



## DE WETSHOF ESTATE

SOUTH AFRICA



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The imposing vistas of the snow-capped Langeberg Mountains and De Wetshof's dramatic winter vineyards were exchanged for a rainy summer in Bordeaux as our marketing team comprising Johann de Wet and Bennie Stipp joined wine-maker Peter de Wet at this year's Vinexpo, still the world's largest gathering-place for the wine world.

Thousands of producers from countries one had scarcely heard of - never mind known to be wine-making nations - as well as the presence of hallowed names from Bordeaux and Burgundy presented their products to trade and media from around the globe. It is big. It is breathlessly exciting. Tiring, at times and yes, daunting.

Yet, according to Johann de Wet, Vinexpo is one of the world's most important shows. Having a solid presence in the global market, many familiar faces from the European and American trade visited the De Wetshof stand to rekindle relationships.



*Beautiful Bordeaux*

"Besides seeing our old friends, it was especially interesting to note the number of Russian and Canadian wine-buyers who are suddenly showing an interest in South Africa, De Wetshof and Chardonnay," he said. "We are privileged to have relationships with certain European markets for over 30 years, but very excited about the interest being shown from countries wishing to discover South Africa and De Wetshof. There is a tremendous amount of potential out there, and Vinexpo makes one realise this."

### 2013 Wines Ready to Give Market a Taste of Quality

With two of our Chardonnays from this year's harvest being in the market – namely Bon Vallon and Limestone Hill – early predictions of a good quality 2013 vintage appear to be vindicated. Says Peter de Wet: "In terms of grape volumes harvested, 2013 was definitely a case of less is more."

"Yields were lower due to a long protracted winter and cool summer. But this meant excellent ripening conditions in the vineyards and superb grape quality which we are tasting in the wines bottled to date. The Chardonnays express their unique varietal characteristics and the influence of different soils, but flavours are concentrated and the wines have depth and structure.

Not since the wonderful harvest of 2009 have we seen such quality in the young wines, and customers are in for a treat."



*Peter de Wet at Wacky Wine Week-end*

### Wacky Wine Week-end and Learned Students

This year's 10th Wacky Wine Week-end in the Robertson Wine Valley reaffirmed this event as South Africa's largest regional wine festival. The usual array of activities was put on by our Valley's wineries, catering to all ages and all types of entertainment-hungry visitors.

As usual, De Wetshof had a wine-tasting area and Bernhard Hess from the Mimosa Lodge in Montagu brought his culinary skills to the restaurant marquee, treating visitors to sushi, steak, fish and soup. We also hosted a few tutored tastings in the (chilly!) barrel-maturation cellar, with Johann and Peter joining Bennie and wine-maker Mervyn Williams in offering those present an array of De Wetshof Chardonnays, with a couple of Burgundian wines slipped in to spice things up.

This year an eager team of younger wine-lovers booked-out one of the events, thanks to vinous socialite and De Wetshof friend Sybil Doms, whose family farm is nearby. In any event, it was heartening to see the enthusiasm shown by this team of Cape Town students, and Johann and Peter really had their work cut-out answering their questions. One particular lively debate on the origin of wood for barrels between Peter and a student ensued, and if these are the kind of wine-lovers who have to be catered for in future, that future is bright.

The audience were all passionate about Chardonnay and had a solid awareness of De Wetshof's status as one of the original producers of this wine in South Africa. They were very interested in the differences between wooded and un-wooded Chardonnays (Limestone Hill continues to be a firm favourite) and all enjoyed wine as part of a healthy, social lifestyle.



*The enthusiastic audience at Wacky Wine Week-end*



*Johann de Wet presenting his Chardonnay tasting*

### In the Vineyard

As Peter states above, good wine needs good grapes, making the vineyard the most important place in the wine-making chain. Especially on De Wetshof where each wine originates from a specific vineyard.

Currently, temperatures have been cold, allowing the vines to shut-down for a good winter's rest – although the usual barrage of cold fronts from the north-west has been slow in arriving.

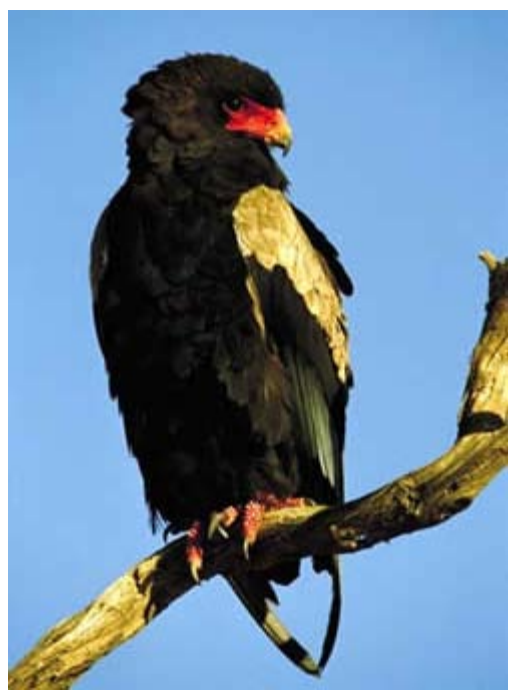
Most of the vines have lost their leaves, and our team of workers are currently pruning away the old shoots, leaving new ones behind from which those lovely green buds will sprout in Spring. But these are still early days to talk of Spring.

Winter is here, and the silence of the sleeping vines bodes well for next year's harvest.



*De Wetshof vineyards*

### New Fact on the Bateleur



*The majestic Bateleur*

A recent lunch-time discussion between Danie de Wet and some friends took a turn towards enlightenment (something lunches are made for!) when a guest at De Wetshof managed to shed some new light on the Bateleur eagle. The Bateleur is, of course, also the name of De Wetshof's flagship Chardonnay and by now we were under the impression we knew everything about this majestic bird there is to know. Not so, it would appear.

According to our guest, the famous hunter and naturalist Harry Selby noted some strange and unique behaviour between a Bateleur eagle and a leopard.

In a letter in the hunting magazine Magnum (2013), Selby wrote of a leopard's intolerance of vultures, especially after the cat had made a kill which obviously attracted the attention of these scavenger birds.

What he had been fortunate enough to observe, was that a leopard would drag its dead prey up a tree, allowing a Bateleur to be within one meter of the feast. The presence of the Bateleur would keep the vultures away, and the eagle would even take-off for a quick scavenger-chasing session before returning to sit with the feasting leopard. Realising that there is no such thing as a free lunch, the leopard would even allow the Bateleur to feed from the very same kill the cat was dining on!

What a poignant scenario, and a prime example of teamwork in warding off the scavengers.

In vino veritas, sure, but we can also learn a lot from nature.

Kind regards,

*The De Wet Family*