

Stephen Tanzer's Südafrika Bewertungen 2011

Der bekannte amerikanische Weinjournalist Stephen Tanzer bewertet in seiner März Newsletter Ausgabe eine breite Palette südafrikanischer Weine. Er schreibt mit grosser Überzeugung wie beeindruckt er ist über die Qualitätssteigerung der letzten 5 Jahre und dies auf breiter Ebene!

Zudem war er schockiert, dass viele der tollen Weine unter 20 USD zu haben sind, wo er bei der Blinddegustation doch dachte diese Weine kosten zwischen 30 und 40 Dollar.

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Focus on South Africa

ISSUE 155, MARCH/APRIL 2011

Stephen Tanzer

If Argentine wine is led by an iconic superstar (malbec), then South Africa fields a more well-rounded team with many talented players. The country excels with numerous varieties, white and red, most notably cabernet sauvignon, syrah (or shiraz), a wide range of red blends, sauvignon blanc, chenin blanc and even chardonnay. But while this versatility is impressive, it can also limit the country's ability to "brand" itself in export markets. Argentine malbec remains on fire, while imports of South African wines were essentially flat in 2010 compared to 2009, and still down from the peak achieved in late 2007 and 2008.

And it's the cosmopolitan wine lover's loss. In my tastings this winter of the better South African wines available in the marketplace (and a number of others that should be, based on their quality), I was struck by the steady improvement in these wines and the emergence of new players. Today's wines are fresher than ever, thanks in part to a general improvement in the quality of oak barrels being used in South Africa and to the rapid change-over to screw-cap closures for many white wines--and some reds.

The burning tobacco or burnt rubber notes that have plagued some South African red wines to varying degrees in past years appear to be far less of an issue today. An investigation of this subject carried out in South Africa in 2008 and 2009 was inconclusive. Much of this element may be attributable to the effects of the wind-driven brush fires that can plague the Cape wine region during hot, dry summers. It may also be partly a function of virused rootstocks that are unable to ripen their fruit properly. But while fires are an act of God, growers have vastly upgraded their vines in recent years. Vineyard plantings of cabernet sauvignon almost doubled between 1999 and 2009 and the overwhelming majority of the new plantings have involved virus-free rootstock. Shiraz plantings nearly tripled over the same period, and new plantings again have been on virus-free stock.

Today, the more important obstacle facing sales of South African wines in the U.S. market has been weak economic conditions here, which have affected the availability of some of South Africa's top wines. With importers reluctant to load up on bottles that retail for more than \$20 or \$25, that often rules out buying the producers' top tier of wines. Some importers have slowed down on replacing vintages because they're still working their way through old inventory. But the good news is that in the course of my tastings, I sampled many superb wines only to be shocked to discover that they cost \$15 rather than \$30 or \$40. Put another way, these wines seem every bit as concentrated and satisfying as their makers' top bottlings as recently as a decade ago--and they're cleaner and more varietally accurate than ever before.

Recent vintage have been conducive to making high-quality wine. Two thousand ten featured a small crop. Severe windstorms during the flowering cut the potential crop size dramatically--up to 60% in some spots. Then a dry, windy summer resulted in some sunburn and heat damage. An unusually extended heat wave in early March caused difficulties, especially for wineries that had run out of irrigation water.

Happily, plenty of fresh white wines were made from grapes picked before the heat wave, and the small crop loads permitted thorough ripening. One of the key characteristics of the 2010s reported by numerous growers is good phenolic maturity at moderate potential alcohol levels--nearly always a good thing in warm growing regions.

Two thousand nine is widely considered to be outstanding for both reds and whites in South Africa. A cold, rainy winter replenished waters reserves in the soil. The weather remained cool and wet through late September, then was cooler than average until early January, which slowed down

ripening and ultimately led to greater flavor intensity in the wines. But there was concern at this point that the harvest would be quite late, which is always a risky proposition.

But the weather then turned quite dry, and hot temperatures arrived during the second half of February, ultimately ripening the crop in a rush in many areas. Again, some whites were in before the extreme heat. It was a high-stress harvest, with some wineries reporting that they started picking two weeks later than normal yet finished a month earlier!

The heat and wind fanned widespread fires beginning in early February, especially in Stellenbosch, Helderberg and Jonkershoek, and many acres of fynbos, the dense indigenous shrubby vegetation that covers much of the Cape wine region (not unlike garrigue in the south of France). There was some smoke damage and a number of wineries declassified, sold off or dumped fruit they feared was tainted.

Many of the red wines I tasted for this article are from the 2008 vintage, a cool, wet, extended growing season ending with a mostly late harvest. This vintage produced many elegant wines with moderate alcohol levels by Cape standards. Although I tasted some underripe wines, the best examples have the density that comes from slow ripening, along with freshness and precision. I would not be at all surprised if I rate this vintage higher than the locals do, in much the same way I often enjoy cooler years in hotter climates like Argentina and Washington State.

By the way, white wine drinkers should give the best sauvignon blancs, chenin blancs and chardonnay from South Africa a whirl. They can offer terrific energy and flavor intensity, and they are rarely expensive. All of the wines featured in this article were tasted in New York in January and February.

Anthonij Rupert Wines

2006 Cabernet Franc Coastal Region Full deep ruby. Superripe, slightly high-toned aromas of plum, chocolate and mocha; I miss the floral treble notes of the variety. Then broad and sweet in the mouth, with lower-toned flavors of chocolate, graphite and earth. Spreads out to saturate the palate but the substantial building tannins are a bit dusty in the early going. A somewhat heavy, oaky version of cabernet franc in spite of its strong material. **89?**

2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Coastal Region Medium ruby. High-toned aromas of dark berries and mocha. Very ripe aromas of plum and chocolate, plus a suggestion of meaty beefsteak tomato. Very sweet, in fact almost stewy, in a distinctly New World style. Huge material here but this rather chunky wine lacks refinement and restraint. **88**

Anwilka

2008 Red Wine Stellenbosch (48% syrah, 42% cabernet sauvignon and 10% merlot; 14.5% alcohol): Bright, saturated ruby-red. Reticent but pure aromas of cassis, blackberry, licorice, bitter chocolate, espresso and spicy oak. Then pliant, lush and deep, with terrific inner-mouth energy and violet perfume to lift the dark berry flavors. The tannins saturate the palate and front teeth without coming across as dry. Classy, polished wine--the best yet from the team of Bruno Prats, Hubert de Bouard and Lowell Jooste. The co-owners have increased their wine's syrah percentage to great effect, as this 2008 avoids the green notes of earlier vintages without showing any syrah rusticity. **92**

Ataraxia

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Pale silvery-yellow. Slightly reduced, metallic aromas of minerals and lavender, with an element of French funk. Supple and ripe but not yet showing its fruit; has a lanolin-like chenin blanc aspect that reminded me of a Loire Valley wine. A bit screechy today and in need of 6 to 12 months to harmonize. **88(+)?**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Pale bright yellow. Very subtle nose combines grapefruit pith, citrus peel, pepper and crushed stone, plus a whiff of tropical fruits. Rich, bright, ripe and deep, with lemon, grapefruit and mineral flavors enlivened by wild herbs and mint. This really coats the mouth without leaving any impression of weight. Finishes suave and long, with terrific grip. Seriously good

sauvignon. **91**

2009 Chardonnay Western Cape Full yellow-gold. Complex, inviting aromas of peach nectar, apricot and ginger, along with a sexy leesy quality. Spicy, vibrant and penetrating, with intense stone fruit, citrus and vanillin oak flavors carrying through to the long, bright finish. This youthful, ageworthy chardonnay offers a lovely combination of silky, almost glycerol texture and inner-palate energy, with firm minerality suggesting it will unwind nicely with some cellar time. **91(+?)**

Badenhorst Family Wines

2010 Chenin Blanc Swartland Secateurs Medium straw-yellow. At once ripe and cool on the nose, offering scents of lemon curd, grapefruit pith, honeydew and lemon. Dense and sweet, with an almost creamy texture nicely leavened by ripe, harmonious acidity. Shows a peach nectar quality toward the back and the thickness of a high-end Sancerre. Dense, sweet and fresh but will it develop more complexity? **89**

2008 White Wine Coastal Region (a blend of chenin blanc, roussanne, grenache blanc, viognier, verdelho and chardonnay): Medium yellow. Reduced, musky nose offers apple, smoky lees and a chalky note. Rich and spicy but not yet filled in, with a slight warmth to the flavors of pit fruits, toast and smoky lees. Sweet citrus fruits give a tangy quality to the persistent finish, but this wine needs time to harmonize. **90(+?)?**

2009 Secateurs Red Coastal Region (58% shiraz, 15% cabernet sauvignon, 14% cinsault, 8% mourvedre, 4% grenache and 1% carignan, co-fermented in concrete tank): Bright ruby-red. High-toned raspberry liqueur, dark chocolate and wild herbs on the nose; in a distinctly Southern style. Then sweet and seamless but with surprising firming acidity and grip. Not complex but juicy and powerful, with building, drying tannins. A bit Rayas-like but without the mystery. **89**

2007 Red Wine Coastal Region (80% shiraz, 10% mourvedre, 7% cinsault and 3% grenache): Bright, deep red-ruby. Enticing aromas of blackberry, raspberry, pepper, black olive and game. Supple, lush and broad but with a light touch and a restrained sweetness to the flavors of raspberry and smoke. Fine-grained, classically dry wine with lovely tension and subtle spice character. Spreads out nicely on the supple back end. A bit Cote-Rotie-like. **91**

