



ANCIENT &



MODERN

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WINE MERCHANTS

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South Africa - Ancient and Modern

You certainly know when you are in an African vineyard - you are told to watch out for puff adders, and you can see the paths left on the surrounding hills by troops of raiding baboons.

I covered fifteen hundred miles around the Cape winelands in April, and it was a hugely stimulating trip. There is no doubt that quality is improving year on year in South Africa, whilst prices remain mercifully stable: there are some cracking values here, at every price level, whether Goedverwacht's Merlot at £6.25 or the Ataraxia Chardonnay at £13.50. My recent visit was highly productive in terms of expanding our South African offering: we have added wines from no less than five estates new to our lists: from Stellenbosch, Knorhoek, Meerlust and The Foundry; Vondeling on the Paardeberg; and the superb wines of Kevin Grant at Ataraxia Mountain Vineyards in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley.

Why is this list subtitled "Ancient and Modern"? First, because we have to get away from the idea that South Africa is a "New World" wine country. The first grape harvest for wine in the Cape was exactly three hundred and fifty years ago! At Meerlust one tastes the wine in a farm building dating to 1693; at the current site of Vondeling, out on the Paardeberg, the planting of vines is documented to 1720; the Van Niekerks are fifth generation farmers at Knorhoek; and at Rustenberg wine has been bottled continuously since 1892, far longer than at most French estates. South Africa, unlike Chile or New Zealand, has long enjoyed a wine culture.

Along with that history come notions of national style, a concept difficult to pin down, but unquestionably relevant to Cape reds, which so often evince an earthiness which is distinctively South African, and yet very much "Old World" in its correspondence to the French notion of terroir, encompassing not just the soils, the vines and the climate, but also the yeasts in the cellar, wine-making practice and so forth. There is no question that Meerlust's Rubicon or Solms-Delta's Hiervandaan are *terroir* wines in an "Old World" idiom.



As for the "Modern", while we love history, we seek out the best new wineries too. All three of our growers in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley are picking grapes from vineyards on uplands grazed by sheep not much more than a decade ago. At Creation there's a dazzling new winery and tasting room, and others are under construction at Waterkloof (see cover) and Spookfontein. The advantage latecomers have is to start with better plant material, resistant to the leaf-roll virus which blights many South African vineyards, better matched to their specific site than hitherto.

Furthermore Cape wineries need not be bound by any European traditions of grape varieties to be combined in a wine. Some of the most successful wines in this list are, by European standards, unusual blends: the tapestry of varieties that go into Knorhoek's Two Cubs red, Ataraxia's Serenity or Vondeling's Petit Blanc are unconventional, yet make such attractive wines.

In conclusion, what is exciting about the South African wine scene today is that New World energy, creativity and innovation is being successfully grafted on to an Old World wine sensibility. Whilst there are some very fruit-driven styles, nevertheless most South African wines stand confidently between "Old World" and "New". For example, Cape Sauvignon Blancs tend to show more overt fruit than those from the Loire, yet less so than those from New Zealand or Chile; and Stellenbosch Bordeaux blends may have higher alcohol levels than those from Bordeaux, but their flavour profile is more akin to claret than to the fruit bombs of Western Australia or Napa Valley. Many of the estates featured below are at the forefront of carving out a distinctive and original Cape identity.

Simon Taylor - June 2009

P.S. We always believe in moving as quickly as possible on to new vintages of white and rosé, but we are now taking this to extremes - please note that the Colombar from Goedverwacht and the Sauvignon Blanc and Syrah rosé from Bon Cap are from the **2009** vintage - as zingily fresh as you can get!

Mixed Cases See also the Cape Rainbow, a £94.00 mixed case of twelve different bottles on the back cover

All mixed cases include two bottles of each of the six wines listed, at a discount of at least 10%

SA109 Table Talk

(Three whites and three reds) £65.50

- 2009 Goedverwacht, Crane White, Colombar (p.3)
- 2008 False Bay, Chenin Blanc (p.4)
- 2008 Knorhoek, Two Cubs White (p.4)
- 2008 Goedverwacht, Crane Red, Merlot (p.3)
- 2008 False Bay, Shiraz (p.4)
- 2006 Cape Chamonix, Rouge (p.6)

SA209 Protea Pick

(Three whites and three reds) £86.50

- 2009 Bon Cap, The Ruins Sauvignon Blanc (p.3)
- 2008 Le Riche, Chardonnay (p.5)
- 2008 Vondeling, Petit Blanc (p.10)
- 2008 Knorhoek, Two Cubs Red (p.4)
- 2006 Spookfontein, Merlot (p.8)
- 2005 Cederberg, Cederberger (p.11)

SA309 Terroirs of the Winelands

(Three whites and three reds) £111.50

- 2008 Ataraxia, Chardonnay (p.9)
- 2008 Vondeling, Petit Blanc (p.10)
- 2008 Fryers Cove Sauvignon Blanc (p.11)
- 2005 Le Riche, Cabernet/Merlot (p.5)
- 2006 Knorhoek, Cabernet Franc (p.5)
- 2006 Ataraxia, Serenity (p.9)

SA409 Randlord's Reds

(Six reds) £182.50

- 2004 Le Riche, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (p.5)
- 2005 Meerlust, Rubicon (p.5)
- 2005 The Foundry, Syrah (p.6)
- 2004 Rustenberg, Peter Barlow (p.6)
- 2004 Solms-Delta, Hiervandaan (p.7)
- 2007 Creation, Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot-Petit Verdot (p.9)

Robertson and Eilandia

The winemakers in this area - "over the mountains" - used to be patronised by the old boys in Stellenbosch, but whilst Robertson remains one of the best sources of good value Cape wine, the success of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and even sparkling wine here has made the burghers of Stellenbosch sit up and take notice. Though it is very dry (irrigation from the Breede river being vital), and extremely hot in summer, there's also a marked diurnal change of temperature which gives balance to the wines.

