

South Africa: Coming of Age



STONE, VINE & SUN

WINE MERCHANTS



South Africa: Coming of Age

A trip to South Africa in March was exciting and a little scary: exciting because the wines seem to be getting better and better (and more on the strengths below); and scary because South Africa, as any recent tourist knows, is becoming a more expensive place to do business. South Africa has often suffered from high domestic inflation. In the past this was off-set by a weakening rand, but not now: the strength of commodity prices and other factors have propelled the rand upwards against sterling. This forced some harsh choices. I wanted to ship wines from Elim, near Cape Agulhas, but just didn't feel they represented great value. I gently had to point out to a good winemaker that he wanted more for his Sauvignon Blanc than we paid for Sancerre.

For years I have written about the South African wine industry having to reinvent itself after the apartheid years. I subtitled this list *Coming of Age* because I really do feel that all the changes we have seen since the 1990s are now paying off. It's no one factor, but a combination of many: the huge investment in the cellars; the planting of the right varieties in the right soils and meso-climates; the increased experience - and greater understanding of international standards and practice - of the young generation of winemakers who have come to the fore; and, perhaps most important, the increasing age of the vines following the wholesale replanting of South African vineyards. (Even now, about 45% of the vineyards are under 10 years old). This is particularly important in the case of some varieties, notably Syrah, which rarely give of their best from young vines.

Among whites we celebrate Chenin Blanc, which really can claim to be a South African speciality: after all, there's a lot more Chenin planted in the Cape than there is in its Loire homeland. We offer half a dozen pure or Chenin-dominated styles, from thrillingly crisp and mineral via fruity and weighty to a richly oaked example. And while there are a lot of poor Sauvignon Blancs in the Cape (it's too hot in most of the winelands) the best successfully bestride the gap between Loire and New Zealand styles. Oaked Chardonnay is also a real strength as are the many South African white blends - usually combining Chenin, Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Viognier - which offer unusual alternatives, especially as lightly aromatic aperitifs.

We used to recommend Bordeaux blends as being perhaps the Cape's strongest suit when it came to reds, and these remain excellent. However, we have wholly reviewed our opinion of Cape Syrah (or Shiraz, as it is often labelled there). We used to barely list a Syrah, but now we offer nine, from the honest example from False Bay to the heights of Adi Badenhorst's Family Red. With Australian Shiraz becoming exorbitantly expensive, South Africa now offers a real alternative. Indeed South African Syrah is really taking on an identity of its own, offering robust cherry and blackcurrant fruit; and the addition of small quantities of other Rhône varieties - Carignan, Mourvèdre, Grenache or Cinsault - often delivers attractive seasoning.

As to where the action is now, there's no doubt that it's out in Swartland, the big zone north-west of Paarl which includes the districts of Voor-Paardeberg, Wellington and Malmesbury. Swartland is home to Adi Badenhorst and Vondeling, but in addition it's surprising how many wines in this list from widely dispersed estates - the False Bay range made near Somerset West, or the Little J wines crafted at Joostenberg near Paarl, or the Solms wines of Franschoek - are largely made from grapes grown in Swartland. Swartland is also the source for the wines of one of our newcomers, Pieter Walser of BLANKbottle, a man who brings new meaning to the phrase "hand-crafted wines".

Finally, I really should mention that Stone, Vine & Sun was chosen last September as the International Wine Challenge **2010 Specialist Merchant for South Africa**, testament to the work we have done over the years in picking the best from the Cape. We don't have the largest range in the country, but this is a terrific selection. A list which pits Fryer's Cove Sauvignon Blanc against the Cederberg Sauvignon; Cape Chamonix against Ataraxia Chardonnay; Adi Badenhorst's Syrah against The Foundry's, and Le Riche against Rustenberg, is a delight: on this basis South Africa can compete comfortably on the world stage.

We hope you will enjoy the wines too.

Simon Taylor
June 2011

Mixed Cases

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

SA111 Rainbow Mix £77.50

(Three whites and three reds)

- 2011 Goedverwacht, Crane White, Colombar (p.3)
- 2010 Bon Cap, The Ruins, Sauvignon Blanc (p.3)
- 2010 False Bay, Chenin Blanc (p.4)
- 2010 Goedverwacht, Crane Red, Merlot (p.3)
- 2010 False Bay, Pinotage (p.4)
- 2009 Joostenberg, Little J Red (p.6)

SA211 Red Diversity £93.00

(Six reds)

- 2010 Goedverwacht, Crane Red, Merlot (p.3)
- 2010 False Bay, Pinotage (p.4)
- 2008 Le Riche Cabernet/Merlot (p.5)
- 2009 Vondeling, Baldrick Shiraz (p.6)
- 2008 Cape Chamonix Rouge (p.11)
- 2010 Fryers Cove Pinot Noir (p.12)

SA311 White Crests £101.50

(Six whites)

- 2008 Le Riche, Chardonnay (p.5)
- 2009 The Foundry, Grenache Blanc (p.5)
- 2010 Joostenberg, Little J White (p.6)
- 2010 Badenhorst, Secateurs, Chenin Blanc (p.7)
- 2010 Cape Chamonix, Blanc (p.10)
- 2010 Fryer's Cove, Sauvignon Blanc (p.12)

SA410 Springbok Terroirs £139.00

(Three whites and three reds: distinctive Cape styles)