Bizoe Wines

2009 Henrietta White Wine Franschhoek (a semillon/sauvignon blanc blend): Bright honey-yellow color. Delicate aroma of lemon thyme, ginger, crushed stone and nuts, with a lightly sweaty sauvignon note. Restrained but penetrating, with lovely fat and serious flavor impact for a wine with just 12.5% alcohol. Subtle spicy oak complements but does not overwhelm the lemon and pineapple flavors. Brisk acidity gives the wine precision and extends its finish. This has the class of a top white Graves. **92**

Black Pearl Vineyards

2008 Oro Paarl (a 78/22 blend of cabernet sauvignon and shiraz): Bright ruby-red. Expressive aromas of currant, tobacco, pepper, wild herbs, beefsteak tomato and mint. Rich, silky and sweet, with good depth of fruit and lovely ripeness for 2008. Boasts nice concentration and volume, not to mention solid underlying structure. Finishes with slightly dusty tannins and nuances of mint and wild herbs. **89**

Boekenhoutskloof

2008 Semillon Franschhoek Bright light yellow. Sexy lanolin, honeysuckle, spices and smoky oak on the nose. Rich, broad and deep but with very good acidity framing the lanolin, honey and marzipan flavors. This young and chewy wine finishes with impressive depth, a note of vanilla and palate-dusting persistence. Needs time to express itself. **90(+?)**

2010 The Wolftrap Rose Western Cape (66% syrah with 20% cinsault and 14% grenache): Watermelon-red color. Strawberry and watermelon aromas are lifted by a minty element. Just off-dry, juicy and penetrating, with a light touch to the flavors of herbs, pepper and underripe strawberry. This refreshing, smooth rose boasts good palate presence and nice length. **88**

2009 The Wolftrap White Western Cape Very bright red-ruby. Black cherry, pepper, tree bark and candied violet on the almost liqueur-like nose. Then juicy and vinous in the mouth, with lovely red berry

sweetness complicated by pepper and a touch of woodsmoke. Finishes with a fine dusting of tannins and nice length for a wine in its price range. User-friendly and downright gulpable. **88**

2008 The Chocolate Block Franschoek (a blend of 69% syrah, 12% grenache, 10% cabernet sauvignon, 7% cinsault and 2% viognier): Bright, dark ruby-red. Sexy, precise aromas of black raspberry, violet, licorice, woodsmoke and spicecake. Silky on entry, then bright and savory in the middle, with very good intensity to the dark berry flavors. Seems more serious than previous vintages. Today the wine's suave tannins cover the fruit on the brisk but seamless finish. I'd cellar this impressively long blend for at least a couple of years. **91**

2008 Syrah Coastal Region Full red-ruby. Subdued but thoroughly ripe aromas of blueberry, bitter chocolate, coffee, minerals, nuts and wild herbs. Vinous and energetic, with a deeply sappy quality to the crushed berry, spice and saline flavors. Finishes with chewy tannins and excellent length; this really saturates the mouth without leaving any impression of weight. With its firm spine, this excellent syrah calls for patience. **92**

2007 Semillon Franschoek Pale yellow-green. Fascinating, nuanced nose combines orange blossom, musky ginger, minerals, honey and wild herbs. Lush but firm and dry, offering a seriously chewy texture and restrained flavors of soft citrus, honey and lanolin complemented by a hint of nutty oak. Rich but subtle wine, finishing with a minerally reserve and excellent persistence. There's no rush to drink this. **92**

Bosman Family Vineyard

2010 Adama White Wine Western Cape (a blend of 60% chenin blanc, 20% chardonnay, 10% pinot gris, 6% viognier and 4% semillon): Pale bright yellow. Pungent, complex nose melds grapefruit pith, peach, underripe pineapple and crushed stone. Juicy and penetrating, with brisk citrus fruit and peach flavors lifted by a floral quality. A leesy complexity gives the wine more texture to buffer its lively acidity. Very pure, dry and classy wine with a cool, long finish. **91**

2008 Adama Red Wine Wellington (85% shiraz, 10% mourvedre, 3% primitivo and 2% viognier): Good bright, dark red with ruby highlights. High-pitched aromas of cherry, spices and pepper. Juicy and intense, with darker black fruit and licorice flavors cut off on the back end by firm oak. Tightly structured, persistent wine, but a bit dried by its oak element. (A second bottle showed a distinct white fruit note on the nose and a chocolatey character on the palate--and less obvious oak.) **88(+)?**

2008 Pinotage Wellington Deep red with ruby highlights. Jammy blackberry, plum and chocolate on the nose, with some truffley, vegetal nuances. Plump, soft and easy to drink, with fat berry fruit, truffle and tobacco flavors offering modest verve. Plenty of spicy oak and mocha throughout. I'd drink this within the next year. **87**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Wellington Deep ruby-red. Aromas of cassis, licorice, mint, bitter chocolate and wild herbs, plus some exotic oak spices. Densely packed and sweet, with minty lift to the slightly clenched black fruit flavors. In a rather chunky style, but spreads out nicely on the finish, showing fairly fine-grained, building tannins. **89**

2009 Rose Upper Hemel-En-Aarde Valley (12% alcohol; includes 27 grape varieties!): Orange with a pink tinge. Strawberry, flowers and wild herbs on the nose. Silky and round but quite dry, with a light underbrush quality complicating the subtle red fruit flavors. Lovely rose in a Provencal style, finishing with good grip. **88**

Botanica Wines

2009 Chenin Blanc Western Cape (half fermented in stainless steel, the other half in 400-liter French oak): Bright medium yellow-gold. Captivating nose combines apple, apricot, minerals, hazelnut and flowers, lifted by a floral nuance. Concentrated, shapely and nicely balanced, with very good cut to the brisk fruit and mineral flavors. A bit of residual sugar (5.6 g/l r.s.) is easily carried by the wine's acidity and underlying minerality. Very well-judged oak treatment here. Really saturates the mouth and echoes on the long finish, which conveys a powerful dusty impression of extract without bitterness. The crop level here was reportedly less than a ton per acre. **92**

Brampton

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch Pale yellow. Ripe aromas of spices and pepper with a hint of

pineapple. Then fruitier in the mouth than on the nose, offering fresh, nicely intense pineapple and nectarine flavors and an attractive supple texture. Finishes with good length. The best sauvignon to date under this label, which was originally launched as Rustenberg's second label but is now on its own.

89

2010 Chardonnay Unoaked Stellenbosch Pale straw. Ripe aromas of nectarine, pineapple, spices and hazelnut, with a hint of more tropical fruits. Fruity, pure and sweet, with enough ripe acidity to maintain its shape. On the soft side but this fruit bomb dusts the palate on the lingering finish. Very chardonnay! **88**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch (blended with 7% merlot and 5% cabernet franc): Good deep red. Cherry, cassis, graphite and spices on the nose, with attractive violet lift. The palate offers good juicy cut and energy to the flavors of currant, cherry, tobacco leaf and spices. Finishes with a solid tannic spine that calls for a year of patience. **88**

Buitenverwachting

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Beyond Constantia Very pale yellow. Citrus peel, green pepper and a floral nuance on the nose. Brisk, firm and on the light side, with a touch of sweetness and very good intensity to the lemon, pineapple and mineral flavors. Finishes with good smoky length and grip. Terrific value. **89**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Constantia Pale yellow. Raw pineapple, grapefruit zest, pepper and a whiff of gooseberry on the very pure nose. At once broad and penetrating; a serious young sauvignon with dominant flavors of pepper and minerals. The wine's fruit is currently in the background, but lovely ripe acidity and sneaky dusty length suggest that this will be better for another year or so of bottle aging. **91**

2009 Chardonnay Constantia (aged in 50% each new and once-used French oak): Medium yellow. Musky, sexy charred oak currently dominates aromas of nectarine, overripe pear, fig, ginger and minerals. Supple and broad, with a touch of sweetness to the mid-palate; a bit less complex in the mouth than on the nose. Finishes ripe and spicy, with a note of butterscotch. **89**

2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Beyond Western Cape Dark red. Peppery redcurrant and menthol on the slightly reduced nose. At once plump and energetic, with ripe acidity perking up the redcurrant and licorice flavors and giving structure to the wine. Finishes with a soft dusting of tannins, and good sweetness and breadth for a wine in this price range. **87**

Cape Chamonix Wine Farm

2009 Pinot Noir Reserve Franschoek (60% new oak): Medium red. Aromas of raspberry, mint, pepper and spices. Silky, supple and sweet, with a mellow quality to the cherry, fresh herb and spicy oak flavors. Finishes with slightly drying wood tannins and a smoky nuance. Could use a bit more finishing lift but this pinot offers solid varietal character. **89**

Cape Point Vineyards

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Cape Point Very pale, clear color. Refined aromas of grapefruit pith, menthol, mint and flowers. At once rich and brisk, with intense lime and mineral flavors giving energy to the mid-palate. A distinctly Loire-like sauvignon blanc with a dense core of fruit and terrific acidity. Really rises slowly on the graceful back end. Outstanding sauvignon blanc. **92**