Goedverwacht, Robertson

Jan du Toit is so refreshingly honest. As owner of one of the twenty family owned farms strung out on the road from Robertson to Bonnievale, following the long bends of the vital Breede river, he bluntly says that he is not "farming with money, but farming for money".

The lowish alcohol Colombar is always attractively exotic in style, with the merest hint of sweetness that makes it both a nice aperitif or excellent as an accompaniment to spicy food, whether Indian, Chinese or Thai. The 2008 Merlot is his best vintage yet, packing in so much ripeness, guts and character at the price, and just rounded by exposure to oak staves. Since we first shipped this last autumn it has won numerous accolades in South Africa, often as a "Best Value Merlot".

2009 Crane White, Colombar, Robertson, 11.5° [Screw-cap]

Bottle £5.75 Case £65.55 Code GDV309

Lively aromas of passionfruit. Cocktail of passionfruit, guava and peardrop, delightfully exotic, but also zippily fresh. Perfect summer quaffing. Now-2010

2008 Crane Red, Merlot, Robertson, 14° [Screw-cap]

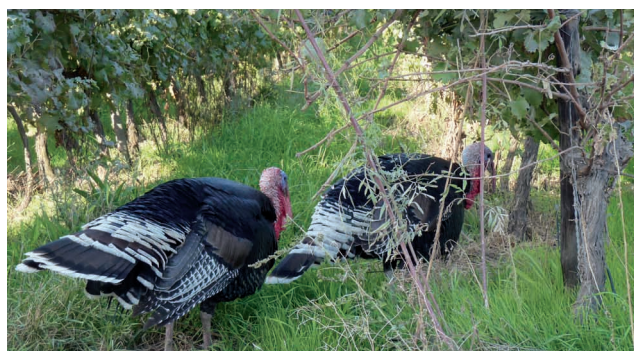
Bottle £6.25 Case £71.25 Code GDV408

Ruby tone. Scent of cooked berries and currant leaf. A surprising wine: both bold and smooth, powerful and polished, and delivering ripe (but not oversweet) red fruit. Mildly old-fashioned, but none the worse for it. Now-2010

Bon Cap, Eilandia

Bon Cap (= Good Cape), a farm with 52 hectares under vines, appears as a shining green oasis amidst a scrubby, dirt brown and barren landscape. Since our first visit in 2003 we have seen the exciting blossoming of this estate under the leadership of Michelle and Roelf du Preez; an off-the-beaten-track wedding venue being the latest venture.

Until the 2002 vintage they used to sell their grapes to the Rooiberg co-operative, but were frustrated that the co-op was uninterested in raising quality or organic viticulture. Now the estate is certified organic - very dry conditions, isolation from other vineyards, and plenty of wind help - and a neat modern cellar adorns the property. Yields are kept low, and the vines are deliberately stressed. The Ruins is their second label.



We have always viewed this estate as a source for red wines, but on this visit I was knocked out immediately by the Sauvignon Blanc, being bottled the very day of my visit. It's not that surprising really, when one considers that Eilandia is only 20 kilometres or so from Robertson, where there's plenty of top Sauvignon Blanc, and at Bon Cap the variety is grown on a very calcareous vineyard. Though this is only the third vintage of this wine, it really hits the spot - if you like your Sauvignon Blanc intense and super-fresh look no further. The wines here are always as extrovert in style as the owners, and the new 2009 rosé - from just Syrah - is no exception, bursting with red fruit.

All three reds are made in a full-on, intense, well extracted style. The Ruins is about 2/3 Syrah and 1/3 Cabernet Sauvignon, given some oak treatment with staves. We are wary of Pinotage as it is a bit of a Marmite grape: for all those who love it, many hate its brassy and distinctive character. All we can say is that the Bon Cap exemplar is a belter, drinking perfectly now, and great with steak. The definition of "Cape Blend" is a red blend made with at least 30% Pinotage: in this Case the proportions are 42% Pinotage, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 25% Petit Verdot.

2009 The Ruins, Sauvignon Blanc, Eilandia, Robertson, 13°

Bottle £7.50 Case £85.50 Code BON609

Intensely scented - cut grass and asparagus, with an irony note. Very ripe attack, sherberty and enticing, full of kiwi-fruit and green apple. Mouthwatering, dramatically fresh and exciting. Now-2011

2009 The Ruins, Rosé, Eilandia, Robertson, 13°

Bottle £7.25 Case £82.65 Code BON509

Bright, almost electric, pink. Ripe raspberry attack, with a perfume of berries and roses. Intensely flavoured, and with good weight. Michelle says it's delicious with salmon, and it certainly has the weight to partner not just salads but chicken and meat too. Now-2010

2007 The Ruins, Syrah/Cabernet Sauvignon, Eilandia, Robertson, 14.5°

Bottle £7.25 Case £82.65 Code BON207

Deep toned. Aromas of blueberry and black fruit. This is the sort of gutsy blend pioneered by the Aussies, brambly, lightly spicy, and with a fresh finish. Now-2010

2006 Pinotage, Eilandia, Robertson, 14°

Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code BON106

Part in American, part in French oak. This dense and powerful wine delivers warm and spicy red fruit, with sweet vanilla and toasted notes and hints of tobacco and leather in the background. Now-2011

2005 Cape Blend, Eilandia, Robertson, 13°

Bottle £12.25 Case £139.65 Code BON405

You only have to look see the grape varieties (above) to know that this is going to be a very deep coloured, robust wine - and it is: damsony and chocolatey, with mocha and dried fruit aromatics. So lush, with smooth tannins. Unusual and surprisingly grand. Now-2011

Stellenbosch and Environs

The proliferation of wineries around Stellenbosch is extraordinary: even locals can't keep up with the number opening each year. The name still has such a draw, and it is justified: Adie Badenhorst, former winemaker at Rustenberg, pronounced that Stellenbosch was one of the best places in the world for grape production.

