



## DURBANVILLE HILLS

*wines shaped by the landscape*

Dear friend,

### *Varietal, rootstock, clone?*

With the vineyards now dormant over winter, our producers are planning their new plantings. In doing so they are very mindful of the needs of the cellar and take into account new trends in the market. Trying to predict the course of consumer preferences in a few years' time is a risky business. As you can imagine, the cost of establishing new vineyards is enormous, so choosing the wrong cultivar could be an expensive mistake as those vines could be in the soil for 25 years and longer. The only recourse the farmer has if the expected demand does not materialise is to graft another cultivar on to the existing vines but that also means an interruption of another year or two in production.

It is not only a question of what to plant but also where to plant. In choosing the location for a new vineyard, we use temperature plotters and rain meters for a season or two before planting. We determine prevailing winds, measure average wind speeds, do soil analyses and then see which cultivars match those conditions. The final choice is determined by what our needs are at the cellar. Once a decision has been made, we select the most suitable rootstock on to which the new vines will be grafted, also taking into account factors such as vigour, moisture needs, etc. When replanting existing vineyards the choice is much simpler as we have a history spanning many years to guide us.

The final step is to select the ideal clone for the location. Chardonnay gives us a choice of no less than 26 to choose from. Just in passing: Clones can come about through spontaneous mutation where the genetic material changes within a season to produce grapes of a different character. Cuttings made from such a vine and then propagated can lead to the release of a new clone.

I hope this clears up the uncertainty that I often find where some people still believe we start a new vineyard by planting pips!

### *The fog is moving in*

After a few seasons during which we have hardly been aware of fog, it has suddenly moved in with a vengeance, and during the past week or so our hills have been covered by a dense and all-pervading fog, some people consider a bit freaky. It is actually a quite uncomplicated phenomenon - nothing else but a low-lying stratus cloud usually brought about by a nearby body of water, in our case the Atlantic Ocean.

However, fog should not be confused with mist (you never realised there was a difference, did you?). Fog has a higher density at a relative humidity of close to 100% while mist occurs at a relative humidity of 70% or higher. When the relative humidity is below 70% the condition is referred to as a haze. (Interestingly, Afrikaans uses one word to describe all three phenomena. The distinction is made by using adjectives that mean thick, mild and slight.)

The highest frequency of fog in South Africa occurs along our West Coast where it covers the land about 50 days a year. Cape Town International Airport is situated at the southern tip of the West Coast and not so long ago there was still serious talk about either moving it out of the fog belt or building a second airport because of the many delayed flights. You often have the frustrating experience of hearing that the plane carrying the passengers you've come to pick up have been diverted to George 430 km away where they either have to wait for the fog to lift or, in the worst case, are bussed back to Cape Town.

It is the northwester which carries the fog inland off the cold Benguela current flowing up along the West Coast. When it starts drifting in from the sea – and where we perch high up on the hill we can detect it very early - we know the weather is changing and that rain will probably follow. This last week I cleaned my gutters just in time before the heavens opened up! Winter has truly arrived.

### *Tasting, spitting, blending and bottling*

When visitors hear the vineyards have gone into dormancy, their very next question usually is: "So what do you do now?" Well we taste, spit, blend and bottle...and sometimes travel.

The 2013 Dry Merlot Rosé is safely in the bottle and will soon make its appearance on the shelves. You will have to check the vintage on the label carefully for the wine is in colour and taste very close to the 2012. The components that will make up the 2013 Sauvignon blanc have been selected and blending has started. Next in line is the Chardonnay but first we have a bit of a breather as the wine is spending some time in wood or tank before being blended and bottled before October.

We are classifying all the reds this week keeping in mind what we want as an end result in the case of our varietal wines, blends and different tiers. The selected components will be barrelled down for separate maturation. They will be tasted regularly in the months ahead to monitor their progress and tell us when they should come out of the wood.

### *Funny teeth*

By now I am used to people staring at my red teeth after long spells of tasting red wine, thinking that I either have bleeding gums or ate something funny. Some dentists have made a study of the effects of wine tasting on teeth and what to do to avoid damage. The trick seems to be not to brush immediately after tasting as the deposits of tartaric acid will damage the enamel when being scraped off the surface. Keep in mind that in tasting, the wine is kept in the mouth for longer than when drinking it. Spitting it out brings the teeth in contact with the wine for a second time, more or less doubling the effect. The trick to minimise damage is to use alkaline saliva to neutralise the acidity by chewing sugarless gum that stimulates saliva production.

The effects of red wine on the teeth remind me of the comment of a friend from the rougher parts of the Winelands when someone asked about his red eyes after a rough night out... "You should see them from this side!"

So to whom shall we lift a glass in shivering hands this month? May I suggest Old Man Winter? May he bring us the cold the vines need for a proper rest and drench our soil and lift our moisture reserves before the summer sun starts beating down again!

Prost!

MARTIN MOORE

Cellar Master

Please visit our website on [www.durbanvillehills.co.za](http://www.durbanvillehills.co.za)

### *Latest News and Upcoming Events*

#### *Happy Father's Day!*



Treat your dad to a hearty lunch at The Eatery Restaurant which has recently been renovated, offering a contemporary space with panoramic views of Table Mountain, Table Bay, the rolling hills and adjoining vineyards.

The special father's day lunch includes a glass of Durbanville Hills Bastion and a grilled 200g sirloin steak served with a rich red wine lamb-shank sauce and sweet-potato crisps.

**Date:** Sunday, 16 June

**Time:** 12.00 – 15.00

**Venue:** The Eatery Restaurant, Durbanville Hills Wines

**Cost:** R135 per person

**Bookings essential** and can be made by contacting The Eatery on 021 558 1337 or by emailing [info@dheatery.co.za](mailto:info@dheatery.co.za)

### *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).

### *Fiction Night*



Ever wondered what inspires fiction authors to put pen to paper, how they conjured up their wacky characters, why they kill the hero or create page-turning suspense? Join fiction writers Consuelo Roland, Peter Merrington and Patricia Schonstein Pinnock and get the inside story.

**Date:** 6 June

**Time:** 18.30 for 19.00

**Cost:** R50 per person

If you would like to join please send your booking request to [joanne@jacana.co.za](mailto:joanne@jacana.co.za).

**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](mailto:sibrown@durbanvillehills.co.za)**