Should be even better in a year or two. **Teddy Hall 2007 Hercules van Loon Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch ($) 90+** This elegant Cabernet Sauvignon shows toasted oak and red fruit with a eucalyptus note on the nose. The palate is very flavorful with a long finish and dry firm tannins. Aged 14 months in Vicard Presige barrels.

**Thelema Mountain Vineyards** This family winery situated on the slopes of the Simonsberg Mountain was founded in 1983 by Gyles Webb and his wife. Since then 50 hectares of vineyards have been put into operation with additional vineyards acquired in Elgin for producing Pinot Noir and white varieties under the Sutherland brand. Thelema is a highly successful producer of top quality premium wines, especially Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. The winemakers are Gyles Webb (Cellar Master) and Rudi Schultz. Rudi conducted a comprehensive tasting of Thelema's wines for us on our visit. ***Importer:*** Cape Classics, New York, NY

**Thelema 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($20) 90** The estate-grown Sauvignon Blanc is particularly rich and creamy. It's full and soft on the attack and creamy on the palate showing ripe apple with a top note of lime zest and good acidity. Well done. **Thelema 2010 Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($25) 90** This Chardonnay offers attractive aromas of orchard fruit, vanilla, and honey toasted oak on the nose that are mirrored on the palate. It has a creamy mouth feel with excellent balance and a long flinty smoky finish with caramel and oak notes. **Thelema 2009 The Mint Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($45) 91+** Thelema's Mint Cabernet Sauvignon is opaque ruby in color and displays aromas of minty dark fruit, chocolate and cedar on the nose. Aged for 18 months in 50% new French oak, the wine is lush yet beautifully delineated, revealing a silky palate with excellent balance and structure, firm tannins for aging, and a long finish. **Thelema 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch ($41) 91** This Cabernet Sauvignon has leafy, undergrowth notes on the nose accompanied by red and black currant fruit. It is full in the mouth with a velvet texture and lots of lush dark cassis fruit. It has very firm, tannins on the long finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Thelema 2010 Riesling Stellenbosch ($17) 89; Thelema 2007 Merlot Stellenbosch ($29) 88+; Thelema 2009 Sutherland Rhine Riesling Elgin 88; Thelema 2008 Sutherland Syrah Elgin 90; Thelema 2010 Sutherland Pinot Noir Elgin 88; Sutherland Cabernet Petit Verdot Elgin 87+; Thelema 2009 Sutherland Viognier Roussanne Elgin 89**

**The Winery of Good Hope 2008 Radford Dale Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($30) 91** This is a beautifully balanced wine showing orchard fruit, honeysuckle, and flint. It's round with good volume in the mouth and has excellent acid balance. Fermented in 80% stainless steel and 20% oak. Importer: Barclays Wine, Elgin, ID and World Premiere Wines, Mooresville, NC

**Tokara** This winery, located in the Simonsberg Mountain area of Stellenbosch, is producing some outstanding wines. Established in the early 1990s by financier, GT Ferreira, Tokara cultivates 62 hectares on its home property and has smaller vineyards in Elgin and Walker Bay. The talented, and recently-inductee into the Cape Winemakers Guild, Miles Mossop, serves as winemaker and neighbor Gyles Webb of Thelema, serves as consultant. We were very impressed by the wines we tasted at Tokara and, also, by their fashionable restaurant. ***Importer:*** Dreyfus, Ashby & Co., New York, NY

**Tokara 2010 Director's Reserve White Stellenbosch 93** Winemaker Miles Mossop has raised the bar on South African white blends with this superb 72% Sauvignon Blanc, 28% Semillon wooded blend. It's superbly balanced with aromas and flavors of almond and citrus complemented by minerals and a lemon-lanolin note. The wine is aged nine months in 20% new French oak with lees stirring. Complex, interesting, and likely to improve further with a little more age. **Tokara 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Collection Elgin 91** This is an elegant wine full of flavor. Kiwi, grass and minerals show on the nose. The palate is viscous in texture, revealing passion fruit flavors and finishing on a chalky note. The fruit for this wine comes from a 420 meter high vineyard planted among pine and apple trees. **Tokara 2007 Director's Reserve Red Stellenbosch 92** The Director's Reserve Red is an elegant and finely textured Bordeaux blend of considerable purity. It shows both black (cassis) and red (red plum and cherry) fruit which is amazingly well integrated with the wood considering the extensive new French oak aging (22 months). Blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (67%), Petit Verdot (20%), Merlot (8%), and Malbec (5%) from Simonsberg Mountain vineyards. **Tokara 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 91** This unfiltered Cabernet Sauvignon shows notes of ripe plum, stewed tomatoes, and cedar on the nose. The palate is round, velvet-like with the fruit and oak perfectly integrated. Earth and mushroom notes add to the complexity.