2009 Isliedh Cape Point (a 90/10 blend of sauvignon blanc and semillon): Bright silver-yellow. Musky ginger, spices and white pepper on the nose. Then surprisingly fat and rich in the mouth, with an almost glyceric texture and a slight sweetness to the stone fruit and spice flavors. Finishes dense and a bit exotic. Very impressive wine but less subtle than the regular sauvignon blanc. **90**

2009 Chardonnay Cape Point Medium bright yellow. Restrained aromas of lime ice, light spices and leesy vanilla. Pure, discreet and very young, with some unabsorbed CO2 perking up the intense flavors of white peach, lime and subtle oak. This very suave medium-bodied chardonnay shows a classically dry, rising finish with lovely sappiness. Needs at least a year or two to blossom in the bottle. **90(+?)**

Cederberg

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Cederberg Pale, bright yellow. Captivating, varietally accurate nose melds citrus zest, licorice and minerals, with a strong, slightly exaggerated minty lift. Juicy and penetrating, with nicely integrated acidity giving verve and grip to the flavors of gooseberry, mint, flinty minerals and spring flowers. Finishes racy and persistent. **89**

2010 Bukettraube Cederberg (bukettraube is a white variety of German origin; 24 g/l residual sugar): Pale yellow. Come-hither aromas of peach, lime blossom and honeysuckle; rather muscat-like. Tactile and slightly sweet but not at all heavy, with perfectly integrated acidity framing and lifting the flavors of white peach, ripe citrus fruits and anise. Finishes long, with mouth-cleansing acidity. Serve this with spicy foods, as you might use a riesling, or enjoy it on its own; in South Africa, it's often paired with Cape Malay cuisine. **90**

2010 Chenin Blanc Cederberg Pale silvery green-yellow color. Grapefruit pith, honeydew, guava, pepper and wild herbs on the nose, along with a sauvignon-like grassy element. Juicy, minty and bright, with refreshing peppery lift to the very dry flavors of citrus fruit and *fynbos*; more restrained than this winery's sauvignon blanc. The racy finish shows very good cut. Try this with spicy, fruit-based grilled fish preparations and chutneys. **89**

2009 Merlot/Shiraz Cederberg (the first vintage of the wine made without pinotage): Medium red. Raspberry aroma lifted by piney, pepperminty high notes. Juicy and nicely concentrated but not particularly sweet. Conveys a cool-climate quality to its raspberry, dark chocolate and pepper flavors. This fresh wine depends more on its bright acids than on its tannins for structure. **89**

Crystallum Wines

2009 Chardonnay Clay Shales Walker Bay Pale bright yellow. Musky, leesy aromas of lime, fresh peach, mint, minerals and high-pitched peppermint; clean and refreshing. Then supple, spicy and penetrating on the palate, with a light touch to the slightly sweet flavors of stone fruits and lemon. I'd give this a year in the cellar to fill in, but it's already superb. The back label includes this very useful warning: "Don't drink and walk on the road, you may be killed." **91**

2009 Pinot Noir Cuvee Cinema Walker Bay Palish cherry-red color. Cherry, smoke and earth on the nose, plus a whiff of cinnamon oak; smells like pinot. Then sweet and nicely intense, with moderate complexity to the red berry and spice flavors. Offers good texture and concentration but I'd like to have seen this fruit with a bit less vanillin, nutty oak. **88**

Darling Cellars

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Onyx Darling Pale yellow. Herbaceous aromas of capsicum and white pepper, plus a whiff of cat pee. Then surprisingly rich, ripe and sweet, offering good palate presence and an inner-mouth aromatic character that's far less green and extreme than the wine's nose. **88**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Onyx Darling Pale yellow. Spices and white pepper on the nose, plus a whiff of capsicum. Glossy and substantial in the mouth, with slightly herbaceous pepper and spice flavors showing more texture and ripeness than the 2010. Finishes with good weight and grip. **88**

2010 Chenin Blanc Reserve Arum Fields Darling Pale yellow. Restrained aromas of honey and melon. In a rather broad and fat style, with honey and brothy flavors, and uncanny richness for a wine with just 12.5% alcohol. But the finish needs more grip. Drink this soon. **87**

2010 Chardonnay Reserve Quercus Gold Darling Citrus and orange blossom on the vibrant nose. Pliant flavors of citrus fruits, spices and flowers are nicely framed and lifted by a floral element. Finishes with honey and citrus notes. **88**

2007 Pinotage Onyx Groenekloof Full red-ruby. Smoked meat and exotic spices on the nose; smells dense! Then supple, sweet and seamless, with a gamey nuance adding complexity to the berry and spice flavors. With its well-integrated acidity and suave tannins, this is nicely balanced from the start. Very attractive pinotage. **89**

2007 Kroon Onyx Darling (45% each shiraz and pinotage, and 5% each grenache and cinsault, co-fermented): Rather vegetal nose shows a strong stewed tomato quality. Then supple, sweet and creamy, in a distinctly easygoing style, but dominated by tomato, veggie and earth flavors. Ready to drink but I'm not sure where this can go. **87**

2009 Shiraz Reserve Black Granite Darling Good deep red-ruby. Granitic smoke and pepper dominate the nose. Then supple, smoky and very ripe, with a captivating sweetness to the black raspberry, mineral and wild herb flavors. This chewy, suave wine finishes with a ripe dusting of tannins and good breadth. Its minerality and firm acidity, though, call for at least a year or two of additional bottle aging. Serious wine for the price. **89**

2008 Shiraz Onyx Darling Good deep red. Dark berries, game and wild herbs on the nose. Fat, sweet, gamey and rich on the palate, with dominant flavors of smoke and meat. Finishes lush but with a slightly tart quality. **88**

2007 Shiraz Onyx Darling Good full red. Sexy aromas of blackberry, plum, musky mocha and meat. Solid minerality gives this wine a firm spine but the plum and meat flavors are already quite expressive. Drink this while waiting a year or two on the 2008. **88**

2009 Onyx Noble Late Harvest White Wine Darling (a 75/25 blend of chenin blanc and riesling): Bright, deep orange-gold. High-toned aromas of apricot, orange, honey and licorice. Viscous and lush but not heavy, with vibrant, harmonious acidity giving shape and lift to the honeyed flavors of apricot and peach liqueur. Even a bit youthfully tight today. Very sexy sweet wine with a rising finish that suggests more to come. **90**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Darling Onyx Medium red. Cassis, licorice and chocolate aromas lifted by a violet topnote. Sweet, dense and lush but at the same time vinous, with tobacco leaf, cedar and floral notes complicating the dark berry flavors. Offers a lot of sex appeal for a wine in its price range and finishes with nicely integrated tannins. **89**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Darling Onyx Good deep red. Peppery red berries and chocolate on the lively nose. Lush, sweet and pliant on entry, then more serious in the middle, with a solid structure framing the flavors of black raspberry, dark chocolate and fresh herbs. Seriously built cabernet for the price; I'd hold off for another couple years. **89(+?)**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Bush Vines Darling Pale yellow. Pure, herbaceous aromas of gooseberry, grass and mint, plus a whiff of asparagus. Lean, juicy, firm and varietally accurate if a bit skinny, with a New Zealand-style element of tropical fruits. Finishes clean and fresh. **87**

De Grendel Wines

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Durbanville Bright, pale, green-tinged yellow. Pungent, cool aromas of lime ice, lemongrass and flinty minerality, with riper peach and kiwi notes emerging with air. Round and lush but fresh for all its volume, with some unabsorbed CO2 and harmonious acidity perking up the ripe yellow peach and smoky mineral flavors. Big and satisfying wine with good shape and citrus grip. Has the density of a cool-climate wine from a warm season. **91**

2007 Merlot Durbanville Bright red-ruby. Dark berries, chocolate, mocha and a whiff of truffle on the nose. Supple and nicely sweet but not yet expansive, with moderately concentrated flavors of berries, spice and tobacco given shape by ripe acidity. A rather silky and savory midweight, finishing with dusty tannins and good length. Nicely done. **89**

2010 Rose Durbanville Pale pink-red. Expressive, perfumed, lightly candied aromas of strawberry and flowers. Fat, round and off-dry, but with good acidity and herbal lift giving it life in the mouth. Distinctly drier on the back end, where the wine's silky delicacy makes it very easy to drink. **88**

2007 Shiraz Durbanville Bright red-ruby. Wild aromas of musky dark berries, mocha and pepper, plus a whiff of apricot. Then lush and seamless in the mouth, with a restrained sweetness to the berry, spice, meat and woodsmoke flavors. Pliant in texture but with a firm spine. Finishes with fine-grained tannins and a late note of woodsmoke. Already offers considerable appeal. Much more syrah than shiraz in style. **90**

De Krans

NV Cape Ruby Port Calitzdorp Medium red. Slightly high-toned aromas and flavors of dark cherry, black licorice, cinnamon, maple syrup and earth. Rich and mellow for ruby, and not a fiery style of port, with the neutral oak (and clean alcohol tones) making for easier early drinkability. A rather elegant style with good energy and length. Drink now or hold. **88**

De Morgenzon

2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch (aged in 40% new French oak; from 38-year-old bush vines): Full yellow-gold color. Wild aromas of orange blossom, honeysuckle, peppermint and clove oil. Very rich, exotic and spicy, with superb chewy depth of flavor. Already showy and sexy but a bit more time in bottle will bring more complexity and refinement. Finishes with impressive length. This is fermented with wild yeasts and the owners play baroque music in the vines 24 hours a day. **91**