False Bay, Somerset West

False Bay is the second label of a new enterprise, Waterkloof, founded principally by English wine agent Paul Boutinot. The vineyards lie on high ground on the southern shoulders of the Helderberg, not far from Vergelegen. Amidst them, on a bluff high above Somerset West and False Bay itself, a startling winery is being constructed: it looks a little like the hangout of a James Bond villain. This is a hugely ambitious project.

The False Bay wines are well crafted, smartly labelled, varietal wines, bottled under screwcap, in part sourced from fruit from Waterkloof, but also from parcels of well-sited vines all over the Coastal Region (which includes most South African vineyards near Cape Town), identified by partner Werner Engelbrecht.

The Chenin Blanc comes from dry-farmed, bush vines in Paardeberg, slowly fermented using only wild yeasts. This brightly flavoured wine exemplifies how old vines in the Cape make the best examples of good value dry Chenin Blanc in the world. The crisp Sauvignon Blanc is based on fruit from cool-climate Durbanville, plus Paardeberg and Stellenbosch. We are now on the second vintage of the Shiraz, sourced from plots in Paarl and Malmesbury, barrel-matured in old French barrels. It's a step up on the previous year's wine, and we are sure it will become a big seller.



2008 Chenin Blanc, Western Cape, 14°

[Screw-cap]

Bottle £5.95 Case £67.83 Code FAB108

A surprisingly concentrated and lively mouthful of ripe pineapple and grapefruit, with a hint of honeyed complexity. Now-2010

2008 Sauvignon Blanc, Western Cape, 12.5°

[Screw-cap]

Bottle £5.95 Case £67.83 Code FAB308

Very pale and star-bright. A crisp, citrusy style with a touch of mango. Attractively sherberty. Clean, mildly steely finish. Now-2010

2008 Shiraz, Western Cape, 14° [Screw-cap]

Bottle £5.95 Case £67.83 Code FAB608

This is a cracking wine at this price, a smooth and juicy mouthful. Fine red-berried fruit with attractive smokey character, just the right bite of acidity, and the merest hint of meaty savouriness. Fantastic with grilled meat, and sure to be a real crowd-pleaser. Now-2011

Knorhoek, Stellenbosch

I visited Knorhoek as their Two Cubs wines are often rated as "exceptionally drinkable and well priced" in Platter's **South African Wines**. Both the white and red came up to scratch, so we have had to break our rule that we don't buy "critter" wines, i.e. wines which have been named after local mammals, reptiles, birds, etc. In this case, as the farm has been known as Knorhoek, "the place where lions growl", for over 200 years, we were prepared to make an exception; and the Two Cubs are fairly understated, almost heraldic, on the label. The white, a blend of 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Chenin Blanc and 10% Semillon, is refreshing and brightly fruited. The red is from 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 25% Petit Verdot, 7.5% Cabernet Franc, 7.5% Shiraz and 5% Pinotage, given modest oak accents with staves: this is a big, open, spicy wine, which shows so well how blends are so often more interesting and harmonious than single varietal wines at a modest price level.

However this estate isn't just a source of good value blends. The vineyards here lie up against the Simonsberg, with Rustenberg just over the mountain. Here we offer the first vintage of the estate grown Cabernet Franc, a gorgeously perfumed wine.

2008 Two Cubs White, Coastal Region, 12.5°

[Screw-cap]

Bottle £6.25 Case £71.25 Code KNO108

Pale yellow. Lightly honeyed nose, with hints of apricot and lime blossom. Mid-weight, showing ripe lime with exotic hints. Fresh, and a charming aperitif. Now-2010

2008 Two Cubs Red, Coastal Region, 13.5°

[Screw-cap]

Bottle £6.75 Case £76.95 Code KNO608

Aromas of crushed blackberries. A surprisingly luscious attack, all black fruit, juicy and spicy. Well balanced. Bags of character and interest. Now-2010

2006 Cabernet Franc, Simonsberg-Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £10.25 Case £116.85 Code KNO806

Such a lifted perfume - cedar and blackberry liqueur. Very pure, ripe and soft, showing briary fruit and cassis. With an underpinning of gentle structure and fine acidity, this is ready to drink but a keeper too. Gorgeously aromatic. Now-2012

Le Riche Wines, Stellenbosch

Etienne Le Riche is hugely admired in the Cape, not least by top winemakers almost a generation younger who are fellow members of the Cape Winemakers Guild, a by invitation association of 38 winemakers.

Formerly the winemaker at Rustenberg, in 1996 Etienne rented a house and unused cellar at Leef-op-Hoop (literally Living on Hope) in the Jonkershoek Valley to start his own winery. Turning out a mere 5,000 cases a year, he is now assisted by his son and daughter. He sources mainly Cabernet from farms around Stellenbosch, and then with artisanal, highly traditional techniques - such as using open top fermenters and lengthy ageing in French barrels - he creates gentle, drinkable reds, not New World fruit bombs, very much in a Bordeaux idiom. These benefit from time in bottle to show their best and deliver remarkable value, especially as they are sold at higher prices in the Cape.

This year we have also shipped Etienne's Chardonnay, a barrel-fermented wine of great balance and vivacity - Etienne chooses not to allow malolactic fermentation to preserve freshness.