- 2009 Ataraxia, Chardonnay (p.9)
- 2009 Cape Chamonix, Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (p.10)
- 2009 Cederberg, Chenin Blanc (p.12)
- 2009 BLANKbottle, The Big Spaniard (p.8)
- 2008 Spookfontein, Cabernet Franc (p.9)
- 2006 Cape Chamonix, Greywacke Pinotage (p.11)

SA510 Top Table Reds £185.00

(Six top reds)

- 2006 Le Riche, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (p.5)
- 2009 Joostenberg, Bakermat (p.6)
- 2007 Badenhorst, Red Blend (p.8)
- 2007 Ataraxia, Serenity (p.9)
- 2007 Creation, Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot-Petit Verdot (p.9)
- 2009 Cape Chamonix, Pinot Noir Reserve (p.11)

Please note: SOUTH AFRICAN TASTING

Wednesday 13th July, 6.00 to 8.30pm

Venue: Stokes of Stockbridge, High Street, Stockbridge SO20 6EX

An informal walk-round tasting of a selection of some 30 wines from the current list. Around 7.15pm Simon Taylor will make a very brief speech on the latest trends in the Cape.

10% off all bottle prices in the tasting.

(Please book direct on 01264 810248 if you would like to follow the tasting with dinner).

Robertson and Eilandia

Robertson remains probably the best source of good value Cape wine. 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 freshens the fruit and gives balance to the wines. The sub-zone of Eilandia, only 20kms or so from Robertson, shares the same conditions.



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, with the merest hint of sweetness that makes it both an easy-drinking aperitif and excellent as an accompaniment to spicy food, whether Indian, Chinese or Thai. The Merlot is in a gutsy, food-friendly style.

2011 Crane White, Colombar, Robertson, 11° [Screwcap]

Bottle £6.75 Case £76.95 Code GDV311

Lively aromas of passionfruit. Cocktail of passionfruit, guava and peardrop, delightfully exotic, but also zippily fresh. Perfect summer quaffing. Now-2013

2010 Crane Red, Merlot, Robertson, 14° [Screwcap]

Bottle £6.75 Case £76.95 Code GDV410

Ruby tone. Scent of cooked berries and currant leaf. Always surprises for its concentration and power: bold and smooth, and delivering ripe (but not oversweet) red fruit. Not subtle, mildly old-fashioned, but none the worse for it. Now-2012

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.

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. The Sauvignon Blanc is grown on a very calcareous vineyard.

2010 The Ruins Sauvignon Blanc, Eilandia, 13° [Screwcap]

Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code BON610

Crisply green-fruited - lemon and lime - with a hint of smokiness. Excellent value for this bright and mineral example. Now-2012



Stellenbosch and Environs

Both South Africans and visitors to the Cape view Stellenbosch as the heart of the South African wine world. In and around the town are the historic big estates and cellars, plus numerous fancy new palaces of wine. It's certainly a fine place to grow grapes, notably the Bordeaux red varieties, but, arguably, it's also a staid centre for wine commerce and big firms rather than innovation and risk-taking.

False Bay, Somerset West

False Bay is the second label of Waterkloof, a recently established estate with a superb winery set on a bluff high above Somerset West. The vineyards lie on high ground on the southern shoulders of the Helderberg, not far from Vergelegen. 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).

The Chenin Blanc comes from dry-farmed, bush vines in Paardeberg, slowly fermented for five or six months, 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 Shiraz is sourced from plots in Paarl, Malmesbury and Stellenbosch, lightly oaked for the 2009 vintage. To these stalwarts of our range, we have added their Pinotage for the first time, from 25 year old vines in Swartland: this is a pure and juicy example.

2010 Chenin Blanc, Western Cape, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £6.95 Case £79.23 Code FAB110

Scent of pears and honey. This is so richly textured for a wine at this price, weighty, offering a generous, well-flavoured heart of white peach and crisp pineapple. Terrific. Now-2013

2009 Shiraz, Western Cape, 14.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £6.95 Case £79.23 Code FAB609

A smooth and juicy mouthful. Attractive ruby tone. Scent of soft red fruits with a lick of oak. Very ripe red cherries with an accent of toffee fudge. Obvious and enjoyable. (The 2010, an unoaked style, follows). Now-2012

2010 Pinotage, Western Cape, 13° [Screwcap]

Bottle £6.95 Case £79.23 Code FAB810

Victoria plum coloured. High-toned scent of raspberry cordial with the merest hint of tar. Bittersweet raspberry and bilberry fruit, crisp and juicy. An attractive raspberry jelly note reappears on the finish. This is a charming example - a light and graceful Pinotage! Now-2013

Rustenberg, Stellenbosch

Our latest visit to the great historic estate at Rustenberg was a little disappointing: there was no estate Chardonnay available to ship, prices are increasing, and not all the new wines showed well. So all we offer this year are wines available in limited quantities – for which apologies. The Roussanne, from vines planted in 1999, is excellent, showing all the stone fruit of this Rhône variety.