2009 Chardonnay Western Cape Medium bright yellow. Citrus zest, mint and a faintly metallic quality on the lively nose. Then juicy and fresh in the mouth, with citrus flavors nicely framed by lively acidity. The dusty finish shows a touch of firming minerality and some spicy oak notes. Impressive for an entry-level wine. **89**

2008 Shiraz Dmz Western Cape (the first vintage for this bottling; aged in mostly French oak, one-third new, for 11 months): Bright red-ruby. High-pitched aromas of crushed blackberry, licorice and wild herbs. Sweet, silky and bright, with lively acidity framing the flavors of crushed dark berries, licorice and mint. There's a faint porty nuance lurking but this is essentially a rather polite style of shiraz. **89**

2009 Shiraz Dmz Western Cape Bright red-ruby. Mulberry, dark cherry, licorice, wild herbs, chocolate and a whiff of game on the nose. Lush and deep but not at all heavy, with sexy, varietally accurate flavors of dark berries and smoked meat. This really expands and gains in sweetness toward the back. The broad finish features substantial ripe tannins. A mouthful of syrah for the price. Incidentally, with this vintage the variety on the label was changed from shiraz to syrah, which is much more reflective of the wine's style. **90**

De Toren

2008 Z Stellenbosch (a five-variety Bordeaux blend based on 45% merlot and 27% cabernet sauvignon blanc; the 15% malbec component was aged in American oak): Good deep red with ruby tones. Sexy aromas of blackberry, spices and violet. Suave, sweet and deep, with lovely integrated acidity contributing to the wine's seamless texture. Offers considerable early appeal but has the structure for aging too, finishing with savory, firm-edged tannins. Very much in a Right Bank style, unusual for a Bordeaux blend in South Africa. **91**

2008 Fusion V Stellenbosch (a Bordeaux blend based on 56% cabernet sauvignon): Full medium ruby. Sexy dark fruits, coffee and spices on the nose. Then lush, sweet and seamless, with glossy flavors of red and dark berries, truffle and spices. Wonderfully ripe, velvety wine with sweet tannins, superb balance and impressive length. A very classy, harmonious wine in a rather New World style. **93**

De Trafford Wines

2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch (15% alcohol): Full medium gold. Very ripe stone fruits, honeycomb and clove on the nose. Broad, rich and honeyed; smooth and silky. A concentrated, honeyed, full-flavored chenin blanc in a very modern style. Quite silky on the aftertaste. **89**

2008 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Full gold. Aromas of flint, smoke and hazelnut; plenty of lees influence. Slightly leaner than the 2009 but still a bit heavy-handed with alcohol, offering sweet flavors of orange blossom and flint. More showy today than the 2009 but is it better? This wine has a record for becoming more minerally and limey with bottle age. **88**

2008 Shiraz Blueprint Stellenbosch Bright ruby-red. Pungent, medicinal aromas of blackberry, plum, licorice and dark chocolate. Then densely packed and juicy, with very good lift to the dark plum, licorice and bitter chocolate flavors. I'd wait a couple years for this wine to expand. **90**

2007 Shiraz Blueprint Stellenbosch Saturated ruby. Very pure aromas of blackberry, licorice and spices. Juicy, suave and pure, with the dark berry flavors framed and lifted by violet and mineral notes. Atypically more French than New World in style for a De Trafford wine. This silky, complete wine finishes with building fruit and very sweet tannins, and has plenty of structure for aging. **91**

2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch Deep medium ruby. Lively, pure aromas of blackberry, bitter chocolate and violet pastille. Then densely packed and a bit youthfully unforthcoming, with its serious underlying richness currently masked by taut structure. Finishes with substantial dusty tannins and strong spice tones. Built for a slow evolution in bottle. **91(+?)?**

2007 Merlot Stellenbosch Good deep ruby-red. Crushed currant, plum, chocolate and licorice on the nose, plus a meaty whiff that reminded me of syrah. Dense, deep and fat, with a lot of personality to the flavors of brambly berries, cedar and violet. Serious, structured merlot with early sweetness supported by firm tannins. Drink or hold. Consistently one of South Africa's top merlot bottlings. **91**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch (15% alcohol): Deep ruby. Vibrant nose combines blackberry, licorice pastille and bitter chocolate. Dense, sweet and palate-saturating, with chewy, deep flavors of brambly berries, cedar and lead pencil. Tactile, sexy wine with a distinctly New World aspect. Finishes chewy and very long, with serious tannins that will support a decade or more of evolution in bottle. Very impressive: for all its richness, it's also shapely and youthfully taut. **92**

2006 Elevation 393 Stellenbosch (a blend of 50% cabernet sauvignon, 37% merlot and 13% shiraz; 15% alcohol): Medium ruby. Rather reticent aromas of spices, dark chocolate and licorice. Dense and very ripe but juicy, with a lively acid backbone currently suppressing the brooding dark berry and licorice flavors. Finishes with very ripe, dusty tannins and palate-staining persistence. This powerfully concentrated wine needs several years of additional bottle aging. **93**

2008 Straw Wine Stellenbosch (made from 100% chenin blanc air-dried on racks; no botrytis; 162 g/l r.s.): Good full, bright gold. Dried stone fruits, crystallized citrus peel and clove spice on the nose. Lush, glyceric and very sweet, but with enough acidity to avoid coming off as heavy. Not really complex yet but the wine's finishing lift suggests that it's still a baby. **91(+?)**

2007 Straw Wine Stellenbosch Deep orange-amber gold color. Pungently exotic aromas of dried apricot, beeswax, barley sugar and mocha. Thick, viscous and hugely sweet, with dried fruit and grilled nut flavors showing an extraordinarily deep, layered texture and outstanding length. This one went straight to my third eye. Offers a significantly different balance from the 2008, with much more r.s. (239 g/l vs. 162) and much lower alcohol (10% vs. 13.5%). I prefer this one. **94**

De Waal Wines

2009 Viognier Stellenbosch Pale bright yellow. Ginger, lavender, mint and herbs on the high-pitched nose. Intense and dry in the mouth, with lovely typicity to the stone fruit, mint and floral flavors. Not a fat style but energetic and persistent. **89**

De Wetshof Estate

2010 Chardonnay Limestone Hill Robertson (made without oak): Palish yellow-green. Aromas of yellow plum, apricot and tropical fruits lifted by a zippy citrus element. Sweet, clean and ripe, with peach and spice flavors refreshed and complicated by sexy flinty minerality. Nicely concentrated, fruit-driven, persistent wine with the energy that comes from decomposed limestone soil. I love this style. **90**

2007 Bateleur Chardonnay Robertson Bright yellow. Exotic apricot and deep nutty oak on the nose. Richer, rounder and more glyceric than this winery's unwooded chardonnay, but without quite that wine's cut and definition. Has the sex appeal for early drinking but also the stuffing to age. I would have liked this even better with the oak dialed back a bit. **90**

Doolhof Winery

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Cape Loerie Western Cape Pale bright yellow. Deeply pitched fig and lanolin aromas lifted by lime. Then juicy and bright on the palate, with good focus to the flavors of citrus fruits, gooseberry and pepper. Finishes slightly tart. **87**

2009 Malbec Wellington Deep ruby-red. Idiosyncratic aromas of dark fruits, tar, smoke and a vegetal component. Then ripe and round but not particularly fruity, displaying notes of black cherry, plum, beefsteak tomato, leather and licorice, along with some earth and game notes that reminded me of pinotage. Finishes ripe, smooth and fairly sweet, with a note of woodsmoke. Intriguing but rather extreme. **88**

Dornier Wines

2010 Chenin Blanc Cocoa Hill Stellenbosch Enticing aromas of mint, spring flowers and a hint of toasty oak. Juicy, spicy and quite dry but not hard, with good depth to the dusty mineral, ginger and quince flavors. The tangy, lemony, moderately persistent aftertaste shows a late hint of vanillin oak.