2008 Chardonnay, Stellenbosch, 13.5°

Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code LER108

Scent of ripe apples; and that russet apple note follows through on to the palate. This is crisp, almost chalky, Chardonnay, lively but balanced by creamy oak. Now-2011

2005 Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code LER605

This includes 9% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot, so is a classic left bank Bordeaux *assemblage*, all given time in old barrels. Deep purple, with a tawny rim. Plum and bramble aromas, with cigar-box oak. Intense, clean black fruit, richly aromatic, with prune, tar, nutmeg, smoke and liquorice touches, and an attractive port-like warmth. Good sustaining tannins. Aromatic, dry finish. Now-2011



2004 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Stellenbosch, 14°

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code LER804

Darkly opaque, dense ruby. Pure aromas of cedar with a hint of fresh mint. Sweet cassis heart, spicy, supported by ripe and mellow tannins. Aromatic and with a splendid finish.

"Rich and juicy but also lovely depth of fruit on the palate. Sappy and bright and already complex though there's still fresh fruit flavours. Really long and fresh even with that level of richness. Very young and a long life ahead (makes me wonder if the Rustenberg Cabernet 1982 was anything like this in its youth)", Julia Harding, MW, **Jewels from South Africa**, May 2009, on the purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com.

Now-2014

Meerlust, Stellenbosch

Meerlust is one of the great and historic Cape wine estates: historic because the vines are on a farm granted in 1693, bought by Johannes Albertus Myburgh in January 1757, and still in the Myburgh family; great because the red blend from this farm, Rubicon, has long been admired as one of the Cape's top reds.



The estate did seem to go through a weaker phase in the 1990s and into this century, but that trend has been reversed by the appointment of local boy Chris Williams (see below for his biography), whose first vintage was 2004. He explains the success of the wines here, on the slightly unprepossessing plain south west of Stellenbosch, first in terms of a tapestry of mixed soils, with plenty of granitic,

gravelly soil wash from the Helderberg, ideal for Cabernet, plus more clayey patches and laterite outcrops on which Merlot thrives. Secondly, he points to the maritime influence of False Bay only 5 kilometres away.

The Chardonnay was a revelation: of moderate alcohol, this feels more at home in the Côte de Beaune than the Cape: and the merest touch of botrytis lends considerable complexity. Rubicon is Meerlust's flagship, a Cabernet based blend, with the proportions varying by vintage (see below), given two years ageing in largely new French oak barrels, and always aged in bottle for at least two years before release. The 2005 is already a charmingly mellow wine delivering great pleasure, but also a wine to keep and enjoy over many years too. We could not resist shipping a few Magnums of the 2004 vintage too.

2007 Chardonnay, Stellenbosch, 13°

Bottle £16.50 Case £188.10 Code MEE107

Strong gold tone. Fascinating fragrance: lightly honeyed, and almost herbal, like a Vermouth. Caramel attack, very smooth, with a palate of limeflower, lavender honey, cream and hazel nuts. So interesting, a wine to sip and savour and try to fathom. Now-2013

2005 Rubicon, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £19.95 Case £227.43 Code MEE605

69% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Cabernet Franc, 15% Merlot. Deep tone, with suggestion of some maturity at rim. The instant impression is all deliciously ripe fruit, velvety texture and firm grip. Red fruits predominate - with a suggestion of strawberry jam - wrapped in woodsmoke. Great depth and richness. Lovely wine, with such potential too. Now-2017

2004 Rubicon, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Magnum £42.50 Case (6 x 150cl. Magnums) £242.25
Code MEE904

63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc.
“...a real classic: fully fruity with an earthy ripeness, great depth and old vine nuance”, Stephen Spurrier, Best New World Red in *Decanter*, July 2009. Now-2016

The Foundry, Stellenbosch

The Foundry is the personal project of Meerlust winemaker Chris Williams. A holiday job at Klein Constantia led him to abandon a law career, and having studied winemaking at Elsenburg College, Chris worked initially at Meerlust, and later at False Bay and Delaire, before returning to Meerlust. At the Foundry, from land bordering Meerlust, Chris makes just two wines, a Viognier and this Syrah. From a westerly facing, granitic vineyard, and with only 10% of the wine going into new oak barrels, the rest second and third fill, this leans more towards the northern Rhône than Australia; and, though labelled 14.5°, is actually only 14.2°.

2005 Syrah, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £16.95 Case £193.23 Code FOU105

Enchanting scents - ripe fruit and perfectly integrated oak. Cherries to the fore, ripe and pure. Svelte tannins. A hint of liquorice. Unlike so much New World Syrah, this appears so elegant and drinkable. Now-2014

Rustenberg, Stellenbosch

Rustenberg has perhaps even greater status than Meerlust in the historic Cape hierarchy; and, over the last thirty years, has gained a renewed lustre under the dynamic Peter Barlow. The second label, Brampton (named after a prize bull from the famous herd at Rustenberg) has been developed, from fruit sourced in Stellenbosch, Paarl and Darling, and new wines released, for example the 2004 Syrah, from imported French clones. Awards come thick and fast, from the The Five Soldiers taking last year's *Decanter World Wine Awards* International Chardonnay Trophy over £10, to the John X Merriman winning countless awards over the years for the best Bordeaux blend in the Cape.

2008 Brampton, Unwooded Chardonnay, Coastal Region, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £7.25 Case £82.65 Code BRA608

Pale lemon. Grapefruit perfume, with a leesy creaminess. Soft, floral character, rounded, with a citrus, melon and sharp pear freshness balanced by dairy texture. Really quite concentrated. Now-2010 Limited stock

2006 Rustenberg, Five Soldiers Chardonnay, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £24.50 Case £279.30 Code RUS706

Always held back for release, this is a magnificently structured wine made in tiny quantities (around 300 cases) for keeping just as much as top white Burgundy. Showing a lot of oak, but also great power and flesh. “Light, creamy, and delicate. Intense and very well crafted with attractive oak aromatics. Classy, and classic”. *Decanter World Wine Awards*, 2008. Now-2013

2007 Brampton, OVR (Old Vines Red), Coastal Region, 14.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £7.25 Case £82.65 Code BRA107

