



The view from Table Mountain overlooking Cape Town

very city has a thousand stories to tell, Cape Town, South Africa tells the story of Dutch and Portuguese explorers and spice traders who brought in French winemakers to plant grapes when the turmoil of the Reformation in 16th century Europe was driving the farmers to migrate out of France. The year 1688 also saw the arrival of Huguenot refugees from France. These independently minded growers moved to South Africa with the promise of land in this rich, new African country. By the early 1700's, South African wines were held in high esteem.

Cape Town also tells the story of Sir Cecil John Rhodes who settled Rhodesia and created De Beers Diamonds. Thousands of immigrants moved to the Cape for sudden wealth. It also tells the more modern story of Nelson Mandela in prison, on a small island off the coast near Cape Town harbor. Modern Cape Town will tell the story of some excellent wines and winemakers, as well as stories of the luxurious settings of South Africa's beautiful hotels and popular restaurants.

The Bay is the size of San Francisco Bay with a better, warmer climate. The wine

growing regions on the end of the African continent have cooling ocean breezes and micro-climates, which are so excellent for growing great wine grapes. Today, all these stories lead the South African wine business & winemakers into the future with a long and interesting wine making tradition. This is a tradition that is hundreds of years longer than the other New World wine areas, and it shows in the elegant old hotels and winery properties that are in some of the nicest locations in the world.

Cape Town is all these influences rolled into one bustling traditional looking city.

The hotels are a rare wonder with first class service and haute cuisine derived from a farming tradition going back centuries.

The sultry and warm Californialike weather leads to great produce and wonderfully fresh foods and

the native game provides exotic meats and fowl as the norm.

We had embarked upon what is to become a truly unforcettable and unique adventure. Jeremy Wilkinson, President/CEO of Great Wines International (a leading importer of South African wines into the USA) personally leads two unique "Behind the Scenes" gourmer food & wine tours in April and September of each year. This time we are a group of wine writers, critics, wine distributors and wine enthusiasts... all virgin travelers to South Africa.

Table Mountain Lodge





On Day One of this incredible whirlwind adventure, we land in Cape Town. We arrive at the Admiral Nelson Hotel (Nelly to her friends). The Old World elegance of breakfast with sandwiches and pastries were there to greet us as we walked in after a long flight. We were made to feel like long lost relatives as we sat outside, on the beautiful patio.

We relaxed until evening where we enjoyed "High Tea" on the verandah, a quintessential experience of the Cape's colonial era. Great Wines International then chauffeured us on to an adventure at Table Mountain, which frames the city of Cape Town. We rode the cable car to the very top of Table Mountain and saw the most spectacular sunset in recent memory.

You can see out across the horizon to the end of the earth. It's no wonder the Flat Earth Society exists, as we view this great expanse. The sun goes orange into the sunset and it is spectacular. Accompanied by an outstanding glass of South African champagne, being equally enjoyed by my fellow tour guests, I warch for the last seconds as the sun dips beneath the glassine seas and flashes a green strobe of light for an instant... then the sun is gone. The vision leaves me in stunned silence; stunned ... too dull a word. This is a sight I've been told of but have witnessed for the first time. An instance of awe leaves us completely satisfied. The whole experience is beyond description without the gifts of a poet. All too quickly, we

are on the cable car headed downward into the lights of Cape Town. The view of the clouds and cliffs over Cape Town, are a stage for the performance of heaven. Harrowing, huge clouds rolling around rugged cliffs, then blowing off, and starting again. Cape Town has seen it all. At the Admiral Nelson Bar, we are served cocktails with a smile and wraparound full service comfort. Jeremy Wilkinson toasted us (many times) with "Jabula" and we are happy and content to be in South Africa!

Day 2 of this trip, I am up and we are moving down the coast at 7 am, along the Cape Peninsula to the dramatic Cape Point. Our first

stop is at Boulder's Beach, where we visit the miniature penguin colonies. Yes, penguins! Hundreds of penguins are nesting among the beautiful South African beach neighborhoods. The almost one foot tall tuxedo clad birds are feeding and diving in



Boulder's Beach at Cape Point

and out of the water. These native residents seem to be viewing the silly humans as we walk down the boardwalks above them.

silly humans as we walk down the boardwalks above them.