**Other Wines Tasted: Tokara 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Collection Walker Bay 89**

**The Winery of Good Hope 2008 Radford Dale Chardonnay Stellenbosch ($30) 91** This is a beautifully balanced wine showing orchard fruit, honeysuckle, and flint. It's round with good volume in the mouth and has excellent acid balance. Fermented in 80% stainless steel and 20% oak. ***Importer:*** World Premiere Wines, Mooresville NC

**Topiary 2009 Brut Blanc de Blancs Franschhoek 92** This is one of our favorite MCCs. It's elegant with melon, lemon and brioche aromas and flavors. The delicate palate is creamy and elegant with a very satisfying finish. The winemaker of this outstanding sparkler is Mark Carmichael-Green. No US importer.

**Trizanne Signature Wines** In this winemaking enterprise, winemaker Trizanne Barnard is producing her own wines from vineyards in Swartland and Elim. She brings to this relatively new and exciting venture rich winemaking experiences from Australia, France, Portugal, Klein Constantia, and Anwilka. Trizanne Signature Wines are first-class. ***Importer:*** 34 South Annapolis, MD

**Trizanne 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Elim ($20) 90+** Winemaker Trizanne Barnard makes a particularly delicate and elegant style of Sauvignon Blanc with light, refined flavors, minerals, and a touch of white pepper. Like the 2009 that we reviewed in Cape Town last year, this white blend shows lanolin from the oak-aged Semillon and complexity from the time on lees and varied harvest times. Excellent and excellent value, but not quite up to the standards of the 2009. **Trizanne 2009 Syrah Swartland ($35) 89+** Sourced from warm climate vineyards in Riebeek, this wine show lots of luscious fruit and overall elegance.. Dark cherry and chocolate shavings appear on the nose and carry over to the palate. It finishes quite dry with a nice spicy note.

**Twee Jonge Gezellen** Twee Jonge Gezellen is one of South Africa's very best producers of sparkling wine. Grapes are handpicked at night to retain coolness and freshness. No sulphur is added. Up to 15% of the base wine is from previous vintages. Matthew Krone is the winemaker. We tasted his wines with him during our visit to Robertson. ***Importer:*** 34 South, Annapolis MD.

**Twee Jonge Gezellen 2008 Krone Borealis Vintage Cuvée Brut Robertson 89+** The Borealis shows very fine bubbles and a ripe nose redolent of toast, yeast, and citrus. It's bright and intensely flavored on the palate with a fine mousse and robust, hazelnut notes. Spends 3 years on the lees, and the 50/50 Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blend goes through full malo. RS 8 g/l. **Twee Jonge Gezellen 2005 Vintage Rosé Cuvée Brut Robertson 90+** The medium salmon pink Krone Rosé is crisp, fresh and lively. Clean and elegant on the palate, it's nicely balanced with a creamy mouth feel and light red cherry notes on the finish. This 60/40 blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay spends 4.5 years on the lees. Very, very good. **Twee Jonge Gezellen NV Nicolas Charles Krone Marque I Robertson 91** A blend of the 2001-3 vintages, this is an elegant wine with a very fine mousse. Bread dough and ripe orchard fruit show on the nose and palate with light nutty flavors on the finish. It's a 50/50 blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir; 25% of the Chardonnay base wine is wooded.

**Uva Mira** This family-owned boutique winery in Stellenbosch is situated at 420-620 meters on the slopes of the Helderberg Mountains. The vineyards average between twelve and twenty-eight years in age and are a mixture of decomposed granite and shale. Vineyard management and winemaking are meticulous under Matthew van Heerden. Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Syrah are all done well. The wines in their Vineyard Selection series, which includes red blends, are especially noteworthy. ***Importer:*** Michael Skurnik Syosset, NY

