

The Wine Show Extra



livin' the life

Horsing around

words: Maryna Strachan

Horses, wine and lots of style was at the order of the day at this year's [L'Ormarins Queen's Plate](#) (LQP), which was recently held at Kenilworth racecourse in Cape Town.

The 150th anniversary of this prestigious horseracing event is on the social calendars of the who's who of South African thoroughbreds and top horses too, along with a few mares!

It was my first time at the LQP, which was all very exciting. I'm a regular [J&B Met](#) visitor and always have a smashing time there, but the LQP was a completely different ballgame.



Maryna Strachan with Soli Philander

A much smaller event, the LQP simply OOOOZED class and sophistication, I suppose something one would come to expect merely by association. The Rupert family, who own the farm, L'Ormarins (pronounced "L-or-ma-raa"), is one of South Africa's wealthiest and well-known in both the winemaking and horseracing establishments.

The strict dress-code of blue and white was adhered to by the vast majority of guests with a stunning array of outfits and hats that were to die for. I was even nominated as a finalist for the 'Best Hat' competition.

Several prized fillies were trotting around in their designer dresses, such as ex Miss Universe, Michelle McLean; Top Billing presenter Jeannie D and Radio personality Liezel van der Westhuizen. Amongst the gents were Proteas captain Graeme Smith; 2 Oceans Vibe DJ, Richard Hardiman and local funny-man Soli Philander. OK, that's enough namedropping...

Of course, we all know it's about the horses at the end of the day, isn't it? I made a few bets here and there and even managed to win some money, although ultimately, it seemed that I merely evened out on my winnings. In the main race, the favourite and four-time winner of the Queen's Plate, Pocket Power placed third and was beaten to the finish-line by xxxxxx in second and Mother Russia in first place. Phew, managed to get that in!

The evening saw some of the top local bands entertaining the crowd from the main stage. The likes of Zebra and Giraffe, Crazy White Boy and Louise Carver had everyone singing and dancing as the sun set behind Table Mountain.

All in all, the overall winner of the day was my beloved city, Cape Town. Hosting yet another event to rival any other across the globe and absolutely rocking it! Now I know why the Queen's Plate is seen as one of THE events to attend. I'll most definitely be at next year's L'Ormarins Queen's Plate.

FUNNY OF THE MONTH!



"Look at me." an elderly Yuppie boasted to his guests at his birthday bash. "I've aged like a fine old carefully stored wine." "I certainly have to agree with that." piped-up his obviously long suffering wife. "Henry's cork's been stationary for years."

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special report

Educating the Englishman - Part one.

words: Christopher Gadd



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Tasting at L'Ormarins

She followed this up with an email full of links to winelands around the Cape showing pictures of idyllic green vineyards beneath indigo mountaintops, boasting wine tastings, great food and attentive service... After battling through the coldest December London had seen for decades, it all seemed a touch too good to be true.

Brittis wasn't wrong; I loved the winelands. But even without her wise tips, I knew I was going to be in safe hands as far as wine was concerned: I'd finally got myself organised to make the trip out to South Africa to spend a few weeks with Wine Extra's editor, one of my closest friends who'd been promising to teach me my way around South Africa's best wines since she moved back to her home country four years ago.

Now I'm no wino, but I do love the stuff. In the UK, though, I have definitely got rather stuck in a rut. I've tasted amazing wines in France, Italy and Spain, but somehow they never taste quite so good back home – or at least the ones that you can pick up for less than a week's wages (maybe the old adage is true that they just keep the good stuff for themselves).

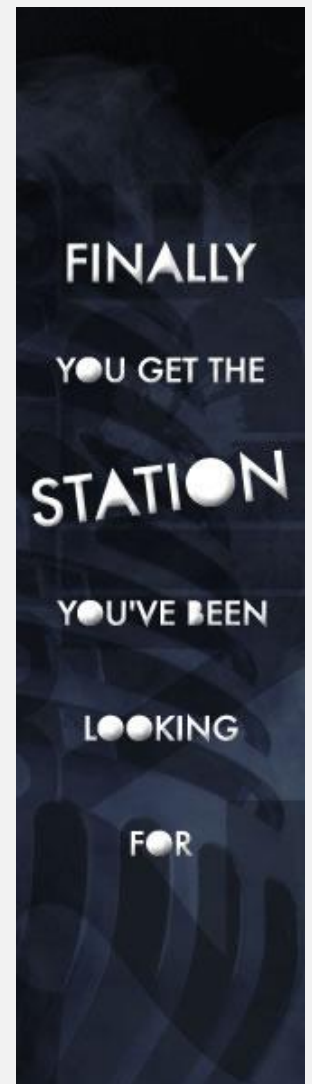
And English wines? Well apparently the soil in the South East is the same as in Champagne just over the Channel. May well be true, but don't grapes need the sun?