Very good value. **88**

2009 Donatus White Wine Stellenbosch (a 60/40 blend of chenin blanc and semillon; fermented in second-fill 500-liter French oak): Good bright pale yellow. High-pitched aromas of stone fruits, musky ginger, smoky oak and lavender. Subtly rich and spicy, showing complex, weightless flavors of white peach, lemon, honey, flint, anise, mint and vanilla. The oak element is in harmony with the wine's fruit. Finishes long, with hints of spices and orange blossom. I found this more pliant than Dornier's whites from earlier this decade--a very good thing. **91**

2007 Pinotage Stellenbosch (aged for 12 months in new and used French oak): Bright, full red-ruby. Bright red and black berries currently carrying a full load of nutty, smoky, spicy oak on the nose. Then pure, sweet and deep on the palate, avoid the bacony funkiness of so many examples of pinotage but showing a lot of nutty oak. Not quite as vibrant as the Dornier wines I tasted from subsequent vintages. **88**

2009 Cocoa Hill Red Blend Western Cape (47% shiraz, 31% merlot, 18% cabernet sauvignon and 4% malbec): Currant, chocolate, mocha, cedar, licorice and woodsmoke on the nose. Offers good mid-palate merlot sweetness, but firm acidity and a hint of woodsmoke give the wine a rather savory quality. Finishes with dusty, slightly dry tannins and decent length. **87**

2009 Pinotage Stellenbosch Bright ruby-red. Musky aromas of black raspberry and woodsmoke. Rich and sweet but youthfully tight, with a slightly burnt quality to the berry fruit. Finishes with firm, dusty tannins that call for a year or two of patience. **88**

2007 Donatus Red Wine Stellenbosch (cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc): Good bright, dark red. Slightly herbaceous aromas of red berries, pepper and herbs. Juicy, fine-grained and intense, but with a distinct pyrazine component that will put off some tasters. Needs a bit more middle-palate ripeness of fruit to support the green pea and herbal flavors, and the slightly drying finish. **87(+)?**

Downes Family Vineyards

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Sanctuary Peak Elgin Valley (with 12% barrel-fermented semillon): Pale straw-yellow. Grapefruit, melon, lemon and papaya aromas lifted by a minty nuance. Bright, savory and laid-back, with racy acidity giving excellent cut to the fruit, honeysuckle and subtle mineral flavors. A lovely hint of semillon richness blends nicely with the vibrant sauvignon. This could use a year of patience. Incidentally, this winery is called Shannon Vineyards in South Africa. **90**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Sanctuary Peak Elgin Valley (includes 15% barrel-fermented semillon): Pale straw-yellow. Richer but less expressive on the nose than the 2010, with aromas of green tropical fruits, lemon drop and pepper and a honeyed suggestion of semillon. Also suppler and riper in the mouth, coating the palate without any undue weight. Shows a rounder, more glyceric mouthfeel but less complexity than the 2009. The rich finish dusts the palate with citrus zest. By the way, this vintage was sealed with a traditional cork, while the 2010 was screw-capped. **89**

2008 Merlot Elgin Valley Mt. Bullet Good full medium-dark red. A real essence of (Old World) merlot on the nose: plum, cocoa powder, mint, tobacco and cedar. Then sweet, silky and vinous, with lovely complexity and class to its plum, cherry, currant, spice and mineral flavors. Harmonious acidity gives this suave, complete merlot a penetrating quality. Showed nuances of chocolate and tobacco as it opened in the glass. Not a fat style but savory, classy and sharply delineated. Finishes with excellent energy and drive. I'm not generally a fan of merlot in South Africa but this rather Pomerol-styled example certainly grabbed my attention. I would not be surprised to see it put on weight with bottle aging and merit an even higher rating. **92(+)?**

Durbanville Hills

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Very clear, light straw-yellow. Pungent aromas of lemongrass, grapefruit, lime and anise, plus a hint of tropical fruits; very sauvignon. Then densely packed, almost glyceric, but with penetrating, tart acidity framing the grassy, tropical fruit flavors complicated by chalk and saline traces. This became a bit looser with air, and finished slightly harsh with alcohol. **88**

Edgebaston

2010 The Honey Pot Stellenbosch (49% semillon, 38% sauvignon blanc and 13% viognier; done in stainless steel): Very pale bright yellow. Fruit-driven aromas of lemon and tropical fruits complemented

by honey and lifted by grapefruit zest and wild herbs. Rich, fruity and nicely concentrated, with a silky texture enlivened by sound acids and lemony grip. The ripe lemon and grapefruit flavors are deepened by an element of leesy complexity. Finishes with good grip and thrust. A great value. **89**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch Pale silver-yellow. Vibrant nose combines lime, gooseberry, grapefruit peel, licorice and dusty herbs. Dense and glyceric but penetrating, with green tropical fruit flavors dominating. Today the wine's thickness and acidity seem a bit out of joint, and some alcoholic warmth gives the finish an aggressive character. **88**

2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Pale bright yellow. Spicy, leesy, oaky aromas of lemon zest and hazelnut. Velvety and concentrated, with good lemony cut to the flavors of stone fruits and brown spices. Silky and seamless from start to gentle, lingering finish. The wine's obvious oak element does not dominate its fruit. **90**

2010 Syrah/Mourvedre/Tannat The Pepper Pot Stellenbosch/Paarl Good bright dark red. Liqueur-like aromas of berries, pepper, wild herbs, licorice and mint. A supple, spicy fruit bomb on the palate, with a slightly stewy and distinctly southern quality countered by strong, somewhat spiky acidity. Finishes with light tannins and notes of woodsmoke and leather. This should match well with spicy dishes or pepper-encrusted meat. **87**

2009 The Berry Box Stellenbosch (34% cabernet sauvignon, 24% shiraz, 20% cabernet franc, 17% merlot, 3% malbec and 2% petit verdot): Dark red. Blackberry, mulberry, licorice, chocolate, menthol and a tarry nuance on the nose. Sweet, fat and liqueur-like, with a chocolatey ripeness to the black raspberry and licorice flavors. Finishes with a fine dusting of tannins and good peppery, palate-coating length. There's huge fruit here, but this wine comes off as fresher than the 2010 Pepper Pot. **89**

2008 Cwg Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch (15% alcohol): Full ruby-red. Very ripe, slightly warm aromas of black fruits, clove, licorice, wild herbs and butterscotch oak. Quite ripe in the mouth, but with strong acidity not yet in harmony with the wine's concentrated dark berry and herb flavors. Finishes with slightly aggressive chewy tannins and a repeating suggestion of alcoholic warmth. This big boy needs a couple more years in the bottle to come into shape. **89(+?)?**

2008 Cwg Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch Bright, dark red-ruby. Raspberry, cherry, mocha and sexy oak tones are lifted by a floral nuance. Silky on entry, then aromatic in the mid-palate, with firm but harmonious acidity framing the varietally accurate flavors of cassis, mint and tobacco leaf. Quintessential Stellenbosch cabernet, and less overbearing than this producer's regular bottling. **90(+?)**

Ernie Els Wines

2006 Limited Release Stellenbosch (a blend of 65% cabernet sauvignon, 20% merlot and 5% each petit verdot, malbec and cabernet franc): Full, bright ruby-red. Tight, pure aromas of cassis, black cherry, mint and crushed rock. Creamy, sweet and deep but with a firm shell for aging. Powerful yet fine-grained wine with terrific medicinal reserve. Finishes with very fine, building tannins and a note of menthol. Lay this one down. **92(+?)**

Excelsior

2009 Shiraz Robertson Good red-ruby. Candied, liqueur-like aromas of blackberry, smoked meat, wild herbs, pepper and five-spice powder. Sweet and silky but nicely framed by decent acidity. Finishes spicy and firmly tannic, with moderate length. Excellent value. **88**

2010 Chardonnay Robertson Pale yellow. Citrus peel on the nose. Sweet and juicy, with ripe acidity framing the citrus and nectarine flavors. Boasts good intensity and varietal character for \$10 chardonnay. Finishes with hints of pineapple and crystallized lemon peel. **87**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Robertson (includes a bit of petit verdot): Aromas of spiced plum and licorice. Juicy, bright and fruit-driven, with brisk acidity giving it a light touch. Noteworthy intensity for the price range. Finishes with sweet tannins and plenty of verve. **88**

2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Robertson Bright dark red. Currant, blackberry and licorice aromas show a candied quality and a touch of reduction. In a sweetish style, with good intensity and harmonious acidity to the dark berry flavors. Hints of menthol and mint on the slightly stunted finish. Will this reduced wine show more give with another 6 to 12 months in bottle? **87**

Fairvalley Wines

2009 Pinotage Bright dark red. Red berries, cherry and a whiff of caramel on the nose. Lush, fruity and sweet, with easygoing red fruit flavors. Nicely generous and pliant wine, finishing with a light dusting of tannins. **88**

Fairview

2009 Viognier Coastal Region Pale yellow. Aromas of tropical fruits, peach nectar and brown spices. Just off-dry and chewy in the mouth, with a hint of spicy oak complicating the subtle peach and tropical fruit flavors. Offers nice life and lift but I'd still catch this one early for its lovely fruit. **89**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Darling Pale silver-yellow. Bracing aromas of grapefruit, white pepper and lime zest, plus a whiff of asparagus. Juicy and firm but not hard, with excellent intensity for a sauvignon in this price range. The citrus, licorice, herb and anise flavors are complemented by a smoky minerality. Nicely chewy, uncompromising wine with a dusty, long finish. **90**

2009 Pinotage/Viognier Coastal Region Medium red. Brooding aromas of dark fruits, licorice, pepper, herbs and menthol. Supple on entry, then dry but nicely filled in, with hints of spice, pepper and smoke. Boasts good sweetness but could use a bit more lift; I'm not sure what the viognier has added here. Finishes with slightly drying tannins and good length. **88**

2009 Pinotage Coastal Region Good bright, deep red. Expressive aromas of red berries, pepper and spice cake. Juicy and intense, with peppery acidity framing and extending the dark berry and game flavors. There's something almost syrah-like about this. Finishes broad and long, with serious but nicely buffered tannins. **89**

2008 Shiraz Coastal Region Deep red-ruby. Black fruits, molten chocolate, licorice and woodsmoke on the nose. Broad and supple but dry, with dark berry and chocolate flavors that still need a bit of time in bottle to express themselves. Finishes with good breadth and a fine dusting of tannins. **88**

