



SARONBERG

TULBAGH

Newsletter Feb 2013

This time of year it seems that in all the newsletters you read the first words to leap enthusiastically off the screen is a happy new year's greeting, filled with hope and promise. I think it can be contributed to the holiday spirit of the well-rested author. Well, you know me better – and I was on duty the entire festive season. Nonetheless, I will wish all of you the euphoria of the first few weeks of unbridled enthusiasm for 2013's prospects. It will last at least until the end of February, when you realise that last year's challenges did not miraculously disappear. I so love this month!

Now, let's take a look at 2012 as it seems my writing in 2012 did not match my good intentions of keeping you informed.

At the beginning of 2012, Chris Immelman joined us as viticulturist – just in time as the workload seems to be getting bigger with the ever-expanding vineyards. Chris is a farm boy from Montagu; that he has farming in his blood is evident in the care he gives to the vineyards and the results speak for themselves.

The wines did phenomenally well the past year and received a slew of awards, both locally and internationally. The dearest might be the Viognier, which has been consistently awarded, validating our belief that it is a cultivar well suited to our range and that our approach to produce a more elegant style has been correct. I feel that I'm getting to grips with Viognier and am most pleased with the 2011, although it will only be showing at its best in a year or two.

Furthermore, both the Saronberg Shiraz and the Provenance Shiraz have been consistently awarded. Of these, our first ever Platter five star for the 2010 Saronberg Shiraz is the sweetest, followed closely by the Syrah du Monde Gold, where this same wine was placed fourth overall! This consistent performance has been underscored by yet another good year at the SAWI awards, gold at the Michelangelo International Awards and four of our wines being on the Top 100 SA wine list again. I am ever hesitant to praise a vintage, but 2010 vintage might just be our best vintage of Shiraz yet. This statement is not based on accolades but on the beautiful balance between subtle fruit, spice and elegance– and the observations of our clients. It seems that as the vineyards are ageing we are

achieving better balance and elegance in the wines and I am certainly looking forward to the years to come.

The Provenance Shiraz 2010 received a Top 6 spot on the Wine Magazine tasting, a Top 100 SA Wine and gold at both the Decanter and Michelangelo International Awards. The 2009 Saronsberg MCC was awarded gold at both the Amorim Cap Classique Challenge and the Michelangelo International Awards. The Provenance Seismic 2008 was awarded gold by IWSC and the 2010 Saronsberg Full Circle received gold at both the IWSC and the Five Nations Wine Challenge.

We are slowly but steadily extending our plantings and plan to extend the cellar's fermentation and barrel maturation capacity as well. Our Provenance Sauvignon Blanc has been moved back to the Saronsberg range – to crown everything it got on the Top 20 list shortly after, which seems to be perfect timing! In addition it received the Best Value distinction. We are also planning to change the label of the Provenance range. Here is a sneak preview.



Astonishingly – you should probably sit down for this – the Saronsberg Sauvignon Blanc Straw Wine, which some of you have been given a sneak preview of, has been released officially after many delays! So no more teasing; you can actually buy some. The first vintage, 2006, has been aged in new French oak barrels for 24 months and has developed nicely, showing exquisite balance and purity of fruit. Mouth-watering! Due to the small volumes it will only be available from the cellar door.

Then I may have hinted in the past that we were toying with the idea of releasing a varietal Grenache. Well, this is about to be realised as well. The wine is made from one of only two bush-vine vineyards on the farm and was aged for 18 months in second-fill French oak barrels. Being a gentler cultivar, the wine shows delicate spice with violet notes and ripe cherry flavours. The palate is elegant and structured, with beautiful finesse. The Grenache will only be

available at the cellar. Release is planned for our 10-year celebrations in the latter part of 2013!

Our olive trees, although relatively small in number (3 hectares), have really rewarded us with a bumper crop this year. Most of the trees are reaching maturity. The oil produced is a blend of Frontoio, Mission, Leccino and Coratina and is for sale at the cellar.

The 2012 grape harvest, weighing in just less than 400 tons, is developing nicely in the barrels and we are currently busy blending the various wines. Although the amount of work is staggering, seeing that it must happen in the next two weeks, I am impressed by the quality glimpsed thus far. We are also organising the cellar before harvest hits us full on, with the first Chardonnays just picked for base wine to produce our MCC.

The weather thus far has been fairly moderate. The winter rainfall was the best in years and practically normal again, spring was fairly dry and we enjoyed nice weather except for a short hot spell in late December. It has cooled down again with a spittle of rain occasionally, but nothing to worry about. The harvest seems to be delayed by about a week; however, as in the past, the vineyards will soon catch up. The berries seem to be small and healthy, and if we can keep the baboons away, keep our winemaker optimistic and finish the 2012 blending, I am sure the 2013 harvest will go well.

Our newest venture to restore many of the derelict cottages on the farm as self-catering cottages is well underway. They are situated just behind the cellar and should be completed end March 2013, just in time for the Absa Cape Epic. Yes, the Epic will pass through our beautiful little valley again. As in 2011, we will host the race village at Saronsberg for two nights – 19 and 20 March.

Nick and Mariette have finally moved to Cape Town and are settling in nicely. I am sure it is too much to expect him to swop his support to the local rugby team, but we can dream...

Finally, I want to thank you all for your support during the past few years. Unbelievably it is our tenth harvest coming up! I must admit, it feels like yesterday when we started moving the tanks and equipment into the cellar. I can still smell the Sauvignon Blanc at the crusher after we harvested our first grapes in 2004.

Well, let me get back to blending! I will try to keep you better informed of life at Saronsberg in future. You have it in writing now, so I had better keep to it.

Until next time, cheers!

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