**Uva Mira 2009 Sauvignon Blanc Cellar Selection Stellenbosch (Helderberg) 91** The Sauvignon Blanc Cellar Selection is intensely flavored with a linear, focused character. It's predominantly grapefruit citrus with a green herbal edge. The fruit comes from a 620 m high vineyard where 35 different parcels are vinified separately and later blended. Better than the recently bottled 2010 vintage we tasted. **Uva Mira 2009 Chardonnay Vineyard Selection Stellenbosch 91** The 2009 Chardonnay Vineyard Selection reveals orchard fruit and flint on the nose and has a lovely, creamy mouth feel with excellent balancing acidity. The palate shows good focus with a smoky flint like edge. Very good effort. As with the Sauvignon Blanc, this is better than the 2010 vintage. **Uva Mira 2007 Red Blend Stellenbosch ($22) 92** The Red Blend is a delicious blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz and Cabernet Franc. It offers aromas of spicy black and red fruit, earth, toasted oak and a hint of balsam. It is velvety smooth and generous on the palate with layers of fruit, cacao and minerals. Aged in French oak for 18 months it is refined and elegant and has a long lasting finish.

**Other Wines Tasted: Uva Mira 2010 Chardonnay Vineyard Selection Stellenbosch 89; Uva Mira 2007 Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon 89; Uva Mira 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Cellar Selection Stellenbosch 89+; Uva Mira 2008 Syrah Stellenbosch 90**

**Vergelegen** One of the premiere estates in South Africa, Vergelegen was originally granted to Governor van der Stel in 1700 by the Dutch East India Company. Today it is planted to 140 hectares of vines nestled between the Helderberg and Hottentots Holland Mountains on the outskirts of Somerset West. The current owner is Anglo American PLC, one of the world's largest global mining groups. The colorful and passionate winemaker, André Van Rensburg, is producing outstanding wines at every turn and we were delighted to taste them with him during our visit. We also thank him for giving us new adjectives with which to describe the wines. ***Importer:*** 57 Main Street Imports Garden City, NY

**Vergelegen 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Schaapenberg Vineyard Stellenbosch ($25) 92** The Sauvignon Blanc Reserve from the low-yielding, 2.5 ha Schaapenberg Vineyard is an elegant wine exhibiting a lovely, delicate and beautifully flavored palate. There are aromas and flavors of passion fruit and saline minerality with excellent acid balance and a chalky finish. Great stuff. **Vergelegen 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 93** The 2006 Vergelegen Cabernet Sauvignon is among the finest Cabernet Sauvignons of the vintage produced in South Africa. With 7% Merlot, it offers ripe aromas of cherry, graphite, and cedar, not unlike a classical Bordeaux. It has a velvet texture on the palate with concentrated red and black fruit flavors. Aged for two years in oak, it is beautifully balanced and has a fruit rich long finish. **Vergelegen 2010 White G.V.B. Stellebosch ($48) 94** The G.V.B. (Grown, Vinified & Bottled on the Vergelegen estate) is refined, pure and impressive. It's richly aromatic and complex with a silky smooth texture and superb acid balance. Guava, mango, peat and smoky vanilla bean all put in an appearance in South Africa's best white Bordeaux blend. A blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon, the G.V.B. is matured in oak (40% new for the Sauvignon Blanc, 50% new for the Semillon). We also tasted the 2005 vintage of this wine, which still tastes fresh and should continue to evolve for another 5+ years. This is a wine to keep in your cellar for special occasions. **Vergelegen 2010 Chardonnay Reserve Stellenbosch ($28) 93** Made from a small (1.5 ha) single vineyard, the Chardonnay Reserve shows amazing purity on the attack and an expansive, lush palate of mango, orange citrus and vanilla cream. The wine is silky smooth. Made with whole bunch press, about 1/3 malo and 12+ months in barrel. **Vergelegen 2007 MMV Stellenbosch 90+** This is a very delicate MCC with a fine mousse and lovely biscuit, light nut, and cured lemon aromas and flavors. A blend of 71% Chardonnay and 29% Pinot Noir, it spends

6 months on the lees in barrel with full malo followed by 3 years on the lees in bottle. Excellent.

**Wines Also Tasted: Vergelegen 2005 Red GVB Stellenbosch 93; Vergelegen 2006 V Stellenbosch ($175) 94+; Vergelegen 2008 Semillon Reserve Stellenbosch 91; Vergelegen 2004 Red Stellenbosch 94; Vergelegen 2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch ($28) 91; Vergelegen 2011 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($18) 91; Vergelegen 2005 White Stellenbosch 93; Vergelegen 2009 White Stellenbosch ($48) 93**

**Vilafonté** This is a joint venture between Zelma Long of California, (Winemaking Partner); Phillip Freese also from California (Winegrowing Partner) and Mike Ratcliffe owner of South Africa's Warwick Estate (Managing Partner) that is producing outstanding red blends from the Paarl-Simonsberg region. The winery is high-tech state of the art for producing luxury cuvees like the ones tasted here. ***Importer:*** Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA

**Vilafonté 2008 Series C Paarl ($75) 92** The Series C is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (66%), Merlot (28%), and Malbec (6%). It is dark ruby in color and ripe and fleshy on the palate with pure red and black fruit flavors. The wine is perfectly balanced with excellent structure and has firm round tannins with a long finish. This is truly a delicious wine made by winemaker Zelma Long. **Vilafonté 2007 Series M Paarl ($35) 92** The M series is also a Bordeaux blend consisting of 66% Cabernet and Merlot, 30% Malbec and 5% Cabernet Franc. Opaque ruby in color it offers black currant, lead pencil and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate it has a soft attack and medium weight with excellent balance and firm round tannins on the finish.

**Villiera Wines** This Grier family operated winery in the Bottelary ward of the Stellenbosch region was established in 1983. Villiera owns 200 hectares of vineyards and has a strong commitment to sustainable agriculture and wildlife preservation. Villiera is one of South Africa's finest producers of MCC sparkling wine as well as of excellent still wines such as the Monro Bordeaux blend, Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc. ***Importer:*** Fairest Cape, Santa Ana, CA

**Villiera 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Traditional Bush Vine Stellenbosch 91** The Traditional Bush Vine Sauvignon Blanc has a mineral streak running through it from the first scent to the last taste on a lingering chalky finish. Green pepper and lime citrus aromas and flavors wrap around that mineral core with excellent acidity. We also tasted the 2007 vintage, which proves that a good Sauvignon Blanc can easily take some bottle aging. **Villiera 2005 Monro Stellenbosch 90** The Monro is a blend of 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Cabernet Franc. It offers aromas of cassis and red berries, lead pencil and fynbos/garrique with notes of eucalyptus. On the palate it is nicely flavored and textured showing ripe red and black fruit with a long, focused finish. **Villiera 2010 Chenin Blanc Traditional Barrel Fermented Stellenbosch 93** Low yielding, old bush vine botrytis-tinged fruit is barrel fermented in 50% new 400L barrels and left on the lees in barrel for about 4 months to produce this beautifully balanced and flavored wine. There's just a hint of vanilla oak to complement the clean, fresh, intense ripe stone fruit. One of South Africa's best Chenin Blancs. **Villiera 2005 Monro Brut Stellenbosch (Bottelary) 91** This is by far Villiera's top sparkler. It's a 50/50 Chardonnay and Pinot Noir blend that spend 5 years on the lees. The base wine goes through partial malo and spends some time in wood. It's an elegant wine with fine bubbles, a big mousse, and fullness in the mouth. Brioche, orchard fruit and almond slivers all make a showing on the creamy, rich palate. Excellent.

**Wines Also Tasted: Villiera 2008 Brut Natural Chardonnay Stellenbosch (Bottelary) 90+; VIlliera NV Tradition Rosé Brut Stellenbosch (Bottelary) 88**

**Vin d'Orrance** This Constantia winery is owned by Christopher Durand, a French winemaker who moved to Cape Town in 1995. He made his first Syrah in 2001 from fruit of a vineyard in the Simonsberg area and later a Chardonnay from Constantia. He is a "minimalist" in his winemaking, intervening a little as possible. The wines are well made and the Kama White Blend is noteworthy. ***Importer:*** Broadbent Selections, San Francisco CA

**Vins d'Orrance 2009 Kama White Blend Western Cape 90+** The Kama White Blend is an excellent Chenin Blanc based blend. It shows flint and herbs on the nose and a lush, creamy and subtly flavored palate of lightly toasted oak with caramel notes and perfectly integrated vibrant acidity. It's a blend of Chenin Blanc 62%, Roussane 25%, Chardonnay 13%. **Vins d'Orrance 2007 Syrah Cuvée Ameena Western Cape ($39) 90** This wine is big and earthy in character with blackberry fruit, loam, and charred oak with notes of roasted meat. It is nicely balanced, medium weight with good fruit concentration on the palate, slightly dry tannins, and a long finish. An interesting wine, European in style. **Vins d'Orrance 2010 Chardonnay Cuvee Anais Western Cape 90+** The 2010 Chardonnay Cuvée Anaïs shows excellent balance between toasty oak, sweet tropical fruit, and bracing acidity. It has an attractive aromatic nose, a creamy mouth feel, and a finish that integrates the components of the wine.

