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APRIL 2014



DURBANVILLE HILLS

CAPE TOWN. OUR LOCATION MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

A BOUNTIFUL CROP

The 2013 crop was an exceptional one so we expected the 2014 harvest to be smaller, for that has been our experience over the years - more is followed by less. However, we were blessed with abundant winter rains and during spring there were no violent winds to interfere with the flowering of the vines. That's when we realised we were seeing the perfect conditions for high fertility in the vineyards, and that if nothing untoward happened we would have to ready ourselves for another bumper crop.

Time proved us right. We've had a bountiful but also brilliant quality harvest. The presses were kept running and they in turn kept us scuttling about the cellar trying to create tank space for all the newly fermented young wines. This is an exercise, I may add, that requires the ability of a top-class chess player in seeing three, four moves ahead.

Make no mistake, it was a challenging season. Thank goodness for an experienced team that knows to do the right thing at the right time. But you must be more interested to hear about the young wines, so I'm happy to tell you the outlook is excellent, with both the Sauvignon blanc and the Chardonnay showing strong fruit flavours. We also have a good diversity of flavour profiles, the key to good blending. The more diverse the fruit flavours among the components, the greater the complexity that can be achieved.

The considerable variation between day and night temperatures also ensured good colour in the reds with excellent varietal expression.

2014 IS ONE FOR RECORD BOOKS

- The biggest crop in the history of Durbanville Hills Wines – which means we sure won't run dry.
- For the first time in my experience, Sauvignon blanc was picked on one farm as late as April - in fact, on the 1st of April, and that is no joke.
- The first light snow fell on mountains in the Western Cape on 3 April. The Weather Office was quick to say it does not necessarily imply the onset of winter. My oak tree, which is already shedding its leaves, begs to differ.
- And, finally: With stocks of the 2013 Sauvignon blanc running dangerously low, it is with great relief that I can tell you that the first bottles of the 2014 Durbanville Hills Sauvignon blanc will be on the shelves of your favourite liquor store by late April - earlier than ever before.

A PAIN IN THE TOOTH

We are busy classifying the wines for the different blends and it is a tough task, especially on the teeth which get coated by wine both with the sipping and the spitting. The rule is not to brush directly after a tasting as the tartaric acid scrapes the enamel, or what is left of it, from the surface of the teeth. So you chew sugarless gum to stimulate the flow of saliva of which the high alkaline content neutralises most of the acid before brushing. I've become accustomed to people staring at my red teeth when popping into a supermarket after tasting a flight of 60 staining young red wines.

FOOD AND WINE

We often have to do food and wine evenings and recently between the hustle and bustle of the harvest invited food and wine fundi Katinka van Niekerk, co-author of *The Food and Wine Pairing Guide*, to provide us with some formal training on the subject.

Despite my other *faux pas* (the less said the better) I was at least correct in first considering the weight of the food when deciding on the weight of the wine and likewise the intensity of flavours. We did some interesting tasting and pairing in looking at the third consideration: namely the five primary taste sensations saltiness, sweetness, acidity, bitterness and the lesser known umami or savoury sensation.

I have always enjoyed pairing food and wine and fondly remember the opening of a restaurant with two of the country's top chefs preparing the meal. The hit of the evening was a chocolate log with a very high content of cocoa to ensure enough bitterness to complement the wine - a chilled Rhinofields Merlot. We did it over three evenings and I still bump into people saying it was the finest pairing they have ever encountered (most probably because it was a pretty unusual combination and also because of the skill of the two chefs in matching the bitterness of the chocolate with the wine).

While talking about food and wine pairing I must also point out that there is nothing wrong with drinking your favourite wine with whatever it is you're having for lunch or dinner - as long as you avoid, in doing so, difficult customers like artichokes, capers, too much garlic, horseradish, soy sauce, tomatoes and too many herbs and spices. Remember the saying "buy on apple, sell on cheese" which refers to the ability of apple to show flaws in a wine and cheese to mask it.

RHINOFIELDS CHARDONNAY'S TOP 10 AND GOLD MEDAL

To gauge whether our wines can stand their own against all comers we enter some local competitions such as Veritas and Michelangelo and international ones such as Chardonnay du Monde held at Château des Ravatys, the wine estate in Burgundy of the Pasteur Institute. The organisers seem to set extremely high standards – their "rigorously selected" panel of judges who taste within the ISO 9002 Quality Insurance standard, are first trained in tasting methodology at a one-day session followed by an assessment of the skill of each taster.

I therefore felt highly elated on hearing we had secured a second Top 10 position in this competition with our Rhinofields Chardonnay. We got Gold Top 10 for our 2010 Rhinofields Chardonnay and now again, we made position no 6, for the 2012 vintage. Be a little patient, though. Right now we are selling the 2011 Rhinofields Chardonnay, released at a good age. That means that the 2012 vintage must all still come on the market.

So, to whom shall we raise our glasses this month? Could I suggest the weather, which conspired so wonderfully to provide us with an exceptional harvest in 2014?

Prost!

MARTIN MOORE
Cellar Master

JOIN THE DURBANVILLE HILLS WINE CLUB

And receive a quarterly selection of 12 exceptional red or white wines personally chosen by me, and delivered straight to your doorstep - just one of a long list of benefits you're entitled to as a Wine Club member.

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DURBANVILLE HILLS NEWS AND EVENTS

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Not for sale to persons under the age of 18. By clicking on any link on this email I confirm that: I am the intended recipient of this email; am 18 years or older, and am a member of Durbanville Hills community.



Please drink responsibly