2009 Rustenberg, Roussanne, Stellenbosch, 14.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £14.75 Case £168.15 Code RUS809

Fairly neutral nose: subtle hint of stone fruit and honey, but then blossoms on the palate, revealing white peach, plenty of body, almondy hints, and a creamy richness. Now-2012 Limited stock

2007 Rustenberg, John X Merriman, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £11.95 Case £136.23 Code RUS107

4 ½ stars in the 2010 John Platter guide, a terrific Bordeaux blend: in this vintage 48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 3% Malbec; aged in 44% new barrels, 56% second and third fill. Showing great fruit and vitality, this benchmark wine always ages well too. Classy cedary scents. Juicy raspberry and red cherry character, very ripe tannins, perfectly clean and fresh, and finishes with a peck of spice. Now-2013 Limited stock

2005 Rustenberg, Peter Barlow, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £26.50 Case £302.10 Code RUS205

Consistently one of South Africa's top reds, a pure Cabernet Sauvignon, which comes each year from the same handful of rows on the Helderberg, given 20 months in oak, 70% new. Less than 1500 dozen produced in this vintage, from low yields. "Rustenberg's Flagship red can often seem brusque and uncommunicative in its youth, but this 2005 is positively magnetic and it radiates charm. This epic initial balance points towards a very long and successful life ahead." - Matthew Jukes' **Top 50 from Cape Wine 2008**. Double decant if you want to drink now. Now-2014 Very limited stock

Le Riche Wines, Stellenbosch

Formerly the winemaker at Rustenberg, in 1996 Etienne Le Riche rented a house and unused cellar at Leef-op-Hoop (literally *Living on Hope*) in the Jonkershoek Valley to start his own winery. Etienne 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. He is best known for his reds, and in particular his skill with Cabernet Sauvignon (the Reserve Cabernet is always named in any shortlist of the Cape's top wines), sourced mainly from the same farms around Stellenbosch every vintage. 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 an old world idiom. These benefit from time in bottle to show their best.

Etienne makes a tiny production of Chardonnay, from fruit sourced from an estate well-known for its Chardonnay, a barrel-fermented wine of great balance and vivacity: Etienne chooses not to allow malolactic fermentation to preserve freshness. Half is then aged in barrel, half in tank.

2008 Chardonnay, Stellenbosch, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £10.50 Case £119.70 Code LER108

Scent of ripe apples; and that russet apple note follows through on to the palate. This is crisp, almost chalky, Chardonnay, with the lively fruit balanced by creamy oak. The 2010 vintage follows at £11.50. Now-2012

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot, Stellenbosch, 14°

Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code LER608

This includes a little Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, so is a classic left bank Bordeaux *assemblage*, all given time in old barrels. Deep purple. Mildly traditional South African scents of cooked plums. Smooth blackcurrant heart, richly aromatic, with nuances of coffee and black pepper. Youthful, but very smooth and balanced. The 2009 vintage follows at £8.95. Now-2013

2006 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Stellenbosch, 14°

Bottle £22.75 Case £259.35 Code LER806

Darkly opaque, dense ruby. Smoky aromas, woodsmoke with black fruit and a hint of mint. Ripe cassis heart, spicy and dense, supported by ripe and mellow tannins. Nuance of tobacco. Aromatic, and with a splendid finish. Now-2015

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. Like so many young Cape winemakers, Chris is focused on Rhône varieties. The Grenache Blanc is a new wine, awarded the top 5 stars in **Platter's South African Wines 2011**. The Syrah leans more towards the northern Rhône than Australia: from a westerly facing, granitic vineyard, with only 10% of the wine going into new oak barrels.

2009 Grenache Blanc, Coastal Region, 13.5°

Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code FOU609

Scent of apricots. Plentiful stone fruit, weighty yet lively. "***** Perfectly crafted, intensely spicy, luminous yet restrained 09 from Voor Paardeberg fruit, with 7% Viognier. Melon, pear drop aromas, linear, persistent, unshowy", **Platter's South African Wines 2011**. Now-2012

2005 Syrah, Stellenbosch, 14.5°

Bottle £17.50 Case £199.50 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. "Seductive in texture and leathery in flavour (sounds quite X-rated really), but it also has freshness and frankness and great balance. This is a complex wine that is very fairly priced for what it offers. Winemaker Chris Williams should take a bow on this one. Just the right sort of restraint. 17/20", Jancis Robinson, **Great new South Africans**, on the purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com, 5th November 2009. Now-2014



Paarl, Swartland and the Paardeberg

This region, basically to the west and north of Paarl, is arguably the most exciting in the Cape right now, especially for red wines, but also for old vine, dry-farmed Chenin Blanc and white Rhône varieties. North of Paarl the landscape changes. The towns, densely planted vineyards and concentration of small wine farms in the Stellenbosch/Franschoek/Paarl triangle give way to open, sweeping plains, planted more with cereals than vines, divided by jagged mountain ranges. It's hotter out here, though the vines on the ridges such as the Paardeberg benefit from south-westerly breezes from the Atlantic, which bring cloud and rain.

Joostenberg, Paarl

When we first starting shipping Cape wines in 2003 we were working with Joostenberg, and customers loved their splendid sweetie, the Noble Late Harvest, in particular. We revisited Tyrrel Myburgh at this family owned, eighteenth century farm this spring, and were delighted to see the progress here. The estate wines are from grapes in conversion to full organic status, and the whole range was excellent. The Little J white and red are delightful, the former from Chenin Blanc from the Agter-Paarl area, enlivened with 5% Viognier; and the latter from 81% Syrah with Cinsault, Mourvèdre and a spoonful of Viognier. To these we add the top red, the Bakermat (meaning a birth-place or cradle), a blend of 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Syrah, plus Merlot and Touriga Nacional; and the terrific late harvest wine. This comes from the same south-facing (i.e. cooler) vineyard of Chenin Blanc each year, where the clay soils retain moisture and hold the damp mists from Table Bay, and shows both concentration and botrytis character. The 2010 vintage was picked between late March and the 25th May!

