



DE WETSHOF ESTATE

SOUTH AFRICA



news | december 2013

De Wetshof Estate played host to a very special event in the calendar of the Commanderie de Bordeaux's South African chapter when the first Fête de la Fleur was held on the farm in October. The Fête de la Fleur (Festival of the Flower) has been held annually in the Bordeaux wine region since 1950 to celebrate the grape blooms on which wine-makers pin all their hopes.

Vine growers wait anxiously for these blooms to appear and deem them a vital indication of the coming harvest as the quality of the flowering is indicative of both the quality and quantity of the future harvest.

The South African chapter of the Commanderie de Bordeaux, a hallowed institution created to honour the Bordeaux wine culture, was established in 2011. The Commanderie is close to De Wetshof's heart - Danie de Wet, a member of the Bordeaux chapter in France, is on the management committee of the local chapter where De Wetshof winemaker Peter de Wet is also a member.

"It is a great honour to host the first Fête de la Fleur in South Africa on De Wetshof," said Danie during the October event. "This is one of Bordeaux's most special occasions, and to have it in Robertson and on De Wetshof brings a very unique part of the world's wine culture to our winelands."

During the gathering on De Wetshof for the illustrious event, three new members were inducted into South African Chapter of the Commanderie de Bordeaux. These were: Siobhan Thompson, new CEO of Wines of South Africa, wine judge, writer and Cape Wine Master Winnie Bowman and Luke Krone from the well-known Twee Jongegezellen wine estate.



Commanderie de Bordeaux welcomes new members: from left are Hein Koegelenberg, Luke Krone, Hanneli Rupert, Siobhan Thompson, Winnie Bowman and Danie de Wet.

With various members of the Commanderie and guests present, the evening was a highlight on the South African wine calendar, one which would have made the Bordeaux patrons proud indeed.

Unseasonable weather



November was a tough time for climate change skeptics. Typhoons in the Far East. Floods in Europe. Unseasonable early snow ... and at the start of the South African summer - in November - De Wetshof experienced cold temperature, torrential rain, harsh winds and even a hail-storm that delivered stones the size of pigeon eggs.

Fortunately no damage was done to the vineyards, but the cold temperatures saw flowering and berry-set occurring in slow motion. And once again, this year we predict a harvest which will commence a week or two later than usual - as was the case in the harvest of 2013.

Later can be good, however, as the slower-ripening fruit gets a chance to collect complex, deep flavours which will hopefully carry through to the wines. But as any farmer will tell you, you don't make predictions on a harvest until the first bunch of grapes falls into the basket!

On the Road

Peter de Wet was invited to the Dijon International and Gastronomic Fair in the heart of Burgundy, France where he had the experience of sharing his wines with some of the most discerning members of the world's wine public.

"As part of a select group of South African wine producers asked to show our wines at the Fair's ViniDivio Wine Exhibition, it was an enormous privilege to engage with French wine-lovers," says De Wet. "The fact that De Wetshof specialises in the Burgundian varieties of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir which we were presenting in the Burgundian capital of Dijon made this a challenging, exciting and - for a passionate lover of these varieties - rather heartfelt experience."

De Wet says that visitors to the ViniDivio Exhibition ranged from young and old, professional to recreational wine-lovers, students and journalists. "But no matter from which walk of life they came, all these people shared a knowledge and respect for wine which I found startling. A shaggy-haired student would grill you on the use of malolactic fermentation in South Africa while a housewife donning a baguette in one hand and a glass in the other wanted to know the timeline from veraison to harvesting in our sunny climate."



Dijon, in the heart of Burgundy



Johann was on the other side of the English Channel presenting De Wetshof wines at the Decanter Fine Wine Encounter held at London's Landmark Hotel. According to Johann, this must be one of the world's premier wine events, not only as the best of France, Australia, South Africa and the Americas are present, but also due to the knowledgeable attendees.

"Those members of the public attending the Fine Wine Encounter are incredibly well-informed wine-lovers," says Johann. "They know about South Africa's terroir, our grape varieties and wine styles, and sharing our wines with people like these is very rewarding as they are immensely appreciative and eager to be engaged in discussions on subjects such as site-specific vineyards and the image and impressions of Brand South Africa."

"After a few days engaging with the visitors you get the feeling that they have taught you as much as you have taught them, which is very rewarding."

Wedding Bells

October saw a splendid spring wedding on De Wetshof when Johann de Wet married Gera Smuts on the 12th of that month.

Gera, daughter of well-known Robertson farmer Anton and his wife Hanneli, grew-up on a farm literally just down the road from De Wetshof. Some 180 guests attended the ceremony held in the De Wetshof barrel-maturation cellar before moving to the translucent marquee tent under the stars where young and old danced the night away.

The new Mr and Mrs de Wet honeymooned in Mauritius and are settling on De Wetshof where Gera runs a graphic design business while Johann tends to his duties as in the estates marketing and viticultural departments.



Johann and Gera De Wet

Season's Greetings



We would like to end by wishing everyone all the best for the festive season. May you and yours have a well-earned break after another busy year and may everyone enjoy everything this special part of the calendar brings.

And please do not forget to come and say hello when you find yourself in the Robertson Wine Valley, home to De Wetshof.

Kind regards,

The De Wet Family