Because of this, I and most of my other thirty-something mates in London tend to stick to knock-you-over-the-head cabernet sauvignons or merlots from Chile or Australia, or sauvignon blancs from New Zealand. Crazy, really, that the best value-for-money wines you can pick up in London have been shipped half way around the world. And crazy that I know so little about the wines from Europe or wines from South Africa – the country where my mother was born. I was ready to learn.

So with my very limited experience of South African wines, Maryna and I set out on a few days touring around the winelands in Paarl, Durbanville and Franschhoek.

I was blown away by the wines we tasted and the farms where we tasted them. From the humblest set-ups, to the more gimmicky farms, I was continuously impressed by the variety of colours, flavours and smells in the wines we tried. On top of that, the professionalism of the staff and the passion they showed for their produce, rarely with any pressure to buy there and then, made the tour informative but unhurried.

Despite my memories of some wine farms being a little fuzzy (I had the luxury of not being the designated driver) a few stick out in my mind – like L'Ormarins, where the golf cart ride through the stunning valley was topped off by an



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impeccable tasting service on an enormous oak table, surrounded by Pierneef sketches and together with a fantastic group of new friends visiting from Germany.

The port was like pure nectar – I can't wait to crack open the first of the two bottles I brought home with me. But the farm also held some surprises, like the Chardonnay, which although not usually my first choice in white wines, was deep, fruity and interesting.

Nitida in Durbanville was a great spot too - the farm seemed quietly confident in the obvious quality of its wines. And Ridgeback in Paarl was a hidden corner with a lovely selection of wines that

we were given time and space to try overlooking the swans circling in the pond.

But it's Maison in Franschhoek that took the hot spot. Perhaps its most endearing feature was its simplicity, with just two wines to try, and cellar manager Guy's refreshing resolution "not to tell you what you are supposed to be tasting." Despite it being well into the 40°C's by five in the afternoon – and seemingly something like 40 glasses of wine into the day too - the delicious, rich Shiraz cut through the head and my spoiled taste buds. I simply cannot wait to get some shipped over to share with my friends and family back in the UK.

Even though I'm back in grey, chilly London now, it's clear that my brief education has started to rub off on me. Only yesterday, I took sole control of the wine list during a country pub lunch with a bunch of mates. And, yes, I went South African, ordering the Cloof Pinotage, which went down very nicely indeed. In fact all three bottles did.

So that's part one of my South African wine appreciation and education. And part two? I guess I'll just have to try more farms out next New Year. Something tells me there's a whole world more to discover.

cooking with wine



Angel Fish with Wine

Clean a whole Angel-fish or any other firm white fish and remove the skin, if possible.

- 50ml Lemon juice
- 1 tin Smoked oysters – drained and mashed
- 1 bulb of Fennel – chopped
- 1 slice of White bread soaked in milk
- 500ml Fairview Weisser Riesling (Cost approx. R55)
- 50ml Olive oil
- 750ml freshly cooked Spinach
- 5ml ground Nutmeg



Drizzle 10ml lemon juice over mashed oysters. Add the fennel and bread, which has been drained and mix to make a filling. Add a little olive oil, salt and pepper. Stuff the fish with this mixture and pinch to close the opening.

Drizzle olive oil and remaining lemon juice over the fish. Place spinach in a layer on top of a large double layer of aluminium foil. Flavour spinach with nutmeg, salt and pepper. Drizzle olive oil over.

Place fish on spinach layer and cover completely with foil. Leave a small opening at one end of the foil and pour in the wine. Seal. Place the fish on a baking dish in a moderate (180°C) oven for 45-60 minutes – depending on size of fish. Serve from the foil or allow to cool and take along on a picnic

news

Forget Rhone, try a Steiermark! For those of you who might be confused, it's a wine region in Austria. Yes, the one in the Northern hemisphere where they don't play much rugby... Mainly located along the eastern borders and along the south of this beautiful country, better known for Arnold Schwarzenegger and The Sound of Music, some apparently decent wines are being made. Check out <http://www.austrianwine.com> for something a bit different.