2010 Little J White, Western Cape, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code JOO110

Scent of ripe pears. Bright attack, a real fruit salad of ripe red apples, pears and even mango. Juicy, fleshy, and rather joyous - a few grams of residual sugar add to its appeal, especially as an aperitif. Now-2012

2009 Little J Red, Western Cape, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code JOO609

Curranty scent. Lively, friendly wine, based on ripe cherries and berries, supple and easy-going, but still hearty enough to be a good food wine, with the merest savoury/meaty hint. Now-2013

2009 Bakermat, Paarl, 14.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code JOO809

Very deep and dark. Splendid nose, combining minty blackcurrant from the Cabernet with an attractive black olives/tapenade note from the Syrah. Layered, powerfully damsony and brambly, with a solid grip of tannins which will keep this going well. Now-2015



2010 Noble Late Harvest, Paarl, 14°

Half Bottle £11.50 Case (12 x 37.5cl.) £131.10 Code JOO310

Pale gold. Scent of orange blossom honey and ripe citrus. Intensely sweet, with a spectrum of lipsmacking flavours from lemon meringue to glace pineapple and marmalade. There are 128 grams of residual sugar, but well balanced by the natural acidity of the Chenin Blanc grape. Now-2015

Vondeling, Voor-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 offer two blends here: the latest vintage of the Petit Blanc, from about 50% Chenin Blanc, 30% Viognier and 20% Chardonnay, made with seven months lees contact to lend some weight; and the Petit Rouge, from just 55% Merlot and 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, all in old barrels. These wines are not made to win prizes or startle the palate - they are just wines for drinking, fruity, lively and fresh. The two Shirazes both include other Rhône varieties: the Baldrick (named after the Blackadder character) includes 10% Mourvèdre and a little Viognier; and The Erica includes 14% split between Carignan, Mourvèdre and Grenache. These additions indisputably bring interest and complexity.

2010 Petit Blanc, Voor-Paardeberg, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £9.25 Case £105.45 Code VON110

Exotic scents of ripe green fruit and a banana note. Intense, crisp and dry, with an attractive palate of pear and white peach, finely textured and with a thread of resign acidity. A distinctive, expressive and successful South African blend, fresh enough to use as an aperitif and with plenty of body to accompany chicken or seafood too. Now-2012

2007 Petit Rouge, Voor-Paardeberg, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 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-2012

2009 Baldrick Shiraz, Voor-Paardeberg, 14° [Screwcap]

Bottle £9.25 Case £105.45 Code VON709

Deep hue. Soft red fruit scents. Gentle palate of crisp raspberry and blackcurrant with a hint of leather. Supple, lightly perfumed, and with a tangy black fruit finish, this is mildly Northern Rhône in style. Now-2013

2007 Erica, Shiraz, Voor-Paardeberg, 14°

Bottle £12.95 Case £147.63 Code VON807

Very deep colour. Open, berried scents with a meaty hint. Smooth, ripe and velvety, full of bittersweet blueberry and damson character. Good backing tannins. Twist of black pepper. Big, honest wine with grunt. Now-2013



Badenhorst Family Wines

It was only just over a year ago that we shipped for the first time from Adi Badenhorst - he of the interesting facial hair, top parrot-breeder and winemaker of rare genius - after he gave up his post as the head winemaker at Rustenberg. Alongside his family-owned vineyards at Kalmoesfontein farm on the Paardeberg, Adi's cellar is now looking fully renovated and he was in ebullient form when visited in March. His wines have found favour everywhere – from our band of customers to wine critics around the world.

What is his secret? Well, he is crafting wines in a very traditional, minimal interventionist manner, using concrete fermentation tanks and old oak, often big old barrels which give no wood tannins at all. Whilst he professes total naivety along the lines of "Ach, man, we dump it all in here and it just makes itself", he is also highly thoughtful. He prefers to leave his reds, post-fermentation, on their skins for 6-12 months – as he believes this delivers smooth tannins, texture and suppleness. He is also moving towards picking earlier, to avoid jamminess and to seek a more perfumed, Rhône-like style.

The rosé is a new arrival and we are the only UK shippers to date. We tasted a tank in the spring and found this blend, from Adi's younger vines of Cinsault, Grenache and Syrah, so delicious that we pushed him to bottle it immediately.