Glen Carlou

2008 Grande Classique Paarl (a five-variety Bordeaux blend based on 52% cabernet sauvignon): Deep red. Expressive aromas of boysenberry, cassis, tobacco leaf, woodsmoke, tar and black licorice. Suave and lively on entry, then dense and sweet in the middle, with nicely concentrated, youthful flavors of dark berries, tar and truffle. This rather serious wine relies as much on its acids as on its tannins for structure. I'd give it another few years in the cellar. **89**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Gravel Quarry Paarl Saturated red-ruby. Cassis, clove, cedar, mint and tobacco leaf on the nose; classic old-school cabernet. Densely packed, juicy and youthfully imploded, with firm but harmonious acidity keeping the flavors of plum, tobacco, mocha and woodsmoke under wraps. Finishes suave and sweet, with fine-grained tannins and a chocolatey note. Traditionally styled cabernet, built to age. **90(+?)**

2009 Chardonnay Paarl Full straw-yellow color. Musky lees, vanilla and nutty oak over fresh peach on the nose. Round, silky and rich, with good lift for all its oak. The flavors of peach and brown spices show good palate presence. Finishes with a dusting of oak spices. **88**

2008 Chardonnay Paarl Quartz Stone Medium gold. Extravagant aromas of pineapple, dried peach, orange blossom, honey and caramel, plus a spicy suggestion of botrytis. Lush, concentrated and deep, with nectarine, caramel and vanillin oak flavors supported by a mineral underpinning. Finishes with subtle stone fruits and brisk minerality. A rather full-blown chardonnay with spine. **90**

Glenelly

2010 Chardonnay The Glass Collection Stellenbosch Pale bright yellow. Musky nectarine, citrus fruits and brown spices on the sexy nose. Intensely flavored, broad and smooth, with a lovely light touch to the flavors of crisp apple and pear. Finishes persistent and classically dry. This is an entry-level wine from the new project of May-Eliane de Lencquesaing, former owner of Chateau Pichon-Lalande. **89**

2007 Grand Vin De Glenelly Stellenbosch (a blend of 44% shiraz, 31% cabernet sauvignon, 24% merlot and 1% petit verdot, aged in French *barriques*, one-third new): Good bright red-ruby color. Black

plum, menthol, graphite, mint and licorice on the nose. Broad, juicy and moderately intense, but with sneaky depth to the flavors of musky berries, mint, leather and underbrush. Finishes with slightly dry, firm tannins. Elegant and distinctly Old World in style. **90**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon The Glass Collection Stellenbosch Bright ruby-red. Aromas of currant, licorice and mint. A sweet, spicy midweight with good energy and definition to its dark berry and licorice flavors. Still a bit tightly coiled. Finishes with dusty, ripe, building tannins. **90**

2008 Lady May Stellenbosch (blended with a bit of petit verdot; aged 24 months in all-new French *barriques*): Bright medium red. Cassis, licorice and cedar on the nose and palate. Wonderfully glossy and aromatic in the mouth, with a silky texture and superb energy. Really spreads out to saturate the palate on the very long, perfumed finish. The wine's suave tannins are already thoroughly integrated. The first release for this bottling. **93**

2009 Cabernet Sauvignon The Glass Collection Stellenbosch Medium ruby. Precise aromas of blackberry, bitter chocolate and violet, with a touch of reduction. Juicy, tight and a bit unyielding today, with firm acidity keeping the medicinal black fruit flavors under wraps. This classically dry, vibrant wine will need at least a few years to gain in pliancy and plushness, but it has the structure to support aging. **89(+?)**

Goats do Roam Wine Company

2010 Goats Do Roam In Villages White Coastal Region (a blend of 68% viognier, 17% roussanne and 15% grenache blanc): Light yellow. Fruit-driven aromas of pear, apple, citrus zest and honeysuckle. Surprisingly supple on the palate, with juicy flavors of more tropical fruits and spices. The enticing, moderately persistent finish shows spice and flint notes and good lift. A very successful blend and an excellent value. **87**

2010 Goats Do Roam Rose (a blend of 40% syrah, 31% grenache, 17% gamay and 12% mourvedre): Watermelon-orange color. Enticing strawberry and watermelon aromas are lifted by a floral topnote and an exotic suggestion of stone fruits. Then supple, spicy and just off-dry, with a juicy quality that makes it very easy to drink. A very successful blend. Easygoing but not short. **87**

2009 Goats Do Roam Red (a Rhone blend based on 72% syrah): Dark red. Expressive aromas of pepper and smoked meat. Supple, sweet and broad but not heavy, with dark berry and pepper flavors showing decent lift. Finishes with a light dusting of tannins. **87**

2008 Goats In Villages Shiraz-Pinotage Good deep red. Nose dominated by chocolatey oak and woodsmoke. Supple on entry, then quite dry in the middle, showing modest flesh and berry sweetness. Finishes with fairly serious, building dusty tannins and smoky and leathery nuances. Will this ever be pliant? **87(+?)?**

2006 The Goatfather Western Cape Medium red. Smoky red berries, leather, iron, tree bark and spices on the nose; hints at a mourvedre component. Then a bit sweeter and softer than the nose suggests, with flavors of pepper, earthy red fruits joined by a hint of woodsmoke. Tannins are a tad dry. I wanted a bit more definition and verve. **87**

2008 Goat-Roti Syrah/Viognier Coastal Region Bright, full ruby-red. Blackberry, licorice and smoke on the nose. Juicy, suave and light on its feet, with lovely violet lift to the flavors of blackberry, wild herbs, licorice, pepper and charcoal. Shows more energy and a lighter touch than this producer's current Goatfather and Goats in Villages releases. The violet quality carries through to the lively, persistent finish. **90**

2008 Goats In Villages Shiraz-Pinotage Good deep red. Strong chocolatey oak and woodsmoke on the nose. Supple but quite dry; a rather serious style of wine with modest flesh to its berry and smoke flavors. Finishes with dusty, building tannins. I wanted a bit more primary fruit and verve. **87(+?)?**

Graham Beck Wines

2008 Sauvignon Blanc The Game Reserve Coastal Region Bright, light yellow. Lemongrass, grapefruit, green fig and a hint of spice on the nose. Dusty, quite dry and energetic, with some CO2 yet to be absorbed. This began a bit tart but grew more supple and harmonious with aeration, showing more breadth on the back end. **87**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc The Game Reserve Coastal Region Bright light yellow. Lively aromas of grapefruit, lemon drop, lime zest and grass, plus suggestions of tropical fruits. Richer and more glyceric than the basic 2008 Coastal Region sauvignon but also nicely juicy, with broad, dry flavors of citrus and tropical fruits, fig and anise. Finishes with a slightly tart character. **88**

2009 Viognier Robertson Pale, green-tinged yellow. Peach, lime, mint and a whiff of licorice on the slightly warm nose. Plump and round, with peach and pear flavors perked up by a floral nuance. A plush, easygoing style of viognier to drink now. **87**

2009 Chenin Blanc The Game Reserve Coastal Region Light yellow. Complex nose and palate meld peach, pineapple, snap pea, dusty brown spices and white tobacco, all lifted by a citrus element. Dense, ripe, seamless and concentrated, with its light sweetness and touch of oak nicely buffered by harmonious acidity. A saline, tactile, soil-driven chenin blanc with a honeyed quality on the dry, gripping finish. **91**

2010 Chardonnay/Viognier Western Cape (an 84/16 blend): Bright light yellow. Nicely perfumed aromas of fresh peach, yellow plum, flowers and lichee. Then surprisingly dry and lively in the mouth, more shapely but less forthcoming than the nose suggests. Offers good energy but could use a bit more pliancy and length on the back end. **87**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon The Game Reserve Robertson Bright dark red. Spicy, expressive aromas and flavors of plum, mocha and cola. Not particularly complex but shows good shape and energy, with a lightly medicinal aspect to the middle palate. Finishes with broad, dusty tannins and a hint of maple syrup. **88**

2007 The William Red (69% cabernet sauvignon, 18% pinotage, 11% cabernet franc and 2% shiraz): Dark red with ruby highlights. Very dark, slightly medicinal aromas of blackberry, cassis, licorice and mint. Dense, chewy and deep, with very primary dark berry, licorice and spice flavors. Surprisingly strong but harmonious acidity gives this very young wine a rather high pitch. Finishes perfumed and long, with a fine dusting of tannins. Hold this. **91(+?)**

2007 Shiraz The Game Reserve Stellenbosch Dark, bright red. Aromatic nose combines blackberry, white pepper and mocha, along with a chocolatey richness. Silky and sweet on the palate, but with good energy to the slightly medicinal mulberry and chocolate flavors. Not a gamey style of shiraz. Suave tannins and harmonious acids give this a solid structure. **89**

2006 Syrah The Ridge Robertson Bright medium-deep red. Carnal aromas of pepper and smoked meat. Silky on entry, then supple and soil-driven in the mid-palate, showing more smoke, pepper and spicy herbs than primary fruit. Spreads out nicely on the back end, finishing with fine-grained tannins. A suave and savory style--very much syrah, rather than shiraz. **89**

Guardian Peak

2008 Shiraz Western Cape Bright full red. Spicy, peppery aromas with hints of meat and menthol. Supple and moderately sweet but a rather polite style of syrah, without quite the depth of the Guardian Peak wines based on merlot and cabernet. Shows a pliant mid-palate texture but finishes with slightly edgy tannins. **87**