Lady in Red or a few bottles of red? Famous music man, Chris de Burgh is auctioning off his rather impressive collection of wines at Christies in London next month. The collection, which comprises 320 bottles and 84 magnums of mostly red wine, is expected to fetch around £200,000. "Every wine I'm selling I've actually tasted, so I know what I'm missing," the 62-year-old said. Check out the full story [here](#).

Concha Y Toro for wine AND beer. The biggest Chilean wine producer and exporter is adding beer (cough-cough) to its repertoire. "The objective will be to participate actively in the premium segment of the national beer market... This segment is having the greatest growth potential in the domestic market, very much in line with international consumer trends," Concha Y Toro said in a statement. [Read more](#).

Bumper South African wine crops for 2011 - The 2011 wine grape crop should amount to 1 351 993 tons, according to the crop estimate by the industry (producer cellars and viticultural consultants) on 30 November 2010. Get the [low-down](#)...

elsewhere



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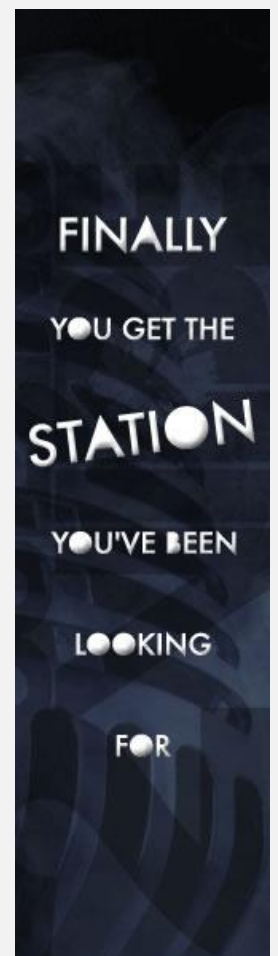
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BMW International Polo at [Val de Vie wine](#) and polo estate (yes, more wine and horses!). A bit like croquet on speed, South Africa take on India in what should be a star-studded event. The stunning Val de Vie estate boasts the perfect setting for guests to wine and dine whilst catching the action on the field. The game takes place on the 26th of February with general entry costing R50. Various hospitality packages are available. Check out www.computicket.co.za for tickets or go to www.sail.co.za for hospitality packages.

'Kitcheniste' - taking 'Garagiste' to a new level. The WinePod is a domestic device for artisan winemaking. The insulated, self-cleaning, fully computerised, three foot tall, metallic urn-shaped appliance includes everything required to make 75 litres of the wine of your choice and is above all, easy to use. It wirelessly connects to your PC/Mac, which monitors Brix, pH and temperature to keep things happening exactly as they should and the WineCoach software mentors you through the wine-making process to obtain the best results for the particular variety of grapes you choose. Get your very own [WinePod](#)

Wrestlerish at Backsberg - On Sunday, 6 February 2011, you can catch these guys performing live at the Backsberg picnic concert. Spend a leisurely afternoon with friends and family with tickets starting from R85 each.

Romeo and Juliet at [Lourensford](#) With Valentine's day around the corner, be sure to catch this famous Shakespearean play about the young Romeo and Juliet, who fall into forbidden love due to a bitter family feud. Tickets are available from [Computicket](#) and the concert takes place from 10-22 February 2011.





taste team

"Wines true to the cultivar character of the grapes from which they came."



The Robertson wine growing region in the Western Cape South Africa is fast becoming one of the major wine producing areas in the southern hemisphere.

Major's Hill wine estate is situated at the centre of the Robertson wine route with easy access from the town of Robertson itself.



The dream of a new cellar started in 1994 when the Louw family bought the farm Klipdrif. Unlike the majority of the wine farms in the Robertson Valley, which had been passed on from generation to generation in the same family, this portion of the Klipdrif farm had been owned by at least four different families before 1995.



A previous owner, Major Jacobus Petrus Marais, also known as "Oom Kosie", started the cultivation of grapes on this farm and built one of the the first cellars in the Robertson valley. His Southern Liquor Company developed the now famous Klipdrift Brandy and also used the Klipdrift brandy as a base for a variety of liqueurs. He was buried in a favourite spot of his, a hill from where he used to look out over his lands. Unfortunately the farm was sold a few years after his death and the Klipdrift brand sold to Distell.

