



DURBANVILLE HILLS

wines shaped by the landscape

Dear friend,

Early-morning visits to the vineyards during harvest time make you very much aware of the subtle changes taking place around you as the weeks advance. Suddenly you notice it is becoming light a little later, and almost without thinking you start putting on something warm against the morning chill. And let me tell you, I have more than enough opportunities to observe these changes as picking in our area covers almost a whole season - from the end of January to the middle of April as was again the case this year.

We have all been taught that the year consists of four seasons each spanning three months, but Nature has her own way of doing things and cares very little about what has been drilled into us at school. Seasons also change from area to area. Here in the Cape, in my book at least, summer is from November to March. Then follows autumn-in-a-hurry in April and May; in a hurry for winter is breathing icily down its neck. Already we have had the first two cold spells signalling that this year winter is already waiting in the wings although I have pencilled it in to arrive only in June. Then the vines will be put to rest and stay until August. By my calculation, that leaves just September and October for spring, before the cycle starts again. This uneven distribution of seasons gives us a wonderfully long ripening period up here in the hills which is magic for flavour development in the new crop.

It ain't over till the fat lady sings...

There are quite a few explanations for this saying, but I particularly like the version where towards the end of the opera, the older of two brothers stops the younger from applauding prematurely saying: "It ain't over till the fat lady sings." (By the way, it is generally accepted this refers to the end of Wagner's opera *Götterdämmerung* where the usually rotund heroine, Brünnhilde, carries on for 20 minutes before giving up the ghost so it's quite easy to understand the young man's impatience!) In the same way we could not say the harvest was done until the noble rot had done its job and we could finally harvest the affected Sauvignon blanc grapes to make another vintage of our noble late harvest wine. We were waiting for *Botrytis cinerea* or noble rot to set in to concentrate the sugar in the grapes and enable us to make a similarly well balanced beauty as last year, with sugar, acidity and varietal character all in perfect harmony. This wine, by the way, is sold only at the cellar.

A lovely warm day convinced me the *Botrytis* would take, but was followed by a fair amount of rain and that started my nerves jangling. *Botrytis cinerea* normally sets in when a warm spell follows a period of high humidity like mist or rain. There were several wet spells towards the end of season, but temperatures remained low, inhibiting the growth of noble rot. We were particularly fearful of the two opportunistic sisters Sour Rot and Black Mould settling in as they love wet conditions and are not so picky when it comes to the weather.

The guys doing the harvesting did a fine job in the vineyards in selecting the best bunches. We then made a second selection at the press. These unhealthy looking grapes - for the untrained eye, that is - do not pass through the crushers or the destemmer, but are placed by hand in the press. But first they soak overnight in their own sugary juice before pressing and fermentation... it's nectar in its purest form.

We were fortunate... not the fat lady, but the angels did the singing at the end.

The joys of small

I have often envied small-scale cellars and *garagistes* the opportunity to work with tiny volumes on which they can lavish all their care. They can really experiment and play around in the good sense of the word. In a commercial cellar with larger volumes the challenges are very different and the chances to experiment are limited by tank sizes and such-like considerations.

Now the days of envy are over. By installing a number of small-sized tanks we too are in a position to "play and learn" - to make wine from small quantities of new and unusual varietals to discover their unique characteristics and how to bring these to the fore; also to experiment with new techniques and see how we can apply them successfully on a large scale. It is a sin blending these high-quality "samples" away but if we were to offer them to only some, everyone else would feel offended. Fortunately wine auctions offer a more equitable way of getting them into the market. We shall see.

Tavern of the seas

In 1488 Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias on rounding the treacherous southern tip of the continent, named it the Cape of Storms. It was King John II of Portugal who later renamed it the Cape of Good Hope as it opened up the sea route to the fabulous East. Cape Town has always been affectionately known as the Mother City but also, in the olden days, as "Tavern of the seas", a name given it by grateful sailors setting foot here after months at sea. (How could they not have used such a striking name for what is today blandly known as the Waterfront?)

I was overjoyed to find that *Cape Town: Tavern of the Seas* by Lawrence Green, first published in 1948, is back in print. I'm looking forward to reading again all his fascinating stories about the first wines at the Cape, about the town's canals and shops, the carnivals and the stories told by the old salts.

2013...13% over capacity

I do recall mentioning that we were not afraid of the number 13 in 2013 in which we celebrate our 15th vintage. The general consensus in the industry is that the vintage has been a difficult one for winemakers, but also one producing exceptional quality and a bigger crop.. While doing my calculations at the end of the season to discover how we managed to fit such a big crop into the cellar, I noticed that our intake was 13% more than our capacity. Now is that freaky or not?

So to whom shall we raise a glass this month? What about old King John of Portugal, today largely forgotten, but who in his time showed such faith in this fabulous but fickle place we call home?

Prost!

MARTIN MOORE

Cellar Master

Please visit our website on www.durbanvillehills.co.za

Latest News and Upcoming Events

Trail Run and Soup Weekend



Join us for a weekend of soup, wine and a sunset run in the vineyards! Tuck into a heart-warming selection of soups and breads for lunch and on the Saturday take part in the Chase the Sunset trail which runs over 5 and 10km. It's the perfect way to experience the rolling hills that makes this wine region so spectacular.

Sip, Soup and Bread

Date: 1 June

Times: Lunch 12.00 - 15.00, Dinner 19h00 - 21h00

Date: 2 June

Time: Lunch 12h00 - 15h00

Cost: R145 per person for the soup and bread buffet

Chase the Sunset Trail Run

Date: 1 June

Time: Registration on the day from 16:00 with the run starting at 17:00

Cost: R60 per person

Wine and Food Pairing



Join our white winemaker, Gunther Kellerman for a fun evening and experience some unconventional food and wine pairings. Learn how to pair everyday food just as well as gourmet meals with Durbanville Hills' wines.

Date: Thursday, 27 June 2012

Time: 18:30 for 19:00

Venue: Durbanville Hills

Cost: R200 per person (includes welcome drink and wine pairing followed by dinner, coffee or tea and biscotti and goodie bag).

Taste Wines from around the World



Taste your way around the world and discover how Sauvignon blancs and Merlots from some of the finest wine-producing regions differ in style. Led by cellar master Martin Moore, the wines of Durbanville Hills will be included among a selection from Chile, France, New Zealand and Australia. The tasting will be followed by dinner.

Date: Thursday, 25 July

Time: 18:30 for 19:00

Cost: R220 per person (includes welcome drink, comparative tasting, dinner, coffee or tea served with biscotti)

For more information on any of these events or to book contact Simone Brown on (021) 558 1300 or by sending an email to sibrown@durbanvillehills.co.za