We continued to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve. You can either walk or take the funicular to the Point where panoramic views

of the dramatic southwestern edge of Africa are at their best. I took the funicular railway to the Cape of Good Hope and the lighthouse peak. I stood looking at the end of the African continent, with awesome views down to the beautiful sandy beaches and

ocean below.

We see baboons up close. Don't let them see you are eating, we are told. On the way back to Cape Town, we go in and out of native markets

and gift stands along the roads, seeing incredible



The Admiral Nelson Hotel





The River Cafe

sculptural art and jewelry of carved wood, jade and stone. We cross over the Cape and come back again onto a windy road next to the milky surf of the Atlantic coastline. In the surf are beautiful rocks that whistled softly in the breeze and perfect white beaches, without a footprint on them. The weather is unbelievable and we see a zebra on the horizon. Wow, I get it! I really am in Africa!



Next, we go to lunch in a restaurant that could be in the Napa Valley of California or Provence, France. At a wonderful indooroutdoor restaurant, we eat on the patio in the shade.



Everything modern in that laid back way called the River Café in the town of Constantia. We are served a lovely salad with fresh local ingre-

dients, California style, and it reminds me of Mustards Restaurant in Napa. They are serving African game as well as traditional fusion cuisine, mixing French and Mediterranean influences with African produce and meats. The food is beautifully presented, and of course, the 10 of us tried everything on the menu. The owners are very helpful and the wines were at once engaging, great South African wines.



After lunch, we explored Cape Town's Waterfront and took advantage of the abundance of magnificent shopping opportunities including antiques, textiles, carvings and other traditional arts and crafts.

Exquisite Dining at these South African Restaurants



LE QUARTIER FRANCAS IN FRANSCIHOEK, A RELAIS & CHATEAUX PROPERTY EXECUTIVE CHIEF MARGOT JAMES



THE PALACE, AT THE CHIS'S TABLE EXECUTIVE CHIS PETER WASHOUGHE SPECIALISMS IN THE NATURAL INGREDIENTS OF THE AREA



WINERY ROAD 96 RESTAURANT EXECUTIVE CHEE KATHY ROMER-LEE FEATURING LOCAL GAME AND ORGANIC INGREDIENTS.

STELLENBOSCH REGION

Day 3 is Sunday and we start our wine tour in the true center of the Winelands, and its oldest and largest region,

and its oldest and largest region, Stellenbosch. Home to the country's premier University and finest oenological program, Stellenbosch also has by far the highest concentration of wine estates. This intensely farmed district is considered by many to be the foremost red wine producing area of South Africa.

We drive across the Cape country through low foothills overlooking the two large bays on either side of a different occan. We are driving through rich fields with beautiful, quaint farms on mostly two lane-paved roads with people madly careening down the wrong side of the road. Drivers notwithstanding, it reminds me of the hill country in Texas or our Yakima Valley in Washington, with small rolling hills and sharp cliffs jutting up 1,000 feet on either side. Houses are quaint and interspersed with modern abodes, as well. This is a prosperous, modern country with many small and shining new cars.

We will visit the finest South African Wineries the country has to offer on this trip, including Avontuur, Lancerac, Vergenoegd, Landskroon, Eikendal, Jabu, Cape View, Boland Montestell, Mooiuitsig, and Van Loveren. We will dine in Relais & Chateaux properties such as Haute Cabrière, and Le Quartier Francais, paired with South African wines. We will not rest until we have tasted it all, and we will do our best to remember it complete-

ly. This article offers only a tiny glimpie, but more stories will be coming, as we cover the Palace of the Lost City in Sun City, South Africa in the next issue of Food and Beverage International.

Lanzerac

We have checked out of the Admiral Nelson and have now checked into the famous Lanzerac Manor and Winery, an cleant five star hotel

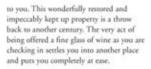


and restaurant on one of the most famous estates in South Africa. The 155 hectare estate was established in 1692 under the name of Schoongezicht, which is Dutch, for beautiful outlook. It is truly beautiful to look at. It is nestled deep in the cleft of the verdant Jonkershoek Valley, and within view of the majestic Helderberg Mountains.