2008 Merlot Western Cape (mostly from Stellenbosch fruit): Expressive aromas of plum, currant, cherry, tobacco and loam; smells like merlot. Then sweet and lush, with the high-pitched redcurrant flavor complicated by leather, herbs and cedar. No shortage of intensity here. Sound acidity and fine tannins will not get in the way of enjoying this wine now. Incidentally, Jean Engelbrecht has ended his partnership with Ernie Els, who will concentrate his wine efforts on his own very successful label. **88**

2008 Frontier Western Cape (also includes 7% Elgin fruit; a blend of 52% cabernet sauvignon, 32% shiraz and 16% merlot): Dark berries, wild herbs, licorice and menthol on the nose. Then surprisingly lush on the palate, with sweet, spicy flavors of black cherry, plum, licorice and sexy smoky oak. Nicely integrated acidity gives this wine very good vinosity. Finishes with dusty but easygoing tannins and juicy persistence. **88**

Hamilton Russell Vineyards

2009 Chardonnay Hemel-En-Aarde Bright, pale yellow-gold. Pungent aromas of peach, nectarine,

lime, hazelnut oil and nutmeg, with a musky iodiney minerality that reminded me of chardonnay from the Meursault/Puligny district. Deep, rich and perfumed, with a lemony edge giving grip and a light touch to the stone fruit and spice flavors. Finishes youthful, savory and long, with an almost tannic quality. A superb vintage for this bottling. **92(+?)**

2008 Pinot Noir Walker Bay Moderately saturated medium red. Very reduced nose offers soil-driven dried rose, smoky minerality and tar, along with leather and musky bonfire notes. Silky on entry, then edgy in the middle, displaying limited fruit ripeness to its flavors of smoke, earth and herbs. Turned a bit more gamey with aeration and showed a whiff of burning asphalt without really losing its reductive character. A second bottle was similar. Disappointing for this wine, which in the best years can be South Africa's top pinot. **88?**

Indaba

2010 Chenin Blanc Western Cape Pale yellow. Pure aromas of apple, nectarine and flowers. Juicy, floral and fresh, with good cut and intensity for the gentle price. Ripe but nicely dry chenin blanc with a hint of citrus zest on the finish. **87**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Pungent aromas of citrus fruits and spices, lifted by a peppery note. Then juicy, spicy and pliant, with rather subdued citrus fruit flavors. Not bad but could use more complexity and lift. **87**

2010 Chardonnay Western Cape Bright medium yellow. Aromas of nectarine, apple and pineapple complicated by a touch of musky brown spices. Sweet, supple stone fruit flavors are nicely lifted by citrus zest and a minerally limestone element. Cleanly made, gently oaked and persistent but a touch on the sweet side, with 6 g/l r.s. **88**

2009 Shiraz Western Cape (includes bits of merlot and cabernet franc; aged for eight months in French and American oak): Dark red. Slightly candied aromas of blackberry, raspberry, pepper, gunflint and musky spices, with attractive floral lift. Supple, juicy and moderately intense, with a slightly high-toned character. Finishes with good sweetness and grip. This is called shiraz but struck me as more Rhone-like than Australian in style. An excellent value. **88**

2010 Shiraz Western Cape Bright red-ruby. Perfumed if slightly reduced aromas of black cherry, red berries, pepper and spices. Smooth, candied flavors of red fruits, spices and pepper offer moderate flesh but surprising freshness. Conveys an impression of slightly elevated acidity. **87**

Jam Jar

2009 Sweet Shiraz Medium red. Blackberry, spices and a hint of tree bark on the bright nose. Very sweet in the mouth (54 g/l r.s.) but with bracing acidity giving this berry bomb a clean character. Very easy to drink but has structure too, and does not come off as gooey. This label was created by its American importer and made by Mike Dobrovic, who was the long-time winemaker at Mulderbosch. **87**

Joostenberg Wines

2010 Chenin Blanc Paarl (with a touch of viognier): Full yellow. Quince, peach, apple, white flowers and honey on the nose, plus a whiff of exotic tropical fruits. Silky and pliant on entry, then firmer in the mid-palate, with a dusty quality further perked up by some unabsorbed CO2. Serious, mouthfilling wine with a dry finish showing modest persistence. **88**

Joubert-Tradauw

2006 Syrah Tradouw Medium red. Plum, strawberry, mocha and spices on the nose and palate. Sweet, silky and fine-grained, with a distinctly elegant quality to the mid-palate and noteworthy breadth on the long, mellow back end. From grapes grown in a warm climate moderated by cooling evening and morning fog; definitely syrah rather than shiraz in style. Fermented with wild yeasts, aged in used oak and bottled without fining or filtration. **90**

Julien Schaal

2009 Chardonnay Mountain Vineyards Upper Hemel-En-Aarde Valley Good pale yellow. Stone fruits, flinty minerality, toffee and spicy oak on the nose, with a complex leesy element. Silky on entry, then

bracing but harmonious in the middle, with terrific penetration and energy to the tropical and stone fruit flavors. Very subtle use of oak. Wonderfully tactile, very young wine with a terrific core of fruit. Finishes impressively long and vibrant, with a light touch. As good a chardonnay as I tasted this year from South Africa. **93**

2008 Syrah Elgin/Walker Bay Good medium red. Expressive aromas of raspberry, woodsmoke, bacon fat and pepper. Intensely flavored but light on its feet, with a penetrating quality and good spicy/floral lift to the dark berry flavors. Very syrah in its medium-bodied, sappy style. Finishes with fine tannins and high notes of mint and pine. An excellent showing. **91**

Kanonkop Estate

2009 Kadette Stellenbosch (a blend of 46% pinotage, 30% cabernet sauvignon, 18% merlot and 6% cab franc): Good full red. Slightly candied aromas of cherry, berry and spices. Sweet but penetrating, with ripe acidity giving this blend a light touch for the vintage. Lovely juicy cherry/berry fruit offers plenty of immediate appeal, and the ripe tannins will not get in the way. Should make a perfect barbecue wine. **89**

2007 Paul Sauer Simonsberg Stellenbosch (68% cabernet sauvignon, 17% cabernet franc and 15% merlot; aged for 24 months in all new French oak): Bright medium red. Dark aromas of blueberry, boysenberry, licorice and mint, lifted by a floral topnote. Intensely flavored, juicy and gripping, with terrific energy and a distinct cool-vintage character. Sexy oak adds complexity to the very long, firmly tannic finish. This very dense, rich wine is still folded in on itself and will require extended aging. **92(+?)**

2008 Pinotage Simonsberg Stellenbosch (made from 50-year-old bush vines; aged for 15 months in French oak, 70% new): Deep red-ruby. Aromas of cherry, mocha and spices. Dense, pure and deep, with compelling complexity and sweetness to its cherry and dark berry flavors. Lovely lush pinotage with solid structure under its supple tannins. Consistently one of South Africa's elite examples of this variety. Drink now or over the next ten years. **92**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Simonsberg-Stellenbosch (aged 24 months in French oak, 50% new and 50% once-used): Bright red-ruby. Captivating aromas of cassis, licorice, violet and minerals, complemented by sexy oak. Creamy, broad, sweet and deep but with lovely mid-palate energy giving shape to the dark berry and cedar flavors. This very intense, seamless wine has plenty of supporting tannins but today they're buried in rich fruit. **92**

Kanu Wines

2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch (includes 7% viognier and 1% sauvignon blanc; 7.6 grams per liter residual sugar): Bright medium yellow. Aromas of lemon drop and smoke. Sweet and honeyed, with good fruit, but a bit lacking in verve and lift. A rather full style of chenin, with an exotic citrus note that may be from the viognier. **87**

Keermont Vineyards

2007 Red Wine Stellenbosch (40% each cabernet sauvignon and merlot, plus 20% syrah): Saturated, deep ruby-red. Brooding aromas of crushed cassis, blackberry, bitter chocolate, licorice and mint, lifted by clove oil and violet; rather New World in style. Supple and concentrated but a bit youthfully clenched on the palate, with very dark flavors of black fruits, violet, dark chocolate, mint and spicy oak. Finishes savory and dry, with palate-dusting tannins and a late note of licorice. I'd like to come back to this in a year or three. A winery to watch. **89(+?)**

Ken Forrester Wines

2010 Petit Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Medium straw-yellow. More soil and minerals than high-pitched fruit on the nose. Plump, oily and soil-driven, with good texture and dryness. Rather serious for a \$12 wine. **88**

2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Pale yellow. Complex aromas of pear, stone fruits, pineapple, spices and pepper, plus a whiff of curry powder. Juicy, fresh and penetrating, with lovely fruit flavors enlivened by minerality, which also gives firmness to the finish. Ken Forrester is now farming his estate vineyards organically. Seventy percent of this wine was aged and fermented in *barriques*, 20% of which were new,

but the wine's material wears the wood component lightly. **90**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch Pale bright yellow. Aromas and flavors of lemon drop, honey and wild herbs, plus a whiff of green pepper. Supple and dry, with a slightly exotic oily texture and very good depth. Boasts sound acidity but not quite the precision for outstanding. Finishes with a firm note of ginger. This showed a denser, almost lanolin-like quality with aeration. **89**