**Wines Also Tasted: Vins d'Orrance 2009 Chardonnay "Cuvee Anais" Western Cape 89; Vins d'Orrance Chenin Blanc Western Cape ($33) 91; Vins d'Orrance 2008 Syrah Cuvée Ameena Western Cape ($39) 89**

**Vriesenhof** This Stellenbosch winery produces several premium reds and a full range of modestly priced wines under the direction of cellarmaster, Jan Coetzee. A Pinot Noir, Pinotage and Kallista, a powerful yet elegant Bordeaux blend, are among the best wines produced by this estate. No known importer.

**Vriesenhof 2007 Pinot Noir Stellenbosch 90** Vriesenhof has been producing Pinot Noir for more than a decade. This offering draws upon grapes grown with Dijon clones 115 and 777 in decomposed shale and clay. It offers attractive cherry fruit and meaty flavors with a fine texture and high acidity Aged for 16 months in two year old barrels, it has excellent mouth feel and an elegant texture. **Vriesenhof 2007 Pinotage Stellenbosch 91** This Pinotage is produced from 32-year low yielding bush vines. Stylistically it shows similarities to Pinot Noir with its feminine elegance and refinement. Aged for 12 months in new French oak, It exhibits wild red berry fruit and vanilla bean and chocolate notes with a silky texture, round tannins, and a long finish. **Vriesenhof 2005 Kallista Stellenbosch 91** The 2005 Kallista is a blend of 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot and 34% Cabernet Franc. Combining power and elegance, it boasts a big and beefy attack of black fruit and herbs, followed by a lovely silky mouth feel. Aged in used oak for 18 months, it has excellent balance, big tannic grip and a long pleasant finish. The wine ages beautifully, based on tastings of older vintages.

**Wines Also Tasted: Vriesenhof 2010 Chardonnay Stellenbosch 89**

**Warwick** This Radcliff family-owned and operated boutique winery is located in Stellenbosch. The estate wines are sourced from 110 hectares of vines. The winery is best known for its red blends, but the Pinotage Old Vines is among the finest examples of this variety produced in South Africa. James Bond has helped make Warwick famous by employing their Three Cape Ladies (not Tasted here) to seduce a heroine in a new Bond movie which takes place in Cape Town. ***Importer:*** Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA

**Warwick 2008 Pinotage Old Bush Vines Stellenbosch ($17) 92+** A delicious Pinotage sourced from old vines. Dark in style, it offers richness and purity of blackberry fruit, chocolate mint and toast on the nose and palate. It is a very elegant wine with rich round mouth feel and a long finish. **Warwick 2009 The First Lady Cabernet Sauvignon Western Cape ($16) 90** Warwick's First Lady Cabernet Sauvignon has a dark ruby hue and aromas of black currant, minerals and loam. It is soft on the attack and elegant on the palate with light tannic grip. Nicely done.

**Wines Also Tasted: Warwick 2010 Professor Black Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch ($20) 89; Warwick 2008 Three Cape Ladies Cape Blend Stellenbosch ($25) 89+**

**Waterford Estate** Located in Stellenbosch, Waterford is among the Cape's leading wineries. The wines tasted here are their finest reds, and most notably the Kevin Arnold Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and The Jem, a first-class Bordeaux blend. Waterford's reds are cultivated on granite and sandstone soils and exhibit ripe concentrated fruit and elegance. ***Importer:*** T. Edward Wines New York, NY

**Waterford Estate 2008 Kevin Arnold Shiraz Stellenbosch 92** This is a beautifully crafted wine, soft and elegant with dark earth and fruit flavors and interesting red fruit accents from Mourvedre. Rich and complex, the wine is flavorful without being overly extracted. It has soft texture, round tannins and good mouth feel. A lovely food wine. **Waterford Estate 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch 91** The Waterford Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of dark fruit and cedar. These are followed on the palate by ripe black fruit flavors with light herbal notes and toasted oak. The wine is smooth and soft in the mouth with velvet round tannins and an elegant finish. **Waterford Estate 2007 The Jem Stellenbosch 93** The Jem is a magnificent blend of 70% Bordeaux varieties and 30% Shiraz, Mourvedre, Sangiovese and Barbera. It offers red and blackberry fruit, mineral and a touch of cigar box on the nose. It is silky smooth on the palate with intensity of black fruit flavors, ripe firm tannins, and a long finish.