It's location is situated right in the middle of the famous South African wine producing areas of Stellenbosch, Parl, Franschock and Somerset West, and within close distance of world renowned golf courses and pristine beaches of the Strand, Gordon's Bay and Cape Town. Close to town, yet nestled into the craggy mountains and rolling valleys of seclusion, the backdrop for the next South African hospitality experience awaits us.

Once again, the service was impeccable. The rooms are the size of a New York apartment and sitting in the lobby, in an old stuffed leather chair, you can imagine Sir Winston Churchill sitting down next

Langerac Manor and Winery



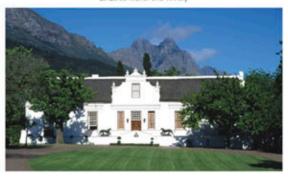
Today, the winery is cultivated by owner Christo Wiese, along with winemaker Wynand Hamman.

Wynand conducts our tasting and steers us into a direction which helps us to appreciate that great winemaking does not begin in the cellar, it begins in the vineyard. As Wynand weaves us through the story of ancient vines in the vineyard and advanced science and technology in the cellar, we begin to understand the complexity of the Langerac wine.

We first taste the Lanzerac Chardonnay, an excellent combination of ripe citrus, hint of clove, ginger and an infusion of butterscotch and vanilla. Continuing with the whites, we then move to a Lanzerac Sauvignon Blanc, which was harvested at an altitude of 450m. This ripe, fruity wine with its characteristic green fig flavor, gently caresses the palate with its smooth and full bodied feel.

As we move into the reds, we all marvel at the deep dark and velvety feel of the Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, however the crowning touch came when we tasted the Pinotage. We are just getting to know the Pinotage grape, as it is a

South African treasure, and we linger a bit longer on it. The Lanzerac Pinotage is a deep, luxurious velvety smooth plummy red, with a whisp of chocolate and caramel flavors. It's full body feel is complete with a fruit and wood balance. We taste this wine again with dinner that evening. paired perfectly with a Malay curry.





Hugo De Villier of Lanskroon with Phillip Retief



Winemaker Paul de Villier of Lanskroon with winemaker Wynand Hamman of Langerac



Winemaker Danie Steytler, Cape View

The reds are rated by the Who's Who in the Wine Industry as among the very finest and will compete with premium wines in the \$100 price range, yet are sold in the USA for under \$28, "fair dinkum" as they say in Australia. They all rate gold medals and are a favorite choice of fine eating establishments in the USA such as Smith & Wollensky, BICE, Ruth Chris Steak House, Morton's, Lawry's, PF Changs and many more.

However, I found the Lanzerac Chardonnay to be the home run of the entire trip. It's complexity of flavors are excellent with smoked salmon, lobster, white fish, creamy pasta and white meats. It is being featured in first class for United Airlines on international flights and is the premier choice for some of the world's finest hotels. This is the first Chardonnay I would choose to serve to my most important client or best friend.

Cape View

Near Lanzerac is Cape View, based in the Bottelary Hills of Stellenbosch. It is our next stop and will remain forever a part of my South African wine tasting experience. This is a small farm of 380 acres founded in 1712, with a boutique style winery. With excellent soil types and microclimates for grapes and facilities just the size for personalized production, it produces some of the very best wines.

Winemaker Danie Steytler has won the top award for the best Pinotage in South Africa (the prestigious ABSA award trophy for 2000). This is the first great Pinotage I've ever tasted. Pinotage is South Africa's national grape and is its own varietal. It has best been described as a 1920's cross between pinot noir and cinsult ('hermitage').

Danie won the "Best Red wine in the Southern Hemisphere" in Atlanta Georgia's International Wine Competition 2002 for his Pinotage and many more awards. Danie and his lovely wife put on a real traditional South Afrikaans barbecue ("a braai") over a wood fire while seated on their patio. Here, we also got to sample South Africa's versions of beef jerky. This tasty snack food is called biltong. It is made of beef, ostrich or game (Kudu, Wildebeest & Reebok), animals I have

only seen on TV. While enjoying the unique experience of biltong, we drink Danie's big bold reds. Danie does elegant wines balanced well between fruit and wood. Excellent value wines of the highest quality are already carried at many top restaurants across the USA.