2010 Secateurs White, Chenin Blanc, Swartland, 14° [Screwcap]

Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code BAD110

From 40+ year old vines, dry farmed, which deliver so much concentration. 5-10% goes into old oak barrels, giving volume rather than oak flavour, and the wine gains weight from about seven months on its lees. Sunnily exotic fruit combined with creamy weight. "There is rich tropical fruit married to a little spicy oak, before chenin's trademark acidity kicks in leaving the palate refreshed and demanding more", Hamish Anderson, Sommelier! In **Telegraph Magazine**, 4th December 2010. "Gorgeous nose, vibrant and intense, tangerine and fudge. Really quite stunning vibrancy on the palate. Richness, vivid fruit, satsuma, light honey notes, and all carved into sharp detail by a scalpel of acidity. Exuberant and packed with energy – a party in the mouth. Absolute pleasure from start to finish. VVGV [very, very good value], 17/20" Tamlyn Currin, on www.jancisrobinson.com, 17th February 2011. Now-2012

2008 Badenhorst White Blend, Coastal Region, 14.5°

Bottle £21.95 Case £250.23 Code BAD308

Ready? 30% Chenin Blanc, and then equal 14% parts of Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Verdelho and Chardonnay, tank-fermented and then aged for 13 months in large 500 or 600l. barrels. Adi thinks his concentrated Chenin Blanc should make up the core of the blend. A heady, rich and complex wine, which won 4½ stars in **Platter's South African Wines 2011**, described thus: "Elegant power: subtle weight and texture, nothing gauche.....endless chalky, tarragon-scented features centre stage". "Pears and a touch of oak on the nose, honey and thyme. Something wild and windblown and intriguing about this unusual white blend. It tastes of wild honey and aromatic herbs and dried grasses, with a touch of white pepper, soft citrus and pear. Beautifully textured – creamy - with real intensity and finely woven, 17.5/20", Tamlyn Currin, on www.jancisrobinson.com, 17th February 2011 Now-2013

2011 Secateurs Rosé, Cinsault·Shiraz·Grenache, Swartland, 13.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code BAD511

Bright pink, slightly coppery. Gorgeous, seductive mouthful of fresh red berries. Great depth of fruit and considerable weight, full-flavoured yet finishes perfectly dry. Hats off again to Mr B. for this winner. Now-2012



2009 Secateurs Red, Coastal Region, 14.5° [Screwcap]

Bottle £9.75 Case £111.15 Code BAD609

A lightly oaked blend of mainly Shiraz, with Cabernet Sauvignon, Carignan, Cinsault and Grenache, bold but wholly smooth. A bottle slips down all too easily with grilled meat. *“Adi Badenhorst is an adventurous winemaker whose experiments in Swartland are yielding some quite delicious, great value wines that are full of character and style. This one is a gutsy, Southern Rhône-style blend that is rich in red and black fruit, with dried herbs adding complexity and natural acidity keeping it all fresh. Irresistible. 93/100”, The Wine Gang - www.thewinegang.com, 14th November 2010. Now-2013. The 2010 vintage follows.*

2007 Badenhorst Red Blend, Coastal Region, 14.5°

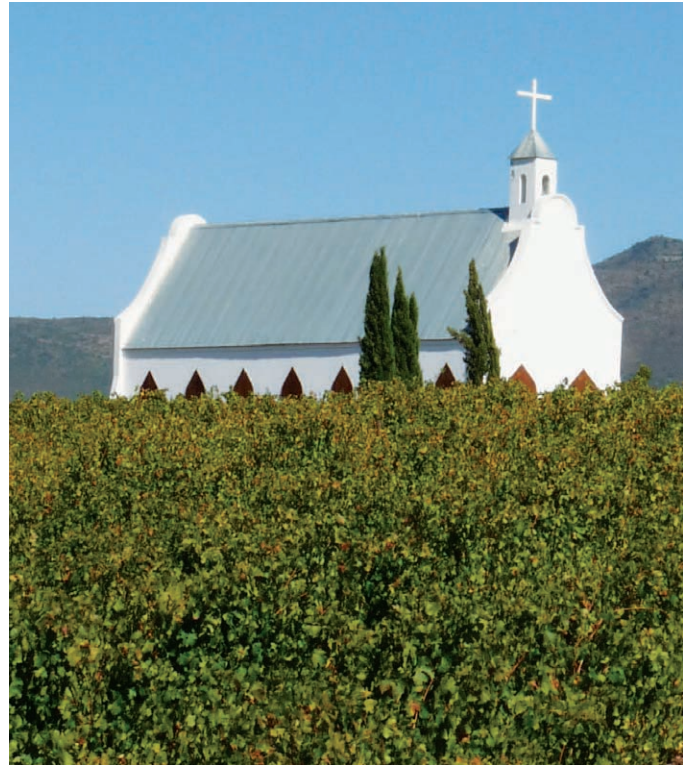
Bottle £21.95 Case £250.23 Code BAD807

80% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre, 7% Cinsault, and 3% Grenache. Only the second vintage of this Rhôneish blend. Brooding aromas of smoke, toast with savoury hints – very Northern Rhône in style. The Syrah shows considerable perfume. Very lush blackberry and black cherry with a liquorice note and a decent backbone of svelte tannin. So smooth, pure and youthful. *“Perfumed and peppery on the nose. Aniseed too. Wonderful swooping freshness in the mouth, spicy length, damask tannin. Liquorice and sweet dark berries, with a serious savoury loveliness on the finish. Real grace. Still very tightly laced up 17.5++/20”, Tamlyn Curran, on www.jancisrobinson.com, 17th February 2011. Can be enjoyed now but perhaps best 2012-2016.*

Pieter Walser - BLANKbottle wines

Pieter Walser is a phenomenon: never before have we met anyone who does everything - from picking grapes to selling his own wine - by himself. For the last seven years he has been making tiny batches, usually only 2-5,000 bottles, of high quality wines. He sources the grapes from friends and contacts, usually in the Swartland; he supervises the picking (sometimes just passing through a vineyard and picking the bunches he wants, before the owner picks); he makes the wines in the cellars of two or three friends; he designs the labels himself; and sells the wine direct to consumers in South Africa from his own website. There he has built up a cult following. Needless to say we are the first to ship his wines to these shores.

