



Dear friend,

In writing to you for the last time in 2013 I don't know whether I should talk about what lies behind or predict what I believe lies ahead, particularly as far as the weather is concerned. In September I told you of tractors stuck in the vineyards; last month I shared my ideas on climate change. Now both seem to have come together in November with 60mm of rain caused by a Black South-Easter. In getting "only" 60mm of rain we seem to have been fortunate compared to some other areas of the Winelands where more than 200mm of rain fell in just two days.

The Cape Doctor, the strong south-easterly wind that normally blows during fair weather this time of year, helps to ensure that the vines stay healthy. Occasionally, in Spring and Autumn, it can be accompanied by a cut-off low-pressure system, bringing in heavy rain from the "wrong" side and causing flash floods and soaked vineyards so that locals then call it by the ominous name of Black South-Easter.

The Weather office, contrary to its usual pronouncement, did not state this phenomenon was "normal for this time of the year", but issued timely warnings of potential flooding in certain areas, predictions which proved to be only too accurate. Friends from the rougher parts of the Winelands claimed they recorded 130mm halfway through the downpour. However, they couldn't provide any subsequent information as their rain meters overflowed and they don't like going out into the wet, not even in the interest of science.

Free fertiliser

Growth in the vineyards in our area tends to be somewhat vigorous and we strive to keep crop and vegetation in balance to help ensure grapes of good quality. To this end we have made numerous changes to trellis systems, vineyard practices, irrigation and nutrition in the past number of years.

So it was with some alarm that I heard thunder ahead of the rain because I knew the balance we nurture so carefully was about to be disturbed. I was in town when it happened and a passerby must have noticed my stricken look because he said: "You can be sure there's a lot of rain on the way." I don't think he quite caught my drift when I added rather grumpily: "And a lot of fertiliser too."

As you all know, air consists of a combination of gases of which by far the biggest component is nitrogen at slightly more than 78%, followed by oxygen at just under 21%. Nitrogen in its free form is of very little use as nutrition except when the enormous energy released by lightning breaks up nitrogen molecules enabling them to bind with oxygen to form nitrogen oxides that are soluble in rain water and can be utilised by plants. Green swimming pools after thunderstorms confirm this, as algae love this food from heaven. They produce their masses of green slime in even greater abundance when the ozone, which is also contained in the rain drops, depletes the chlorine.

In the vineyards we control exactly the amounts of fertiliser provided and prefer to do without any "freebies". However, when we do end up with such an unexpected "gift" we very carefully remove the resultant exuberant growth to restore and maintain the balance.

A recap for the summer

We have a couple of bottlings to do to build up stocks before our cellar staff can start thinking of going off on what some of us believe is a well-deserved Christmas break. We do so to ensure the shelves don't run dry in our absence. As I'm convinced summer is going to put in an appearance sooner or later, our first priority is to ensure you will always be able to lay your hands on a bottle (or more) of the Dry Merlot Rosé, the Lightly Wooded Chardonnay and our award-winning Sauvignon Blanc, all in the Durbanville Hills range.

We know from past experience that on those lazy summer days our Rosé combines effortlessly with casual cheese and meat platters or with sushi, sashimi and seared tuna. Over the past few years, South Africans have certainly picked up on the Mediterranean consumption of rosé. Remember also that the Durbanville Hills Rosé is made in the classic way- it is not simply a blend of red and white wine that ends up as some pink stuff in a bottle.

The Lightly Wooded Chardonnay goes well with a wide range of lighter dishes. Chardonnay is still the biggest selling white cultivar globally and is produced in a variety of styles. Our version in the Durbanville Hills range is very slightly wooded and shows lively citrus flavours, while the Rhinofields Chardonnay with its well-integrated wood on the palate, serves as a more complex food wine.

I'm convinced that besides complementing fish dishes during a lighter lunch, much Sauvignon blanc is also consumed while preparing food. It must be the wine of choice on sunny days when crackling hearth fires have been replaced by hot coals sizzling under the braai. However, making the fire and waiting for the flames to subside into coals is thirsty work and a crisp and fruity white can be a great cure for a dry throat.

The Rhinofields Sauvignon Blanc is the more complex and concentrated big brother of the Durbanville Hills crowd pleaser and calls for slower enjoyment with a range of suitable food. This time of year is also a time for oysters and I must still come across a wine that complements them better than our Biesjes Craal Sauvignon Blanc, a wine which reflects the true terroir and backbone of this varietal in our area.

A few years ago I got a call from a slightly irate Karoo farmer who said in his view the information on food pairing on the back label of our Sauvignon blanc was wrong as it did not include lamb. No one, he told me, switches from a nicely chilled dry white enjoyed while braaing to red just because the chops are now ready. Of course he was right and the best suggestion I could come up with was for him to try our lighter, berry-style Pinotage, slightly chilled... Why not try that over the holidays?

Ho Ho Ho!

The festive season seems to make the hand reach into the pocket with less reluctance than usual. But the good news is that this rule won't apply as far as our wines are concerned. They are available at very appealing prices... so keep your eyes peeled.

As always at this time of the year I raise a glass to no one else but you. Have a great holiday break, drive carefully and come home safely. And may this time be filled for us all with joy and genuine goodwill to those around us.

Prost!

MARTIN MOORE

Cellar Master

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

Latest News and Upcoming Events

Summer Picnics



The scenic views of Table Mountain, Table Bay, the rolling hills and adjoining vineyards from our cellar is the perfect setting to soak away the winter blues under the olive grove with the beautiful bespoke throws and comfy pillows that come standard with each picnic booked.

The hand-woven wicker basket includes a bottle of Durbanville Hills Merlot Rosé and a wonderful selection of picnic treats. The kids can tuck into the "5 Ants" before shedding some energy on the free-form jungle gym.

Picnic season: October 2013 – April 2014

Cost: R310 per two people sharing and R75 per child

Bookings are required at least 48 hours in advance during the week and for weekend picnics, please book on the Friday by 12:00.

Summer in a glass



The fresh, lively taste of our 2013 Merlot Rosé is the perfect wine to enjoy this summer. Not only will its gorgeous pomegranate hue bring a festive feel to your get-together but its versatility will pair with a variety of dishes - from braised duck, turkey breast, seared tuna steak to berry desserts, mezze, salads and roast chicken.

The wine is dry, light-bodied and bursts with raspberry, rose petals and fresh summer berries.

Sunset Concert



Enjoy a glass of Sauvignon Blanc as you watch the sun setting over Table Bay and Table Mountain with a memorable performance by Gerrie Pretorius, all in aid of the Môresterretjies crèche, a day-care centre for the children of farm workers in the Durbanville area. Bring your own picnic blanket (no chairs allowed) as well as your own picnic basket, or pre-order one from the Durbanville Hills restaurant. The restaurant will also have chicken burgers, wine, hot chocolate, coffee, tea and cold drinks for sale.

Date: Friday, 31 January 2014

Time: Gates open at 18:00 and the concert starts at 19:30

Cost: R120 per person and bookings can be made at www.webtickets.co.za. Entry free for children under 12.

To pre-order a picnic basket or for more information, contact Simone Brown on 021 558 1300 or info@durbanvillehills.co.za

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