



## DURBANVILLE HILLS

*wines shaped by the landscape*

Dear friend,

August is the month when we normally finish pruning just as winter starts to leave our shores and the days start to get warmer. Before I left on a week-long visit to Auckland, New Zealand, I thought the farmers were over-eager already cutting away excess growth as a precursor to a second visit during which the selected shoots are cut to the desired length.

However, on my return I found fruit trees in full blossom and some un-pruned Chardonnay vines already budding on the ends - we call these "flags" for obvious reasons. The warm spell did not last long and my hope that spring had truly arrived was soon doused by torrential rains in the weeks that followed. The cold that accompanied the rain stopped the vines in their tracks and sent them back to bed. Although the cold and rain do not seem to be over yet, the dams are overflowing and the soil saturated so I guess it will be one of those years where we will only start irrigating late in the season should it be needed.

### *Wine... another medical breakthrough*

It's been known for a while that the alcohol as well as some of the anti-oxidants present in wine may help to prevent heart disease by increasing the so-called good cholesterol and protecting against damage to arteries. We learned some years ago that the skins of red grapes contain 3,5,4'-trihydroxy-trans-stilbene (ok, let's just call it resveratrol) which ends up in the wine through its contact with the skins. It was found in experiments involving rats and mice that resveratrol helps protect against cancer, diabetes and inflammation. Reason enough to fill the glass, I'd say!

Now some clever guys in white jackets at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus have provided us further reason to drink red wine (obviously in moderation!). They've discovered no fewer than 23 new and potentially health enhancing molecules in red wine they think might lead to future medical breakthroughs. These molecules are called stilbenoids (now you know why I mentioned the other name for resveratrol above) and in addition to the 23 new ones, there are no fewer than 43 of them present in wine. While researchers investigate their potential for new medicines and other pharmaceutical products, me thinks doctors should in the interim period simply prescribe a dose of red wine to their patients.

### *It's all in the mind*

I'm often confronted by "wine experts" making statements based on what they claim they read somewhere or heard somewhere. At a wine show recently a visitor was most derogatory about the fact that some of our red wines for export had screw caps instead of corks "which are so much more beneficial for the wine". However, on offering our critic a comparative tasting he backed off saying he didn't drink red wine!

Marketers have been trying to understand for years what makes consumers pick a particular wine off the shelf and whether that choice is determined by a perception of quality. In 2001 a Bordeaux researcher with a somewhat malicious sense of humour, asked 54 students to give their views of two wines – the one a very expensive looking wine and the other a typical French vin ordinaire. Do I need to say both bottles contained the cheap wine? The students gave glowing descriptions like "complex and full" of the fake "expensive" wine while describing the other as "weak and flat".

To expose the pretensions of people further he coloured a white wine with a neutral red food colouring and presented it, unbeknown to the 54 students, along with conventional reds and asked them to describe the wines. Not one of the 54 identified the fake but instead commented in the usual red wine terminology on its berry flavours and well-balanced tannins.

In 2008 the California Institute of Technology decided to literally pick the brains of twenty volunteers, connecting them to brain scanners while they were tasting wine. In the experiment five bottles of wine ranging in price from \$5 to \$90 were tasted although there were only three wines, with two of them again presented in both cheap- and expensive-looking bottles. When tasting a wine, the same parts of the brain would light up every time, but when tasters thought the wine was expensive, a particular area of the brain became more active. There is an area in the prefrontal cortex of the brain that is responsible for feelings of pleasure, and apparently that area is stimulated more by tasting what is supposed to be an expensive wine.

### *What's up in the cellar?*

Preparing wines for bottling takes up most of our time as we stock up for the end-of-year rush. The 2013 Sauvignon blanc and Merlot Rosé have already received much positive feedback from the market. More bottlings of these blends will soon be finding their way to the shelves, while the first bottling of 2013 Durbanville Hills Chardonnay will soon follow suit. Keep an eye out for this one for I believe 2013 will be remembered as a Chardonnay vintage of note. The reds have been tucked away for maturation, replacing the older vintages which are now being bottled. We cannot wait for the blending of the reds from what was an exceptional 2013 vintage, but we'll simply have to be patient.

### *It's a jungle out there*

My recent visit to the Kruger National Park seemingly put the animals around the cellar at their ease. Our resident Cape eagle owl is back on her spot in the wild fig tree behind the cellar but will only start nesting in November. Among our regular visitors are small antelopes, black weasels, porcupines, guinea fowl, various other bird species and a snake now and then. This week we were first surprised by the appearance of a wild peacock and then by a caracal who scared the wits out of one of our security guards. Another rare visitor was a huge secretary bird, a member of the eagle family, spotted striding along close to the road on a neighbouring farm.

There's never a dull moment here at the cellar so come for a game walk! I shall brook no counter-suggestions. This month we raise a glass to those intrepid researchers of British Columbia who has shown again how essential red wine is to our health!

Prost!

MARTIN MOORE

Cellar Master

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

### *Latest News and Upcoming Events*

#### *Heritage & Braai Day Treats*



Celebrate the rich heritage and culture of our country at the cellar on Heritage and Braai Day, 24 September. Join us for live music and a variety of gourmet boerewors rolls and chicken sosaties fresh from the braai, each served with interesting, creative toppings.

The restaurant will be open for breakfast and lunch with an a la carte menu and you can relax in the tasting room, sample some of the cellar's award-winning wines with a chocolate or biltong pairing, or spread out on the lawns under the olive grove.

The tasting room will be open from 10.00 until 15.00 and live music will be available from 11.00 until 14.00.

**Date:** Tuesday, 24 September

**Time:** 10.00 – 15.00 (live music from 11.00 – 14.00)

**Cost:** Free entry but charges apply to tastings and food ordered.

#### *Season of Sauvignon*



Enjoy the crisp, lively zestiness of Sauvignon blanc with us at the annual Durbanville Wine Valley's Season on Sauvignon. Taste our range of flagship Sauvignon blancs as well as those from all the wine producers in the Durbanville area. Take part in an interactive sensory tasting on both the Saturday and Sunday and discover how sweet, sour, bitter and savoury flavours change the taste profile of a Sauvignon blanc. Entertainment for the kids, live music and food from a number of stalls will be on offer as well as picnic baskets and charcuterie platters. The restaurant will also be open for breakfast and lunch.

**Date:** Saturday, 5, & Sunday, 6 October

**Time:** 10.00 - 17.00. Sensory tastings on both days start at 11.00

**Cost:** Entry is free. Wine tasting which includes a crystal glass, costs R50 per person. Sensory tasting experience at R60 per person.

#### *Halloween Sunset Run*



Join us this Halloween for a trial run as the sunsets. It's a great way to appreciate the rolling hills of the area as you chase the setting sun. The 5km and 10km run starts and finishes at the cellar and the route meanders through the vineyards offering spectacular scenery along the way. Bring your own head-light and dress up in Halloween costumes to stand a chance in winning a prize. Wine tasting, wine sales and gourmet burgers available. The restaurant will also be open for dinner.

**Date:** Thursday, 31 October

**Time:** Registration from 17.00 with the trail run starting at 18:00

**Distance:** 5km or 10 km trail

**Cost:** Entry fee is R60 per runner.

**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)**