**Wines Also Tasted: Waterford Estate 2006 Kevin Arnold Shiraz Stellenbosch 91**

**Waterkloof 2010 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch 91** This wine offers a heady perfume on the nose and a fat, tropical palate of guava and passion fruit--not at all in the pungent, herbaceousness style of Sauvignon Blanc. Quite a seductive wine. This Somerset West winery is certified biodynamic. It is located close to Vergelegen and sports a first class restaurant. The winemakers are Werner Engelbrecht and Nadia Barnard.

**Wildekrans Wine Estate.** Established in 1993 in Walker Bay, this boutique winery produces a wide variety of high quality wines from well-managed vineyards in Walker Bay and Bot River near the coast. The winemaker, William Wilkinson, uses a minimalist approach in his winemaking aiming to produce cool climate wines that reflect their terroir. He succeeds quite well. ***Importer:*** Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA

**Wildekrans 2010 Wildekrans Estate Sauvignon Blanc Walker Bay ($16) 89+** This Sauvignon Blanc is a hybrid of Old and New World with citrus and flinty minerals on the nose and a stony palate showing a touch of grapefruit and ending on a chalky note. Lacking the aggressive grassiness of many Sauvignon Blancs, this wine is very versatile with food. **Wildekrans 2010 Chenin Blanc Walker Bay ($16) 89+** The Wilderkrans Chenin Blanc is a nicely made wine showing ripe stone fruit on the nose, a lanolin-coated, melon flavored palate, and crisp acidity on the finish. It's well-balanced and very pleasant to drink. **Wildekrans 2007 Cabernet Franc Merlot Walker Bay ($15) 91** A blend of 78% Cabernet Franc and 22% Merlot, this earthy offering is soft and elegant on the palate and ready to drink. It boasts lots of fruit and toasted oak with light leafy and herbal notes. It is rich tasting and concentrated with beautiful balance and structure. Outstanding value.

**Wines Also Tasted:** Wildekrans 2010 Chenin Blanc Western Cape ($16) 89+; Wildekrans 2009 Pinotage Barrel Selection Walker Bay 89; Wildekrans 2009 Pinotage Walker Bay ($18) 88; Wildekrans 2007 Pinotage Barrel Selection Walker Bay ($30) 90+; Wildekrans 2009 Osiris Pinotage Barrel Selection 89; Wildekrans 2011 Osiris Sauvignon Blanc Barrel Selection 90

# Annex 1: Appellations and Labels

While there are over 100 Wine of Origin (W.O.) appellations in South Africa, the consumer is likely to encounter relatively few on wine labels. The W.O. designated on the wine label implies that 100 percent of the grapes came from that particular region, so the larger the W.O. region put on the label the greater the flexibility the producer has to select grapes from within that region to maximize quality and minimize costs. This is especially true for varieties like Sauvignon Blanc that gain complexity from a blend of fruit from cooler and warmer sites.

Most South African wines that American consumers encounter in the market are produced from vineyards located within the Western Cape. Those wines can then either be labeled Western Cape or a smaller W.O., if the grapes came entirely from that smaller appellation. Within the Western Cape, the W.O.'s that consumers are most likely to encounter are those labeled as Coastal, which refers to vineyards throughout the Cape that are in close proximity to either the west coast or to the large bay (False Bay) located south of Stellenbosch.

There are, in addition, many smaller appellations that lie within the Western Cape. The most important ones that consumers are likely to encounter are: Robertson, Elim, Elgin, Walker Bay, Hemel-en-Aarde, Cape Point, Darling, Franschhoek, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Swartland, Tulbagh, Durbanville, Wellington, Cederberg, and Constantia. Each of these areas was described earlier in this report. A precise definition of each W.O. can be found at www.wosa.com.

In addition to the many regional appellations, the consumer will encounter estate wines, which are defined as wines where 100 percent of the grapes are grown within the estate. The consumer will also find single vineyard wines where 100 percent of the grapes are derived from a particular vineyard.

In addition to the appellation, each wine label also carries information as to the vintage and the variety or blend of the wine. A vintage designation requires that 85 percent of the grapes come from that vintage. The designation of the variety implies that at least 85 percent of the grapes for that wine are of that particular variety. Blended red and white wines are not restricted as to the grapes they are made from. One exception is the Cape Wine Blend which requires that between 30 and 70 percent of the blend be Pinotage.

Wines may also be designated as being "reserve" wines, but this designation means whatever the winemaker wants it to mean. Typically, it is a field selection of grapes or a barrel selection of wines, but the consumer has no guarantee that a wine labeled reserve is any way special.

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