45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Shiraz, and 24% Merlot. Deep, youthful opacity, with a vivid purple rim. Youthful perfumes of primary black fruit and cedary oak. Cassis heart, plenty of guts and drive, with smooth tannic backbone touches of clove and warm earth. Calls for spicy sausages. Now-2010

2005 Rustenberg, John X Merriman, Simonsberg-Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £10.95 Case £124.83 Code RUS105

A terrific Bordeaux blend, based on Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot with Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Though approachable now, and showing great fruit and vitality, this benchmark wine ages well too. Now-2012 Limited stock

2004 Rustenberg, Stellenbosch Syrah, 14°

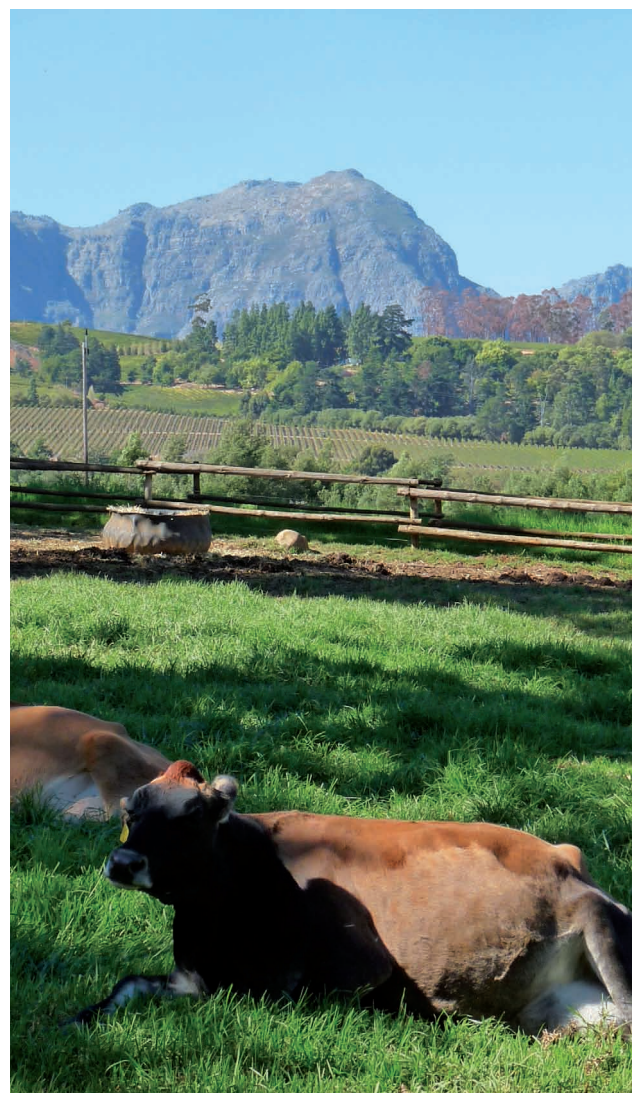
Bottle £15.95 Case £181.83 Code RUS304

A real Aussie-slayer in its massive and inky concentration. Well-oaked, bittersweet, blackcurrant and black chocolate cocktail. “Rustenberg's Syrah stood out at a tasting from John Platter's *Wine Guide 2008* with its rich, spicy nose and fleshy, fresh, Rhône-like fruit”, Stephen Spurrier's *World in Decanter*, August 2008. Now-2011

2004 Rustenberg, Peter Barlow, Simonsberg-Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £23.50 Case £267.90 Code RUS204

The top red here, a pure Cabernet Sauvignon, which comes each year from the same handful of rows on the Helderberg, given 20 months in oak, 70% new. Best decanted to open it out. Youthful purple. Recently retasted, it is now perfectly poised between vibrant primary cassis fruit and smooth maturity. “Protective tannin, fresh acid should allow full evolution of ultra ripe fruit. 4½ stars” *Platter's South African Wines*, 2008. Now-2014



Franschhoek

Though technically a sub-district of Paarl, Franschhoek has a character all of its own. Just as the pretty town was first settled in the late 1680s by Huguenots, who brought French wine expertise with them, so the valley is highly cosmopolitan now, attracting overseas investment into real estate and wineries. The better vineyards lie on the slopes of the surrounding mountains rather than on the alluvial valley floor.



Cape Chamonix, Franschhoek

Cape Chamonix is an estate with vineyards above the town running from 380 to 600 metres in altitude. The youthful-looking Gottfried Mocke has been winemaker here since 2001, which makes him a veteran by Cape standards. He trained in Germany (with visits to Burgundy), but has additional experience at Trevallon in Provence and Rex Hill in Oregon.

Gottfried turns out a superb portfolio of much acclaimed wines - we will have more of them in the future. For the moment we add the red, called simply Rouge, but in terms of quality anything but a basic wine. This is 44% Merlot, 28% Malbec, 25% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Cabernet Sauvignon 3%, but Gottfried thinks it's the Malbec in the blend that really lifts it. Part goes into old barrels. Troika is a more serious and ageworthy Bordeaux blend of three grapes (hence the name), 48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Cabernet Franc and 14% Merlot.

2006 Rouge, Franschhoek, 13.5°

Bottle £6.50 Case £74.10 Code CHX106

Deep hue. Touch of cedar on the nose. Classy gush of cherries and raspberries, with a perfumed nuance of violets. Light, perfectly ripe tannins. So charming, it has an enticing moreish quality. A winner. Now-2011

2005 Troika, Franschhoek, 14°

Bottle £11.50 Case £131.10 Code CHX205

Really pretty aromas of berries and sweet oak. Ripe raspberry attack, but nicely counterpointed by that attractive lead-pencil note from the Cabernet Franc. Lively, fresh and would appeal to Francophiles as well as New World drinkers. Now-2010

Solms-Delta, Franschhoek

Mark Solms returned to the family farm in 2001 after working as a leading neuro-psychologist in the UK. He wisely picked the experienced Hilko Hegewisch (ex Boschendal) as winemaker, and together they have embarked on making highly individual wines, focussed on Rhône varieties,

The Cape Jazz is a semi-sweet sparkling Shiraz, made in a *pétillant*, Lambrusco-like style, from grapes picked early for fresh acidity, balanced by sweetness from only partial fermentation. With only 9° of alcohol, it's frothy, frivolous and fun, and though non-vintage, this is from the 2009 harvest.