What Pieter loves is the opportunity to work with a wide range of grape varieties: as he says, it's “not about stylistic winemaking philosophies, but all about different varieties”. More from Pieter: “we pick certain varieties as “treble” components and other as “base” components. We then focus not on the varietal as such, but on the specific contributing factors of that wine to the final blend”. He is also very careful not to over-employ new barrels: he likes the oak just “polishing the fruit”. From a terrific tasting (at any moment Pieter has a number of different blends on the go) we chose four wines. Two have the word “Black” in their title, a translation of “Swart”, as in Swartland.



2009 Moment of Silence, Wellington, 13.5°

Bottle £11.25 Case £128.25 Code BBO109

From thirds of Chenin Blanc (and a particularly good clone of Chenin, Pieter says), Chardonnay and Viognier, barrel fermented in 4-5 year old oak. Intriguing scents: cream, custard and cinnamon; and a creamy palate too, showing lime and ripe apricot, quite restrained, balanced and silky. Now-2012

2009 The White Black, Western Cape, 13.5°

Bottle £18.75 Case £213.75 Code BBO309

As Pieter writes, “a classic Swartland style white blend. It is a joint venture between Swartland loyalist Albert Ahrens and the BLANKbottle philosophy. A blend of Chenin, Chardonnay, Viognier, Clairette and some other interesting stuff. The grapes are from the Paardeberg in the Swartland”. There's some Roussanne, Marsanne and Grenache Blanc in this too, and the closest point of comparison in taste is probably to a top Roussillon white. Toasty nose, with nuances of honey, flowers and Indian spice. Quite weighty, with subtle stone fruit. Irony and mineral too. Fascinating, great food wine. Now-2013

2009 The Big Spaniard, Western Cape, 14°

Bottle £14.95 Case £170.43 Code BBO609

About half Carignan, a third Mourvèdre with Grenache and Cinsault, given two years in old barrels. Huge fruit expression both on the nose and palate: intense, liqueur-tinged aromas of mulberry, blackberry and damson, licked by vanilla oak. Gush of fleshy red fruit and blackberries, mildly cooked. Wow. Pieter says “the BIG Spaniard 2009 is driven by Carignan which gives it its colour and perfume. The Mourvedre adds oomph and the Cinsaut and Grenache, elegance”. Now-2015

2008 Black, Syrah, Swartland, 14.5°

Bottle £25.00 Case £285.00 Code BBO808

Pieter says “predominantly Syrah (Riebeek and Paardeberg grapes) with bits of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Carignan from the Paardeberg”. Delightful scent: pure strawberries and raspberries. Deep colour, but not that dense – this wine isn't about power and extraction but finesse and pleasure. Delicious strawberry fruit, almost luscious. Drink now or put away – a terrific wine to spring on friends. Now-2015

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, cooled by winds from the ocean, this really is a sweet spot in the Cape, excellent for both whites and reds.

Spookfontein, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde

Spookfontein (the ghost fountain) was established on just 11 hectares of farmland by determined Cape businessman Mike Davis with winemaker Craig Sheard. Here production is small, and unlike others in the valley, based on Bordeaux varieties, all matured in French oak for 18 months. These wines have consistently impressed us for their purity of red fruit and fairly European levels of natural acidity. Our favourite wines here are probably the Merlot and the lovely Cabernet Franc.

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-2012 Limited stock

2008 Merlot, Upper Hemel & Aarde Valley, 13.5°

Bottle £11.95 Case £136.23 Code SPO108

Cedary nose. So supple and smooth, with attractive fat. Raspberries and redcurrants wrapped in smoke. Pure fruit on a long finish. Now-2013

2008 Cabernet Franc, Upper Hemel & Aarde Valley, 14°

Bottle £11.95 Case £136.23 Code SPO208

Enticing scent of red fruits perfumed with vanilla and a hint of green pepper. Full-flavoured currant, red cherry and damson fruit, bright, attractively sharp and juicy. Floral hints. A splendid New World example of this fragrant grape. Now-2013

Ataraxia Mountain Vineyards, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde

Ataraxia, with vineyards on the slopes of the 1200 metre high Babylon's Toren, 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 word 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 region on the bottles. He's a total perfectionist: most wine-makers are knowledgeable and opinionated on the subject of barrels - the forest source of the oak, the level of toast and cooperage - but Kevin is near obsessive!

Although Kevin's first vintage was only in 2005, already the wines from Ataraxia, especially the Chardonnay, have won huge praise and awards around the world. 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 Syrah in it, but it's a cocktail of many varieties, and difficult to categorise as a result!