The Cape View Pinotage was a bright.

pinky red color and was superb. It gave sweet aromas of raspberry and banana fruit with soft nutmeg and clove spiciness. With fruit aplenty and a hint of coffee, the Pinotage is a perfect companion for beef, lamb and roasts. The Cape View Merlot was a dark magenta red with a nose that bursts with ripe plums, wild cherry and strong spice, conjuring up visions of duck with cherries or roast lamb! I paid particular attention to the Cape View Shiraz. Imagine a deep ruby color with milled black pepper and earthy, leathery aromas enveloped by all spice oakiness. Fruit spiced with clove and liquorices are also on the palate. Paired with barbecued

farmer's sausage straight from the braii,

this is a serious wine that pairs well with

Landskroon

meats and spicy foods.

On Day Four we left Stellenbosch and headed for the Paarl District, which has a tradition of being both prolific in production but also extremely diverse, thanks to its varied micro-climates and ideal soil conditions. We arrived at Landskroon whose wine making tradition dates back to the late 17th Century when the French Huguenot settlers came to the Cape. Landskroon has 1,440 acres of which some 700 acres are under vine. This flagship label stands out among the fine wine estates in Paarl, South Africa. The town is dominated by the Paarl Mountain to the east, and the monolithic rock appears as a black pearl after a shower of rain.

Paul and Hugo de Villiers gave us an excellent tour of the cellars, followed by a wine tasting as we gazed across picturesque vineyards to the ocean, clearly visible in the distance. More than 75% of the vineyards are red vines although a full selection of white and red varietals showed extremely well. They are quality wines at affordable prices. An excellent Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Merlot and Pinotage,

Sauvignon, Shiraz, Merlot and Pinotage, all are retailing at \$13 to \$16 in the USA. Then came the dessert wined

Paul de Villiers is the ninth generation of winemakers in his family and has received the most prestigious Diners Club Award as the best winemaker in South Africa in 2000 for what is without a doubt, one of, if not the best Port in South Africa. The Port has developed a huge following across America, including such notables as Robin Leach (of the Rich and Famous, who reviewed it as the best

Port he has ever tasted at under \$22 US retail), The 1998

Landskroon Vintage Port has power and refinement. Ripe plums and blackberries are in the bouquet. It has a smooth and lively

palate with an attractive dry finish. It is an excellent companion to chocolates, raspberries and cherries and a traditional accompaniment to blue cheese and walnuts.

This remarkable portfolio also includes my favorite: a remarkable Jerepico (fortified) Morio Muscat which last year won the grand trophy for the best fortified wine in the entire Southern Hemisphere at the Atlanta Georgia International Wine Competition. A mild gold straw color with swirling jasmine, honeysuckle and Muscat perfumes, it is well integrated with delicious grapey flavors and simply spectacular served chilled! Think liquid crème brulee.

Eikendal

It is Day 5? ...I can hardly believe it! We leave Lanzerac and head for Franschoek, the valley of the French Huguenots, but not before visiting Eikendal in

Stellenbosch, This Swiss owned Estate has over the many years gathered a significant word of mouth following in Europe as a provider of elegant high quality estate wines.

Eikendal is set in a picture postcard setting where hot dry summers with cooling afternoon ocean breezes assist the acclaimed South African female winemaker Lizelle Gerber, to craft such wonderful wines. Total annual production is only 25,000 cases, emphasizing that this is a jewel in the making. Eikendal is well known for their 4 star plus rated Chardonnay, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.



South African Wine Tour Group, Great Wines International

Lizelle guided us through yet another top notch tasting. The quality across the board was first class. What stood out was "Classique," a superb Bordeaux style blend of Cabernet (75%), Merlot (35%) and Cabernet Franc (8%). The Classique had deep ruby hues, redolent with cassis. liquorices, spicy cedar and coffee on to an equally complex palate. Classic elegance is balanced with a rich fruit profile and a long bright spicy. mocha finish. Eikendal is certainly poised to be considered one of the very best estates in South Africa.

