



## DE WETSHOF ESTATE SOUTH AFRICA



news | december 2011

### A Healthy Harvest Beckons

Commenting on agricultural conditions in the Western Cape, a former South African politician said the Cape is like a baby: "If it is not wet, it is full of wind."

True to Cape form, weather conditions on De Wetshof and in the rest of the Robertson Valley have been erratic. Summer kicked off with wind, rain, heat and then some windy rain again. The cool, sunny stillness we are currently experiencing on the farm is a welcome respite, but whatever the weather may decide to do next, the vineyards are looking splendid.

The valley is resplendent in lush greenness emanating from the vineyards, and for those who wish to get in amongst the vines, you will see strong, healthy vines already bearing bunches of fruit.

Of course, the sight of these bunches means that De Wetshof's staff are heading into the summer holidays knowing that the 2012 harvest is literally just around the corner. Some 75% of the farm is planted to Chardonnay, an early ripening variety. So from the second week in January we will be standing-by to begin the next harvest.

That is why, it is said, the farmers from Robertson have such a strange look in their eyes over the Christmas holidays – they have one eye on the sea and the other on their vineyards!



### Great Guns

DE WETSHOF ended the year with a bang, literally. And it all has to do with a bit of fascinating maritime history.

Visitors to our Estate will be familiar with the two cannons perched on either side of the wine-tasting venue. Well, these two cannons were salvaged from the wreck of the Reijgersdaal, a ship belonging to the VOC that sank off the Cape's west coast in 1747. The ship was en route from Texel in the Netherlands to India and she was laden with eight coffins of silver and a huge load of lead.

In any event, the Reijgersdaal lay undisturbed for centuries until it was discovered by a friend of De Wetshof, the legendary diver Tubby Gericke in 1979. Together with his diving partner Brian Clark, Tubby removed the cannons from the wreck as well as some coins. For years these two cannons stood at the late Tubby's holiday house in Struisbaai on the Cape South Coast, where the De Wet family also spend much of their free time. When Danie began showing an interest in the cannons, as he always does with old Cape relics, Tubby sold the cannons to De Wetshof, where they proudly stand to this day.



*De Wetshof's two cannons salvaged from the Reijgersdal.*



*Ending 2011 with a bang as the replica cannon is fired.*

Earlier this year Danie and Lesca bumped into Tubby's widow, Maureen. Then and there it was decided that one of the Reijgersdaal cannons would be fired on 7 December in celebration of Tubby's birthday – he would have been 71.

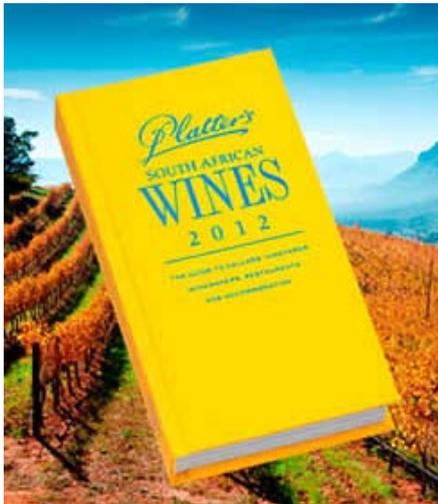
In planning this celebration, however, there was a bit of a glitch – the original cannons could not be fired due to safety legislation. A replica was arranged, and on 7 December a few friends of De Wetshof and a group of journalists attended the firing of the gun on the farm, with Maureen's brother, Allan Craik, giving a fascinating account on the history of the Reijgersdaal and Tubby's salvaging of the guns.

The event was preceded by a tasting of old wines from the De Wetshof vinoteque and the evening ended with a dinner in the tasting venue.

And so another De Wetshof tradition begins!

## A Year of Achievements

IN the previous newsletter we wrote about the launch of De Wetshof's new wine, The Site Chardonnay from the 2009 vintage. It was thus with tremendous pride that we saw The Site 2009 garnering the top accolade of Five Stars in the Platter Wine Guide for 2012. This annual guide is internationally renowned as the most authoritative publication on South African wines, and achieving Five Stars is a highlight for any winery.



This brings us to a glimpse back at 2011, a year in which De Wetshof's wines achieved a few noticeable mentions on the awards front, as well as from international rating panels.

Four of our Chardonnays scored 90 points or more in the recent judging of South African wines by the Wine Advocate which is published by the famed American critic Robert Parker.

The two top scores of 92 and 91 went to De Wetshof D'Honneur Chardonnay from the 2006 and 2004 vintages respectively. De Wetshof's iconic Bateleur Chardonnay 2009 and The Site 2009 both received 90 points.

Steven Tanzer, respected American wine judge who also publishes the International Wine Cellar awarded both the Limestone Hill 2010 and Bateleur Chardonnay 2007 with 90 points. The Bateleur 2007 also achieved a 90 point rating in the Wine Spectator, one of the world's iconic wine publications.

And on the awards front, De Wetshof took home three gold medals at this year's Veritas National Wine Awards, South Africa's leading wine competition. The medals went to the Danie de Wet Limestone Hill Chardonnay 2011 and the De Wetshof Finesse Chardonnay 2010 as well as the 2010 Limestone Hill made for Woolworths.

While we believe that the consumer is his or her own best judge when it comes to selecting a good wine, De Wetshof is proud of these achievements as they show a consistent standard of quality in our products and underscore the hard work done by our viticultural and wine-making teams.

## Get Clubbing

VISITORS to our website, [www.dewetshof.com](http://www.dewetshof.com) can now join the **De Wetshof Chardonnay Club**. Among the benefits members can enjoy are a 10% discount in wine purchases made on the farm or via the internet, free access to De Wetshof's activities during Robertson Wine Valley events such as the *Hands on Harvest* and *Wacky Wine Weekend* Festivals as well as latest information on new wines.

We already have a healthy number of members who have signed up and look forward to this relationship with wine-lovers who share our passion for Chardonnay and the other wines produced on the Estate.

As per usual, our winery is open throughout the holiday season, except on 25 and 26 December and on New Year's Day. For those of you



passing through our valley, do stop by. It is always a pleasure to welcome you here.

From all of us at De Wetshof, we wish you a blessed Christmas and all the best for the New Year..

Kind regards

*The De Wet Family*



The Chardonnay Club  
@ De Wetshof



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tel: +27 23 615-1853 fax: +27 23 615-1915 email: [frontdesk@dewetshof.com](mailto:frontdesk@dewetshof.com) website: [www.dewetshof.com](http://www.dewetshof.com)