Oom Kosie or Major Marais was commemorated in the name Major's Hill Winery. The spirit of the old cellar can now dwell peacefully in every bottle of wine made with utmost care and devotion.



Major's Hill Sauvignon Blanc 2010



(RRP) R69

Available at: [Frogitt & Vonkel Wine Merchants](#)

Pieter

This Savvie has a friendly, uncomplicated nose that shows some pear. The palate is fairly bland, but nice enough with brisk acid and a medium aftertaste.

David

Displays an unobtrusive, yet complex nose with subtle passion fruit qualities. The palate didn't disappoint, with a smooth texture and subtle nutty aftertaste. It is certainly a wine for quaffing. "With nothing 'in your face' the Sauvignon Blanc is a simple, yet enjoyable wine."

Robyn

Like biting into a fresh green apple, this wine is full of zip and vigour. Not your usual Sauv Blanc profile so it went down well with me, and almost hard to believe that it is 100% cultivar. Probably best enjoyed over an equally fresh summer lunch with friends; uncomplicated and enjoyable.

Ellen

A 'warm' pale lemon colour, this wine's nose is of medium intensity with almond and kiwi fruit aromas. The palate belies its youthfulness. Predominant flavours are lemon and green apple. A perfectly drinkable wine.

Gail

I did enjoy this Sauvignon Blanc. It's not at what you'd expect from a Sauvignon Blanc. With tropical fruits, pear and popcorn on the nose, it could almost be confused with a Chardonnay. Very smooth and nutty. This would pair very nicely with a Thai curry. Very bland label, though, with little interest in terms of design elements.

**Major's Hill Chardonnay 2010**

(RRP) R75

Available at: [Frogitt & Vonkel Wine Merchants](#)

Pieter

There's fair fruit on the nose of this wine, yielding some nuts and white peach. On the palate, the fruit leaves a sweetish impression, with evident wood and a medium aftertaste.

David

More complex than the Sauvignon Blanc with a wonderful nose. Lovely gentle aromas of butter and almonds. The palate offers slightly less than the nose promises yet this chardonnay still comes highly recommended due to its accessibility and simple nature.

Robyn

While I wasn't too keen on the nose, this lightly wooded chardonnay is still pretty drinkable. Despite being fairly dry and lacking fruit it managed to remind me of summer in Durbs - the flavour capturing the sense of a warm day in green, forested surrounds.

Ellen

A bright wine with a slightly 'cool' appearance, the nose is shy but rewards one's patience with peach notes and a suggestion of freshly baked bread." The palate is fruity, and fairly intense with medium acidity and reasonable length. An attractive wine but in its price range there are plenty of Chardonnays I prefer.

Gail

Lovely rich nutty, vanilla and burnt toffee notes on the nose, with a strong, overpowering scent of rising damp. The dampness was improved by the taste which was, as expected, very buttery with a caramelised sugar aftertaste. Textbook Chardonnay as expected.



Major's Hill Merlot 2008

((RRP) R128

Available at: [Frogitt & Vonkel Wine Merchants](#)

Pieter

Simple "purple" fruited nose (maybe some cherries?). The palate shows plenty of aniseed, supported by sturdy tannins. Unfortunately, I found bitterness and high alcohol that makes it tough to drink.

David

Ooh, by far the most interesting nose of all the wines tasted. I noticed very little fruit but this was more than made up for by the toffee, caramel and gentle coffee aromas present. A whiff of this wine is like having a decadent desert. On the palate the wine seemed a little sharp, with a slight bitter aftertaste.

Robyn

The scent of caramel leapt out of the glass at me with this one. Slightly over-ripe, the underlying flavour is of jammy red fruit with a bit of bitterness, but the wood treatment has given it caramel and chocolate overtones. Reminded me a little of 80% dark chocolate with black cherries... So if that sounds good to you, give it a go!

Ellen

Youthful in appearance, with a purple core and paling at the rim, the nose is pleasant and rich, showing baked fruit and coffee. The coffee, mixed with some chocolate, follows through on the palate. There is fruit but nothing distinctively identifiable for this taster. The wine is young, and the tannins could do with integrating a bit more, though it is by no means overly tannic. I'd give this wine more time in the bottle.