2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Western Cape, 13.5°

Bottle £10.75 Case £122.55 Code ATA309

A rich and textured style of Sauvignon Blanc. Aromas of ripe grapefruit, mildly honeyed. Weighty and rounded, very much showing fully ripe fruit, but cut by limey minerality too. A SB to accompany fish. Now-2012

2009 Chardonnay, Western Cape, 13.5°

Bottle £15.95 Case £181.83 Code ATA109

1/3 new French oak, 2/3 second fill for 10 months. Sourced largely from cool-climate sites in Hemel-en-Aarde, Elgin and Walker Bay. Generous scent - cream and vanilla oak. Burgundian in style - perhaps just slightly richer - well rounded, with that buttery oak element overlaying ripe melon, pineapple and a touch of honey. Now-2013

2007 Serenity, Western Cape, 14°

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code ATA607

Scents of young Syrah - mulberry and cherry with chocolate and a tarry note. Strangely Italianate in style, Barolo-like in its aromatics, with fine acidity. Crunchy blackcurrant and spice quality. Plenty of vigour for keeping. Now-2014

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 Bordeaux blend, including 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot and 20% Petit Verdot, was a revelation, a really refined, sumptuous wine.

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

Bottle £14.95 Case £170.43 Code CRT607

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**, on the purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com, May 2009. Now-2013

Franschhoek

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 valley floor.

Cape Chamonix, Franschhoek

Here goes: Cape Chamonix is now one of the best estates in the Cape. Why? Not because they make a handful of fantastically expensive wines, but because every single wine from this estate is of terrific quality (not that we buy all, just most!); all are excellent examples of their respective grapes or styles; and all represent value for money. We would put the Reserve Chardonnay and Pinot Noir up against anything from the New World at the same price.

The estate owns 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.

The sparkling wine is of tiny volume - it doesn't even appear on the estate's own website! - so we are lucky to have got our hands on some of this, made in a consciously Champagne style from Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. This year we have also added the estate's simply titled Blanc, a blend of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc. The Reserve Sauvignon is a barrel-fermented wine which is intended to mature in the manner of a white Bordeaux: Jancis Robinson calls it a "lively, long-term wine". The Reserve Chardonnay is really superb, and a great keeper too. The reds start with Rouge, a Bordeaux blend. Troika is a more serious and ageworthy blend of three grapes (hence the name). The Reserve Pinot Noir is from the higher vineyards, at 500-600 metres of altitude and facing south-south west, so cooler.

From low yields, and 80% new oak, this has the balance and structure to keep well too. And don't ignore the Pinotage, new to our list, an intensely flavoured, ageworthy example.

2006 Blanc de Blancs Brut, Franschhoek, 12°

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code CHX806

Yeasty aromas. Very much a vintage style, with ripe citrus overlaid with bready and creamy nuances. Smooth and rounded, and more than a match for a lot of Champagne. Now-2013

2010 Blanc, Franschhoek, 13°

Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code CHX510

A zippy little number, showing ripe citrus fruit with a liquorice twist. Fresh and appealing, very attractive aperitif. Now-2012

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve, Franschhoek, 13.5°

Bottle £12.50 Case £142.50 Code CHX609

Including about 12% Semillon, all barrel fermented (part by whole bunch), about a third undergoing malolactic in barrel; and then left on its lees in barrel, 30% new, for eleven months, this is a complex style of Sauvignon. Scent of cream, citrus, hawthorn blossom and toasty oak. Gooseberry with more exotic fruit hints – sharp pineapple and pink grapefruit. Irony and textured. Oak there but integrated. Very creamy and polished, and with great potential for keeping too. Now-2013





Solms-Delta, Franschhoek

Mark Solms returned to the family farm in 2001 after working as a leading neuro-psychologist in the UK. With the Astor family he has formed a trust to benefit the employees and local residents of his farm. 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 house speciality is to include some juice from late picked, half desiccated grapes (an ancient Mediterranean technique, imitated by crimping the stems of the bunches with pliers) to give concentration and complexity to the wines, without leading to higher alcohol levels.

Amalie (named after a 17th century Solms princess, grandmother of William of Orange) is a barrel-fermented and oak aged blend of halves of Viognier and desiccated Grenache Blanc. Hiervandaan (the name translates as "from this place"), 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.

2009 Amalie, Western Cape, 13°

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code SOM609

Mid lemon – hint of pink? Intense perfume of white peach, apricots with notes of orange peel and menthol. Such an exotic attack, all nectarines, passion-fruit and dried apricots. Silky textured but full-bodied, lightly honeyed but balanced by a bitter hint of kernels, this is a powerful, intriguing wine. Now-2012

2005 Hiervandaan, Western Cape, 13.5°

Bottle £13.25 Case £151.05 Code SOM105

It's nice to be able to offer a Cape wine with a bit of bottle age. Ripe and spicy attack, with the cassis fruit given raisiny, figgy and fruitcake hints by the 12% of desiccated fruit in the blend, plus black pepper and clove. Complex and fascinating depths. Now-2012



Gottfried Mocke at Chamonix

2009 Chardonnay Reserve, Franschhoek, 13.5°

Bottle £15.50 Case £176.70 Code CHX709

11 months in barrel, 60% new. Sunny scents of cream, oatmeal and citrus. Very ripe citrus, tangerine and grapefruit, deliciously honeyed, with well-integrated oak. Fine acid. Exuberant, but will age well too. Now-2014

2008 Rouge, Franschhoek, 13.5°

Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code CHX108

The 2008 vintage is 35% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Malbec and 10% Petit Verdot, aged in old barrels: Gottfried thinks it's the Malbec in the blend that really lifts it. Red fruit nose, lightly smoky. Lively red fruit and coffee palate, fleshy, well-textured, totally clean, and still a bargain for the quality. Now-2013