Hiervandaan (the name translates as "from this place"), which includes some juice from very late picked, half desiccated grapes (they crimp the stems with pliers) to give an almost Amarone-like richness, is two-thirds Syrah, with Mourvèdre, Grenache, Carignan and a spoonful of Viognier, sourced from the estate's Franschhoek vineyards plus some Paarl and Swartland fruit; and aged in French oak.

NV Solms Astor, Cape Jazz Shiraz, Western Cape, 9°

Bottle £9.75 Case £111.15 Code SOM4NV

With the scent of ripe red grapes, this is like fizzy, lightly alcoholic grape juice, all foamy raspberries backed by a smidge of tannin. Light mousse. Drink for fun, drink with barbecued bangers, or try at the end of a meal with a light dessert or cheese. Drink this year.

2004 Hiervandaan, Western Cape, 13.5°

Bottle £12.50 Case £142.50 Code SOM104

Toast, cassis and raisins on the nose, followed by velvety smooth, melting black fruit - currants and figs - with spice and savoury notes. Very fragrant and refined.

"Juicy, rounded, spice and plum nose, with soft, herby, punchy, southern Rhône warmth lifted by refreshing acidity and mineral hints", Harper's Wine & Spirit, South Africa Supplement, June 2009. Now-2010

Landau du Val, Franschhoek

Basil Landau, ex-head of Toyota in South Africa, owns a special Semillon vineyard of gnarly vines, planted in 1905 on the lower slopes of the mountains. From the concentrated juice of these veterans top winemaker Jean Daneel crafted this barrel-fermented Semillon, aged in a mixture of old and new French oak for just six months.

2004 Semillon, Franschhoek, 13.5°

Bottle £14.95 Case £170.43 Code LAN104

A complex palate of mango and lime with honeyed and nutty nuances. With splendid balance and freshness, and a long finish, this would appeal to lovers of top white Bordeaux. Now-2010 Limited stock



Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, Walker Bay

The Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, which literally translates as Heaven on Earth, rises prettily from just west of Hermanus. When we first visited in 2003 the wineries were all in the lower part of the valley, but more recently pioneers have begun planting in the Upper Valley - higher, drier, with warmer days but cooler nights - and now we are working with no less than three such estates. Enjoying naturally low pH soils, and moderate temperatures, this really is a sweet spot in the Cape, excellent for both whites and reds, and with a sense of community and mutual support and respect among the valley's winemakers.



Spookfontein, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde

Spookfontein (the ghost fountain) was one of our best finds of 2008. Established on just 11 hectares of farmland (with a winery and tasting room under construction) by determined Cape businessman Mike Davis, production is small, and focused on Bordeaux varieties, all matured in French oak for 18 months. These wines hugely impressed us for their purity of red fruit and fairly European levels of natural acidity; and to the Merlot and Bordeaux blend (The Phantom) we offered last autumn we have added their Cabernet Franc, which includes 13% Cabernet Sauvignon.

2006 Merlot, Upper Hemel & Aarde Valley, 14.5°

Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code SPO106

Such enticing scents: cedar with fruit crumble and custard. Splendid flesh of fresh red cherries and brambly fruit, with classy aromatics and backed by decent tannins for keeping. Already so smoothly impressive, this has the potential to develop nicely too. Now-2011

2006 Cabernet Franc, Upper Hemel & Aarde Valley, 13.5°

Bottle £9.75 Case £111.15 Code SPO206

Delightful scent of red fruits. Bright, juicy red cherry palate, smokey, with such ripe charm - almost a hint of redcurrant jelly. Very attractive, and perfect for roast pork. Now-2011

2006 Phantom, Upper Hemel & Aarde Valley, 14°

Bottle £9.75 Case £111.15 Code SPO306

55% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Franc, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon. Youthful purple. Blackcurrant menthol vapours. Sweet and generous attack of black cherries and redcurrants. Charming hints of tobacco and clove. Ripely enjoyable. Now-2011

Ataraxia Mountain Vineyards, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde

Ataraxia, with vineyards on the slopes of the 1200 metre high Babylonstoren, is the creation of Kevin Grant, formerly the hugely admired winemaker at Hamilton Russell at the foot of the valley. The winery is named after the Greek name for a tranquil state of mind, free from worry or preoccupation; and Kevin seeks to make wines of equilibrium and harmony. At the moment he is in part reliant on bought in fruit, as he puts it, "personally sourced from extreme, radical and individual parcels scattered throughout the Cape winelands", hence the Western Cape name on the bottles.

Although Kevin's first vintage was only in 2005, already he has made waves around the world. The previous vintage of the Chardonnay was a Platter 5 star wine, and went on to win the Tri-Nations Chardonnay prize against Australia and New Zealand. Matthew Jukes called Ataraxia "one of the great winemaking estates of South Africa". Despite all this acclaim prices remain more than fair.

A note about the red blend: Kevin deliberately does not list any grape varieties on the label: he sees this wine as more a quest to "show that 'where from' is far more decisive than 'what from' and is the truest expression of a wine's personality". There's plenty of Shiraz in it, but it's a cocktail of many varieties, and difficult to categorise as a result!