Considered one of the Cape's best kept secrets, look for more to unfold with this creative winemaker. The chardonnay and Classique are quite well known, and will be marketed as Eikendal's flagship wines.



Winemaker Lizelle Gerber

Jabu

After lunch we travel to meet up with Gyles Webb, the winemaker from the famous Thelema Vineyard in Stellenbosch. Gyles has personally crafted and launched a new brand called Jabu with highly visual African motif labels. Jabu in Zulu means happy and content. The labels suggests a journey of discovery to Africa and the wines are very highly acclaimed.

Currently available in the United States is a Chardonnay Chenin Blanc blend (with tastes of strong green fig and crisp tropical fruit while ending with the buttery finish of Chardonnay), and a Shiraz (dark red in color, with an edge of purple haze portraying sweet cherry, peppercorns

with mocha chocolate, plum pudding and a seamless finish).

We travel to the charming French Huguenot Village of Franschoek, set in a valley with magnificent mountains towering above. We discover our new lodgings at the Relais and Chateaux property of Le Quartier Français. Words escaped the group on arrival, as we meandered through this exclusive retreat nestled amongst blooming flower gardens. I am booked in the Honeymoon suite, a romantic setting with a private patio and 50 feet from a 4 star restaurant. Le Quartier Français Restaurant.



Jeremy Wilkinson in Montestell Cellar

Montestell

Day 6 arrives and we embark for the famous Boland Montestell Vineyard in Paarl. Montestell crafts the special cuvée reserve wines for Boland Kelder in Paarl, With 4,500 plus acres providing quality grapes. Montestell has a reputation for consistent quality at affordable prices, Indeed, Cellar Master Altus le Roux is without any doubt an internationally acclaimed winemaker in South Africa. He was awarded the Robert Mondavi Award as the best winemaker in the world for 2001, at Vin Expo Bordeaux, also winning trophies for the best Shiraz and the best Cabernet Sauvignon in the world and best South African vineyard. In 2003, Alrus again won the Winemaker's Grand Trophy for best Shiraz in the world at the 2003 Competition Vin Expo Bordeaux 2003 - an unprecedented second time in 3 years.

In the private tasting room, we learn about the viticultural expertise and efforts that produce such good grapes, essential for the making of great wine. We taste a great Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinotage and Merlot, all excellent quality and value, retailing at \$10 to \$14 in the USA. Elegant wines with plenty of fruit and very good balance. The Shiraz, a serious wine with full on plum and soft spice influence wins my heart.



along with the Caberner Sauvignon, succulent berry enhanced by soft oak flavors. Both are worthy of the acclaim they are receiving.



Owner Wynand Retief



Winemaker Russell Retief

Van Loveren

Onwards after lunch to Van Loveren wine cellar. Sinuated right in the valley of wine and roses. this is a must visit experience. Bordered by brilliant hedges of cannas lilies, leading to the most unique garden (where every tree has a history), this family owned South African gem constantly wins awards as the best value vineyard providing every day drinking qual-

Russell Retief ity wines at exceptional value (Selling at between \$8 to \$15 retail in the USA). Owners Nico and Wynand Retief along with son Philip Retief took us through a tour of the cellars followed by an extensive tasting

in the gardens.

I found the Papillion Sparkling Wine (dry and firm without peer in its price range) judged to be one of the 12 best champagnes in the world. It has an especially good value at under \$14 retail in the USA, My assessment has recently been supported by the renowned Atlanta Vino Challenge awarding the Papillon the Grand Trophy for the Best Sparkling Wine in the Southern Hemisphere in October 2003.