Gail

This young Merlot showed its youth with a purplish tinge to its appearance and a slightly acidic and bitter taste with powerful tannins. Almost gritty. The nose however was amazing with strong notes of sugar, caramel and cinnamon. I recon this could be a real treat with the patience of a few years laying down.



Major's Hill Cabernet Sauvignon 2007

((RRP) R128

Available at: [Frogitt & Vonkel Wine Merchants](#)

Pieter

A little bit more of a classic nose. Stalky, with some vanilla wood and spices. The palate seems sweet-fruited, with nice minerality and a faint echo of aniseed. Fair balance and aftertaste.

David

Had a sweet yet delicious nose that reminded me of bournville chocolate and orange zest that matures nicely

in the glass to bring forth black berries. On the palate the wine was smooth and brought out a medley of dark fruits. Certainly a very pleasant wine.

Robyn

I've been warned by 'the gang' to steer clear of French-style wines if I don't like the idea of tasting rotten fruit and 'forest floors'. To me this wine was like swallowing down exceptionally over-ripe plums, with a hint of sour and rot. I can't say I was a fan, I'm afraid.

Ellen

Translucent and ruby red, with a pale rim, the nose shows red fruit and chocolate, but didn't invite me to linger. A medium-bodied wine, of medium flavour intensity, the palate displays the red fruit promised by the nose. It's fair to say this wine was not my favourite.

Gail

With air, this Cab developed very interestingly. At first, a sweet chocolaty nose arose, but after a few minutes something very savoury came through with hints of raw meat and broken twigs which was interesting and puzzling all at once. On the palate this wine was smooth and far more drinkable to me than the young Merlot. Lovely with a hearty meal, but without food it leads to purple teeth!



Major's Hill Pinotage 2008

(RRP) R128

Available at: [Frogitt & Vonkel Wine Merchants](#)

Pieter

If noses could scream, this one would shout "Pinotage!": there's really attractive mulberries and boiled sweets. It gets a bit funky in the glass after a while, so I'll probably refrain from maturing this for too long. No need to do that anyhow, as the palate has very supple, easy-drinking tannins and bright Pinotage fruit. Despite the slightly out-of-kilter alcohol and funkiness, this was comfortably my favourite of the flight.

David

Displays a well balanced nose with enough fruit to compliment the generous oak. When left in the glass I noticed the slightest bit of mint aromas presenting themselves. The palate was smooth and had black berries to offer yet was over too quickly, I prefer a nice lingering palate.

Robyn

Red berry coulis swirls over your tongue, as you sip this red. Cheerful and more medium bodied than the rest, and with less wood, I'd have to say that this little pinotage was my winner for the evening.

Ellen

Very light in colour, the nose invites interest with red cherry aromas and coffee notes. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and not overly intense in flavour. Red fruit and chocolate come through, along with a savoury tang. Soft and easy-drinking with low tannins. An attractive wine, priced a bit ambitiously for me.

Gail

Notes of coffee and wood came across when first lifting this Pinotage to my nose. Something you'd typically find in a Pinotage but not overpowering or obvious in any way. Its youth was revealed on the palate with strong acidity and tannins, broken twigs and an element of leafiness.



Major's Hill Shiraz 2007

(RRP) R128

Available at: [Frogitt & Vonkel Wine Merchants](#)

Pieter

Some cedar wood and a touch minerality on the nose. On the palate: caramelly wood and sweet, highly extracted fruit. Slightly unbalanced, but not without appeal.

David

The Shiraz had a lovely spicy plum aroma that was softened by delicate buttery notes. On the palate, once again I found the wine a little too short lived, I prefer a longer palate. Not overly spiced (as some people find Shiraz) and for that reason a very approachable wine playing to a large audience.

Robyn

My runner up for the night was this bold and powerful Shiraz. A hint of spice comes with the fruit on the nose and is followed by a rich, fruity red with a slight refreshing hint of menthol.

Ellen

Ruby red, the nose is of medium intensity and shows distinctive mint, chocolate and black fruit aromas. The wine is of medium to full body with intense black fruit flavours. With medium to high tannins, but a hint of alcohol burn. This wine may reward a bit more patience.

Gail

A high alcohol content was immediately visible in this wine - its legs were impressive and it almost brought tears to the eyes when inhaled deeply! Mint, dried fruit, wood and eucalyptus were evident in the powerful scent of the wine; however the taste didn't really live up to the nose at all! It didn't linger on the palate and faded away fast, leaving very purple teeth in its wake.