2008 Chardonnay, Western Cape, 14°

Bottle £13.50 Case £153.90 Code ATA108

40% New French oak. Sourced largely from cool-climate sites in Hemel-en Aarde and Elgin. Generous scent - cream and vanilla oak. Very Burgundian in style, well rounded, with that buttery oak element overlaying ripe melon, pineapple and a touch of honey. So classy.

"Rich, concentrated, almost profound with incredible purity and minerality, a great example of a richer style", **Harper's Wine & Spirit**, South Africa Supplement, June 2009. Now-2012

2006 Serenity, Western Cape, 14.5°

Bottle £12.25 Case £139.65 Code ATA606

Mid ruby. On the nose a toasty oak element with Italianate black cherries. Lively but velvet-smooth palate of red and black cherries and blackcurrants, with hints of earth and spice. Fresh and alive - with a food-friendly Old World feel.

"Savoury but very fresh. Ripe bright spicy Syrah fruit. Tight and juicy and firm but very fine tannins. Long and gently spicy aftertaste". Julia Harding, MW, **Jewels from South Africa**, May 2009, on the purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com. Now-2011

Creation Wines, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde

Even further up the valley on the dirt road towards Caledon, and with vines planted since 2002, lies Creation Wines. This smart new winery, completed just in time for the 2007 harvest, is driven by the ambitious Swiss wine-maker Jean-Claude Martin, with plenty of assistance from his South African wife, Carolyn. (Her uncle is Peter Finlayson, who has also given useful advice).

The Viognier is unoaked (and malo-lactic fermentation stopped to preserve freshness), and despite its highish alcohol (the bane of Viognier) it is vigorous, and aromatic without any of that sense of over-exotic fatness which mars some South African examples of the grape. The Bordeaux blend, including 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot and 20% Petit Verdot, was a revelation, a really refined, sumptuous wine. This summer we have added the Pinot Noir, from new plantings of French clones.

2008 Viognier, Walker Bay, 14.5°

Bottle £11.95 Case £136.23 Code CRT108

Pale and clear. Textbook Viognier scent of apricots and limeflower. Full-bodied mouthful of apricot with white peach and pear. Attractively balanced, with a hint of kernels and a dry finish. Really well-made and complete, and would be perfect with crab, scallops or lobster. Now-2010 Limited stock

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot-Petit Verdot, Walker Bay, 14.5°

Bottle £14.95 Case £170.43 Code CRT607

Very deep and opaque. Black fruit married to cinnamon and caramel oak on the nose. Concentrated black fruit, not sweet, but showing a classy, dry, lead-pencil character. Svelte tannins. Grandly structured but refined.

"A leafy, fresh style, pure, clean and dry and still juicy. Real purity and less herbaceousness on the palate. Cool, fresh and elegant", Julia Harding, MW, **Jewels from South Africa**, May 2009, on the purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com. Now-2013

2008 Pinot Noir, Walker Bay, 14°

Bottle £16.95 Case £193.23 Code CRT808

French barrels, 30% new. Soft garnet tone. Open scents of toasty oak and jellied black cherry. Youthful, intense, big, but classic style, all bright raspberries and wild strawberries, fine acid, and light tannins. Lovely fruit finish. Needs just a few months for the oak to integrate, and would then rack up well against Pinots from Central Otago; and age well too, becoming savoury and gamey. Now-2011



Paarl and Swartland

North of Paarl the landscape changes. The towns, densely planted vineyards and concentration of small wine farms gives way to open, sweeping plains, planted more with wheat than vines, divided by jagged mountain ranges. It's hotter out here, though the vines on the ridges such as the Paardeberg and the Riebeekberg, benefit from south-westerly breezes from the Atlantic bringing cloud and rain.



Vondeling, Paardeberg

Vondeling (literally the “foundling”) is a long established farm producing grapes sold to KWV, Boland and, recently, Rustenberg. Hampshire man Julian Johnson took over in 2000, and with new investment, and, from the 2007 vintage, a really capable, well-travelled winemaker in young Matthew Copeland, this is an estate now going places. The largely south-facing (i.e. cooler) vineyards are largely on very granitic soils on the slopes of the Paardeberg, a long ridge which represents an exceptional South African terroir.

We chose two blends here: the Petit Blanc, from thirds of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay and Viognier; with plenty of lees contact to lend some weight; and the Petit Rouge, from just 55% Merlot and 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, all in old barrels. What is so pleasing about this pair is that they are not made to win prizes or startle the palate - they are wines for drinking, fruity, lively and fresh.

2008 Petit Blanc, Voor-Paardeberg, 13° [Screw-cap]

Bottle £7.50 Case £85.50 Code VON108

Scent of white flowers and peaches. Crisp and dry, with an attractive palate of white peach and apricot, backed by some fat. A distinctive, expressive and highly successful South African blend, an enticing aperitif and perfect with seafood too.

“Attractive fresh aromatic citrus aromas and flavours. Good acidity (all natural) and tense but creamy mouthfeel” Julia Harding, MW, **Swartland and Paardeberg’s finest**, on the Purple Pages of www.jancisrobinson.com, May 2009. Now-2011

2007 Petit Rouge, Voor-Paardeberg, 13.5° [Screw-cap]

Bottle £7.50 Case £85.50 Code VON607

Deep tone. A supple, black-cherried, joyous glass of wine. So smooth, with the merest wisp of tannins. A part of the fruit is given carbonic maceration - and that helps bring this juicy wine alive. Now-2011.

Kloovenburg, Riebeek Valley, Swartland

Swartland can be blazingly hot and dry in mid-summer - so the siting of the Kloovenburg vines on the slopes of the Riebeekberg is central to producing Shiraz with purity, freshness and balance.