Next was an excellent Sauvignon Blanc described by the London Times as, "Chock a block with flavor with bright, floral gooseberry fruit like New Zealand and the guts and Tropical fruit charge of a top Australian finish!" Their River Red wine, a very rich elegant blend of Shiraz, Merlot and Cabernet, captures the velvety Merlot characteristics perfectly, along with the layers of the Shiraz which give the wine nice complexity and elegance. Both were chosen by United Airlines for International Business Class in the year 2003. We also tasted a dry unwooded Chardonnay wine of exceptional quality, a pleasure to discover the true characteristics of Chardonnay without oak, This Chardonnay has just been selected by United Airlines for International Business Class for the years 2004.

South Africa is too large to sum up in one trip, even a trip as incredible as this one. Look to our next issue of Food and Beverage International as we take you to the Palace of the Lost City, and other places we didn't get to tell you about in this article.



For complete information on any of the vineyards or wines featured in this article, please visit she website link at www.greatscinesintl.com or the travel section at www.foworld.com

To travel with the September Food and Beverage International tour group to South Africa, email me at mwalsh@floworld.com



SOUTH AFRICA'S Gold Medal Wines "Quality for Value"



Cape View 1999 Shiraz

Imagine a deep ruby color, with milled black pepper and earthy, leathery aromas enveloped by all-spice oakiness, and fruit spiced with clove and liquor on the palette. The chef pairs this with

a barbequed farmer's sausage. This is a serious wine that pairs well with mean and spicy foods.



Verenoegd Estate Reserve Blend

A serious structured blend of Bordestux style using three noble grapes. The Reserve has a rich, almost inky appearance with wild herb, red berry and a plann fruit taste. Minst and

runilla flavors with hints of coffee and chocolate are on the palette. This is a well structured, complex wine with fruit. It is nicely lifted by oak, providing an elegant and lasting finish. Roll on the steaks.



Landskroon 1998 Vintage Port

This selection has power and refinement. Ripe plums and blackberries are in the bouquet. A smooth lively palate preceeds an attractive dry finish. It is

an excellent companion to chocolate, raspberries and cherries. This Port will go very well with a Humboldt Fog blue cheese and Blue Diamond walnuts.



Landskroon 2001 Morio Muscat

The Morio Muscas was awarded the best fortified wine in the Southern Hemisphere as the Atlanta show. A remarkable wine with a mild, gold snow color with hins

of noirling jaomine, honeysuckle, and muscat aromas. It is well integrated with delicious fruit flavors. Think liquid crème Brulee. This is as serious as B&B with a fresher tasse and grand finish.



Lanzerac 2002 Chardonnay

The 'bome run' of the trip, this is a totally unique and wonderfully drink-able usine. It offers a complexity of flavors of clove, ginger, bustersouth and wanilla. Buy a bottle to serve to your most discriminating guests. This is the best white wine I've ever tasted and the world's best chardomay.



jaBu

Jabu White

A chardonnay and chemin blanc blend that sastes of strong green fig and crisp, tropical fruit with a finish of buttery chardonnay. A great wine for summer salads.

Jabu Red

A shiraz of dark red color with a purple rim and lingering hints of meeting a mocha chocolate plum pud

sweet cherry and peppercorns meeting a mocha chocolate plum pudding. This Jabu Red goes out with a seamless, rich finish.



Papillion Sparkling Wine

I found the Papillion Sparkling Wine dry and firm, without peer in its price range, Judged to be one of the two best champagnes in the world. My assument has recently been supported

by the renowned Atlanta Vino Challenge, awarding the Papillion the Grand Trophy for the best Sparkling Wine in the Southern Hemisphere, on October 1, 2003. Buy two, you'll wish you had?



Montestell 2002 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

This is an elegant wine with plenty of fruit and excellent balance. Beautiful color warms into the succulent perfume of berry, enhanced by soft oak

flavors. Well integrated with delicious flavors, it evidences a very good finish. Mammum, good!



Montestell 2002 Reserve Shiraz

Consider the Shiraz, rich and silky. A powerful wine, with ripe plum aromas followed by delicious fruit tastes. This fine wine also ends with

a nice easy finish. Bring on the barbequed chicken and planked, rousted salmon.



These wines are all available now in the United States. Ask your local retailer or e-mail Jeremy Wilkinson at Great Wines International to arrange distribution or a trip to South Africa.

jeremy@greatwinesintl.com