2006 Troika, Franschhoek, 14°

Bottle £11.95 Case £136.23 Code CHX206

52% Cabernet Franc, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot. Youthful purple. Really pretty aromas of berries and sweet oak. Layers of cassis and chocolate, but nicely counterpointed by that attractive lead-pencil note from the Cabernet Franc. Ripe fruit tannins. Would appeal to Francophiles as well as New World drinkers. Now-2012

2008 Greywacke Pinotage, Franschhoek, 14°

Bottle £12.50 Case £142.50 Code CHX408

A Pinotage with real class and ageing potential, named after a type of sandstone derived soil quite common in the Cape. Gottfried leaves some bunches cut but hanging in the vineyard and then adds these in a *ripasso* manner to promote a second fermentation. Ageing is in French oak, 40% new. Lifted aromas, with cloves. Vibrant red cherry, raspberry and blackberry attack, intensely bittersweet. Very smooth, ripe tannins. Still young, but suave. Quite akin to a fine Zinfandel, and as such excellent with steak. Now-2015

2009 Pinot Noir Reserve, Franschhoek, 13.5°

Bottle £15.50 Case £176.70 Code CHX309

Fermented with a proportion of the stalks in open top concrete fermenters, as in Burgundy, and then into Allier oak, 60% new. Clear, mid ruby. Gorgeous wave of raspberries and strawberries, with mocha. Splendid flesh and smooth tannins. Very French in style. Top New World Pinot by any standards. *"Ripe but elegant fresh cherry fruit nose, which is subtly spicy and sappy. The palate shows rich cherry and berry fruit with notes of herbs, iodine and spice. A rich but elegant style. 93/100"*, Jamie Goode, www.wineanorak.com, 13th January 2011. Now-2015

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 Fryer's Cove 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, heading to the far south, David Nieuwoudt of Cederberg is also sourcing fruit from 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 300 kilometres north of Cape Town, lies a lonely 6 hectare vineyard 800 metres from the Atlantic Ocean. 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 extraordinary: very often the vines here are blanketed in a thick sea-fog, whilst only a few kilometers away inland the sun may be shining and the temperature torrid. He knew too that there was limestone - ideal for both Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir - under the top-soil. He then had to negotiate with a bunch of farmers to pipe in water from the Olifants river 29 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 most interesting and characterful Sauvignon Blancs, whilst keeping the price reasonable. We also offer their fragrant, early drinking Pinot Noir - of which they produce less than 300 cases - which has built up a good following and tends to sell quite fast. The quality of their wines and the distinctive nature of their *terroir* has already demanded that the estate should have its own tiny, but official, geographical entity, Bamboes Bay. Previously the wines have been made in Stellenbosch, but a winery has just been constructed right on the dockside in nearby Strandfontein - water-cooled!

2010 Sauvignon Blanc, Bamboes Bay, 13.5°

Bottle £10.95 Case £124.83 Code FRY110

A very small amount of this wine is fermented in barrel. Creamy scent. Gooseberry and cut grass, rounded and weighty. Some tasters claim to taste salt in this wine - which is entirely possible given the proximity to the sea, as the saline sea mist leaves fine salt flakes on the grapes. Now-2013

2010 Pinot Noir, Bamboes Bay, 12.5°

Bottle £11.95 Case £136.23 Code FRY610

Soft, quite pale ruby tone. Aromas of red cherries with vanilla. Supple, berry and cherry flavoured wine; but with stuffing too. Really quite Burgundian. Very honest expression of Pinot Noir. Now-2013

Cederberg (and Ghost Corner)

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, unfailingly excellent. We also offer the V Generations Chenin Blanc, a tiny production wine, and a prime example of an intensely concentrated, rich, barrel aged style.

Ever since we first started shipping from the Cape we have prized our friendship with David Nieuwoudt, one of the kindest, big-hearted, amusing and passionate winemakers we know, who took over this remarkable estate from his father in 1997. Not content with the efforts he has made at Cederberg - for example the new plantings into the hard shale slopes - he has also 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 Semillon is oaked (30% barrel fermented in French oak) and more akin to a bracing, ageworthy Hunter Valley style than white Bordeaux.



2009 Chenin Blanc, Cederberg, 13° [Screwcap]

Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code CED109

Light scent of pears and ripe melon. Mouthwatering entry of crisp pineapple and grapefruit. Deliciously ripe but zippy. Dry, stony finish. The 2010 vintage follows shortly at £10.25. Now- 2012

2009 Sauvignon Blanc, Cederberg, 13° [Screwcap]

Bottle £10.95 Case £124.83 Code CED209

Cut grass and grapefruit aromas, cut by gunflint. So crisp and vital, with citrus and green fig on an irony frame. Such mineral expression. Now-2012

2008 Ghost Corner, Semillon, Elim, 13° [Screwcap]

Bottle £14.95 Case £170.43 Code CED408

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

2008 V Generations Chenin Blanc, Cederberg, 13.5°

Bottle £18.95 Case £216.03 Code CED508

Scents of lavender, cream and honey. Grapefruit heart, enfolded in nuances of honey, caramel, and toasted nuts. Richly satisfying, and very long. The 2009 follows at £19.95. Now-2013

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