2004 Shiraz, Swartland, 14°

Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code KLO204

John Platter’s **South African Wines 2007** give this 4 ½ stars (out of five) and names it *“unflashy but consistently superb northern rhône-style red...04 showed a subtle white pepper undertone to the black-fruit, spice and nutmeg aromas, elegant tannins seamlessly integrated”*. This treads confidently between Old World Syrah and New World Shiraz. Now-2010



The north-west and the far south: cooler climates of the Cape

It would be logical to assume that as one heads 200 kilometres north of Cape Town that the vineyards would be hotter - but not in the case of Bamboes Bay and Cederberg, our two estates in the north-west of the Cape winelands: the former is on the frigid Atlantic, the latter cooled by over 1,000 metres of altitude.

By contrast David Niewoudt of Cederberg has bought a new vineyard in Elim, near Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of Africa.

Fryer's Cove, Bamboes Bay

On the outskirts of Strandfontein, a peaceful beach resort on the Atlantic coast 250 kilometres from Cape Town, lies a lonely 6 hectare vineyard a couple of hundred yards from the sea cliffs. How it came to be there is a remarkable story. Viticulturist Jan "Ponk" van Zyl knew this area from his experience at the nearby Vredendal co-op, and wanted to try to plant cool-climate varieties. He knew the micro-climate was extra-ordinary: the day of our visit we stood and shivered among the vines in a thick sea-fog, whilst only a few kilometers away inland the sun was shining and the temperature was torrid. He knew too that there was limestone - ideal for Sauvignon Blanc - under the top-soil. He then had to negotiate with a bunch of farmers to pipe in water from the Olifants river 25 kilometres away in order to establish the vines.

But Ponk's persistence has paid off. He and winemaker Wynand Hamman turn out one of South Africa's top Sauvignon Blancs - the last vintage was also one of Oz Clarke's **250 Best Wines, 2009**. The quality of their wines has already demanded that the estate should have its own tiny but official, geographical entity, Bamboes Bay.

2008 Sauvignon Blanc, Bamboes Bay, 13.5°

Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code FRY108

Still quite tight on the nose and palate, this will get better and better in the bottle, with that characteristic mineral steeliness giving way to more grassy, gooseberry and quince flavours. Bracingly sea-fresh.

"Fresh, light, quince-like nose, rounder, riper, well-textured palate with hint of tropical fruit and minerality", **Harper's Wine & Spirit**, South Africa Supplement, June 2009. Now-2011

Cederberg

Ever since we first started shipping from the Cape we have prized our friendship with David Niewoudt, one of the kindest, big-hearted, amusing and passionate winemakers we know. On this visit I again enjoyed his tour of this remarkable estate, which David took over in 1997, wondering at the hillside vineyards planted into hard shale, the outlying field fenced against baboons (a couple lurked on top of the remarkable rock pillars of the area), and the surrounding amphitheatre of mountains.

The vineyards here are 1100-1150 metres up in the Cederberg mountains. Good natural rainfall, around 550-600mm, cool temperatures and occasionally snow-bound winters, with plenty of wind, mean that Cederberg enjoys a near perfect climate, in particular a long ripening period. The whites are mountain-fresh, with plentiful natural acidity: our favourite is the Chenin Blanc, which took one of the 40 Grand d'Or awards at the Michelangelo Wine Awards in the Cape last year; but we also return to the medium-dry Bukettraube this year. The reds enjoy generous oak, and the Shiraz is undoubtedly the pick: the 2006 vintage, including 5% Mourvèdre and 3% Cinsaut, won the International Rhône Trophy over £10 at the **Decanter World Wine Awards** in the autumn.

2008 Chenin Blanc, Cederberg, 13° [Screwcap]

Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code CED108

In the five years we have been working with Cederberg we have come round to the view that the Chenin Blanc may actually be their best wine: it's always so thrillingly crisp and mineral, with ripe grapefruit and lime, backed by a stony freshness. Now-2010



2008 Bukettraube, Cederberg, 12.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code CED308

Pale and clear. Tropical aromas - papaya and pineapple. Medium dry wine, with mouthwatering white peach and guava flavours, zippily fresh and juicy. Now-2010

2005 Cederberger, Cederberg 14.5

Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code CED605

A uniquely South African blend, from 50% Merlot, 30% Pinotage, and 20% Syrah, aged in old French and American oak barrels. Ripe, fresh, berried flavours, juicy, with attractive plumpness. Generous heart, and very food friendly. Now-2010

2005 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cederberg, 14°

Bottle £12.25 Case £139.65 Code CED705

The Cabernet is usually picked in mid April, giving what the Americans call "long hang time" and therefore great concentration and ripeness to the grapes. Deep ruby. Vigorous blackcurrant core, with ripe and sweet tannins. Maturing into a rich and rounded glass of wine. Now-2011

2006 Shiraz, Cederberg, 14°

Bottle £14.75 Case £168.15 Code CED806

Oak integrating well now. Lovely substance - velvety. Doesn't give all immediately, but unfolds elegantly on the palate.

"Aroma of ripe black cherry and young berry fruit with notes of cedar and chocolate. Tightly knit fruit is interwoven with classy oak. Youthful with punchy tannin and underlying fruit." **Decanter World Wine Awards**. Now-2013

David Niewoudt, as if he didn't have enough to do at Cederberg, has bought land in Elim on slate and granitic soils. He has branded his wines from there Ghost Corner, the name sailors used to give to nearby Cape Agulhas, the most southerly point of Africa. The oaked Semillon was picked for the prestigious Cape Winemakers Guild Auction and also won the prize for Best Semillon at last year's South African **Terroir Wine Awards**.

2007 Ghost Corner Semillon, Elim, 14° [Screwcap]

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code CED407

Pale and clear. Open scent of limeflower and smoke. Crisp attack, steely and citrusy, but builds well, with pear, greengage and asparagus notes on a mineral frame. Very long. Very much a cool-climate wine. Now-2012

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