



High Hopes

I've also come across GlenWood (a producer of highly-rated Chardonnay and Shiraz) as well as Haut Espoir, two newer cellars on the upper slopes of the Franschhoek Valley. Global corporate consultant Ian Armstrong bought Haut Espoir as a retreat – and soon caught Franschhoek fever, planted vines and built a boutique cellar. If you're looking for white wines to celebrate summer, try the maiden 2004 vintage of Haute Espoir Semillon, Reserve Chardonnay (from a single vineyard) and Sauvignon Blanc. These wines are well-made with rich fruit and well-balanced wood, showing classic varietal character. The Syrah is all spicy liquorice, cherry and black pepper.

Haute Espoir, tel: 021 876 4000, e-mail: wine@hautespoir.co.za or visit www.hautespoir.com

GlenWood, tel: 021 876 2044, www.glenwoodvineyards.co.za

Hooray for Bamboes Bay

Wines from cool-climate vineyards are all the rage – especially when it comes to Sauvignon Blanc planted 850m from the sea. I recently tasted a line-up of boutique wines from the Olifants River Wine Route, including Fryer's Cove, Seal Breeze and Stellar Sensory wines. I bet you've never tasted a wine of origin from Bamboes Bay, home of Fryer's Cove Sauvignon Blanc 2005 – awarded a rare five-star rating by *Wine* in November 2005. Made by top winemaker Wynand Hamman (now at La Cave in Wellington), it highlights the classic gooseberry, nettle, fig and green pea flavours of coastal Sauvignon Blanc. Great with west coast *kraef* over the season.

To irrigate the vineyards, they built a 30km pipeline which would impress the Romans.

Tel Fryer's Cove at 027 213 2312, e-mail: janponk@kingsley.co.za or visit www.olifantsriverwineroute.com

Sugarbush City Limits

In search of cool-climate wines for hot summer nights, I whirled off by helicopter to visit the new vineyards in the south-eastern Cape. Dave Mostert, co-owner of Lomond Wines, flew us down to the most southerly wine farm in the Agulhas appellation – complete with his own 108 hectare trout loch. An aerial view is a spectacular way to appreciate the coastal terroir of vineyards eight kilometres from the sea. We tasted two single vineyard wines from the maiden 2005 vintage – Sugarbush and Pincushion Sauvignon Blanc – named after two proteas which grow wild on the farm. While Sugarbush crashes in like the Atlantic with grassy, herbaceous flavours, Pincushion comes in waves

like the Indian Ocean with tropical fig and pineapple flavours. I can also recommend Sauvignon Blanc from Land's End, which beams forth like the Agulhas lighthouse on the label – and goes down faster than a shipwreck.

Lomond wines are distributed by Cape Legends, tel: 021 809 7000, e-mail: info@capelegends.co.za or visit www.capelegends.co.za

Catcher on the Way

At Wine X I also tasted the limited release wines of Black Oystercatcher, another hot new wine label 'from the cool tip of Africa'. The family farm of Moddervelei, near the historic missionary village of Elim, is the home of a delightful new label inspired by the endangered sea-bird and the landscape. Owner Dirk Human explains that maritime terroir and cool sea-breezes ripen the grapes slowly, producing intense fruit flavours. The Sauvignon Blanc 2005 has a zesty nose of nettle and capsicum with gooseberry and tropical flavours – perfect for a dozen shucked oysters. The Shiraz 2003 has a smoky aroma with plum and mocha flavours and a body as plump as an albatross.

Tel: 028 482 1618, e-mail: dirk@blackoystercatcher.co.za or visit www.blackoystercatcher.co.za

Some like it Hot

On a roll, I've discovered a few more sexy blends, which adventurous wine-lovers might want to try. Why stick to Chardonnay and Merlot? I've taken my tastebuds for a walk on the wild side with a new Spier vintage selection label. These innovative wines combine Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Viognier in a single white blend – or Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot in a red blend. The wow factor is greater than the sum of its parts. Winemaker Frans Smit says, 'South Africa is gaining increasing recognition for its exceptional blends that offer a point of difference'.

Sunny skies are here again. If you prefer to stick to single varietal wines this summer, quaff the cheerful red and white wines under the revamped Savanha label. The stylised image of the sun stands for the sunny South African terroir of its wines. The winemaker, says, 'Cool climate vineyards and sea breezes enable the grapes – sourced from the west coast – to reach optimal ripeness, while plentiful exposure to sunlight results in powerful varietal colour and intensity of flavour.' See what I mean? Some may like it hot – but cool climate wines are definitely the flavour of the season.

Winecorp, tel: 021 881 3699, e-mail: winecorp@iafrica.com or visit www.winecorp.co.za □