2008 Chenin Blanc The Fmc Stellenbosch Full, bright deep yellow. Wild, complex nose combines orange blossom, dried apricot, honey, brown spices and a whiff of lees. Lush, musky and carnal; in a full-blown, nearly unctuous but not overly sweet style (12.8 g/l r.s.), lifted by a strong peppermint and spice character. Finishes with hints of caramel and grilled nuts. Try this exotic, rather extreme wine with spicy Thai food. The grapes were picked in five passes for optimum ripeness, with some botrytis at the end, then fermented slowly in 400-liter French oak barrels. **90**

2008 Merlot Stellenbosch Dark red. Slightly high-toned aromas of redcurrant, spearmint and clove oil. A fresh, minty, moderately sweet midweight that shows decent flavor intensity but modest nuance and depth. About 15% cabernet franc was blended in just before the bottling. **87**

2007 Syrah/Grenache The Gypsy Stellenbosch (a 60/40 blend; aged): Medium-deep red. Wild, sexy, highly perfumed nose combines black cherry, dark berries, coffee, spices and herbs. The components of this wine aged for a year in new and once-used French barrels, after which the selection was made and the wine spent another year in oak. Wild, aromatic and deep, with a wonderfully light touch for this blend. Finishes with suave tannins and compelling spicy perfume. A beauty. **92**

2009 Petit Pinotage Stellenbosch Medium red-ruby. Candied aromas of cherry, flowers and spices. A lush, sweet fruit bomb with good length and immediate appeal, and none of the banana and burnt rubber qualities that put many tasters off pinotage, especially in this price range. **88**

2008 "T" Noble Late Harvest Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch (botrytized chenin from 42-year-old bush vines): Full deep gold. Powerfully rot-ennobled aromas of dried apricot, honeycomb and marzipan. Thick, very sweet (154 g/l r.s.) and deeply honeyed but with ripe, harmonious acidity giving it surprising drinkability for such a concentrated, heavily botrytized wine. Finishes with outstanding persistence. Very much in a Sauternes style. **92**

2009 Chenin Blanc The Fmc Stellenbosch Straw-gold. High-toned aromas of cherry, honey, toffee and oak spice, with orange blossom and minty nuances emerging as the wine opens in the glass. Concentrated, glyceric and ripe, with deeply spicy stone fruit flavors dominating. I don't find the exotic botrytis character of earlier vintages yet, but the harmonious acidity of this seamless, slow-to-unfold wine gives definition to the lightly saline peach, spice and mineral flavors. In a fairly easygoing style but finishes with noteworthy power. **91**

Klein Constantia

2005 Vin De Constance Constantia (from shriveled but not botrytized muscat de Frontignan grapes; 157 g/l r.s. with 7.5 acidity): Full deep gold. Lovely perfumed nose combines cherry, orange peel, apricot, honey, sexy spices and wild herbs. Very sweet and extremely concentrated wine, with intriguing floral and spice notes contributing a tangy quality to the intense apricot, honeysuckle and yellow raisin flavors. The extremely long, honeyed finish boasts outstanding energy and floral lift. Harmonious from the outset but capable of many years of evolution in bottle. **93(+?)**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Perdeblokke Constantia (aged for 11 months on its lees): Pale straw color. Cool, bracing aromas of lime zest, minerals, ginger and wild herbs. Dense, suave and concentrated, with terrific inner-mouth lift to its citrus and crushed stone flavors. Wonderfully smooth but weightless wine, with perfume expanding in the mouth. This elegant, taut, very subtle sauvignon leaves the taste buds tingling. Pliant enough to enjoy now but worth cellaring. **93**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Constantia Bright red-ruby. Sexy aromas of redcurrant, plum, spices, mint and tobacco, with riper hints of chocolate and mocha. Plummy, sweet and deep; lush and seamless for a Constantia red (the alcohol content is 14.5%). Broad, fine-grained tannins are thoroughly buffered by plum and currant fruit. This plush, long, satisfying wine really perfumes the palate on the slow-building finish, which is complicated by notes of tobacco, spices and nutty, vanillin oak. **92**

2006 Vin De Constance Constantia Deep, full orange-gold. Knockout nose offers orange, apricot, cherry, raspberry, mace, nutmeg, honey and flowers. Thick, very sweet and hugely concentrated; like

liquid velvet in the mouth but with outstanding energy to its palate-staining orange and apricot fruit. Utterly seamless wine with a palate-staining, lightly saline aftertaste hinting at red berries. **95**

Kleynood

2007 Syrah Tamboerskloof Stellenbosch (14.5% alcohol; includes bits of mourvedre and viognier): Bright medium red. Classic syrah aromas of red berries, plum, woodsmoke, mocha and game, with a hint of beefsteak tomato. Velvety and quite fine-grained, with subtle flavors of berries, white pepper and game. Consistent from start to finish. The wine's enticing sweetness offers early appeal but its building tannins give it the structure to age. **90**

La Capra

2009 Chenin Blanc Coastal Region Pale, bright yellow. Aromas of lemon, honey, smoke and dusty herbs. Clean and a bit chewy in the mouth, with ripe acidity to counterbalance the slight sweetness. Not a complex or particularly persistent wine but offers good balance and stuffing. Finishes nicely dry. **87**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Coastal Region Pale straw-yellow. Citrus zest and peppery nuances on the vibrant nose. Supple and quite dry, with moderate complexity but good intensity to the citrus and green pepper flavors. Finishes with good cut and persistence. **87**

2010 Chardonnay Western Cape Pale bright yellow. Aromas and flavors of stone fruits, spices and dusty herbs. Fresh and energetic, with good flavor intensity and persistence. This excellent value holds its shape nicely. **88**

2009 Pinotage Coastal Region Bright medium red. Plum, licorice and a hint of spicy oak on the nose. Mellow and easygoing, with flavors of red berries, plum and woodsmoke. The firm finish features broad, dusty tannins that turn a bit dry. **87**

2009 Shiraz Coastal Region Medium bright red. Aromatic nose combines red fruits, spices and pepper. A lightly sweet, gentle midweight, with flavors similar to the aromas. Soft tannins won't get in the way of enjoying this wine now. **87**

Lammershoek Winery

2008 Chenin Blanc Swartland (from 65-year-old dry-farmed vines, 100% fermented in second- and third-fill 300-, 500- and 600-liter barrels): Full, deep yellow. Wild aromas of minerals and honey, with some stone fruits peeking out with aeration. Broad, spicy and rich, with honey, lanolin and resinous nuances enlivened by a flinty minerality that reminded me of a Loire Valley wine. Intensely flavored chenin blanc with an element of spicy oak accentuating the wine's hint of sweetness. **89**

2009 Roulette Blanc Swartland (44% chenin blanc, 34% chardonnay, 13% viognier and 9% clairette blanc; fermented and aged in used oak): Good medium straw-yellow color. Wild aromas of stone fruits, lanolin, ginger and menthol. Very minerally and a bit medicinal in the mouth; hints at apricot but I wanted a bit more fruit. Offers good texture and ripeness but finishes a bit tart and oaky. I'd be more optimistic about this rather idiosyncratic wine's ability to gain in bottle except for some slightly advanced notes that emerged with air. **88(+?)?**

2006 Roulette Red Swartland (62% syrah, 20% cinsault, 13% grenache and 4% mourvedre; 14.5% alcohol): Good deep red. Syrupy red berries and pungent wild herbs and mint on the nose, along with a candied, almost jammy nuance. Sweet and silky on the palate but with a light touch and good energy to the berry and spice flavors thanks to edgy acidity. A touch of minerality gives firmness to the finished. This was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. **89**

2007 Roulette Blanc Swartland (a Rhone blend that includes a bit of viognier): Bright medium red. Raspberry, spicy and herbal aromas and flavors, lifted by a peppery element. Supple, nicely balanced and leanish, with a lovely light touch but excellent intensity to the mid-palate. Finishes with sweet, fine-grained tannins and lingering dark berry fruit. **90**

Le Riche Wines

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Full deep red. High-toned aromas of plum, redcurrant, mint, herbs and tobacco leaf. Sweet, fat and pliant, with red fruit flavors carrying a full load of spicy, nutty

oak. Not bad but could use a bit more verve. **88**

Lomond

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Sugarbush Vineyard Cape Agulhas Pale, bright yellow. Cool aromas of citrus zest, lime ice and flinty minerality. Ripe but dry and penetrating, with strong grapefruit and wild herb flavors. I very much liked this cool-climate sauvignon until the finish, which betrayed a bit of alcoholic bite. **89**

2008 Syrah Cape Agulhas Bright full red. Spicy, high-toned aromas and flavors of raspberry, plum, pepper, mint, mocha and flowers. Juicy, energetic and light on its feet, thanks to brisk but harmonious acidity. A wine of finesse and delicacy--not a blockbuster. Finishes with light but firm tannins. This enticing cool-climate style of syrah has the balance to age. **90**

Lynx Wines

2010 Viognier Franschhoek (50% barrel-fermented, one-third of which was new oak): Very bright pale yellow. Aromas of peach, mint, honeysuckle and toasty, vanillin oak. Silky, dense and fat, with lovely floral lift to its slightly leesy peach and melon flavors. The oakiness quickly dissipated. There's a lovely penetrating sweetness to the fruit that's nicely buffered by harmonious acidity. **89**

2010 The French Connection Franschhoek (a blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, shiraz, cabernet franc and petit verdot): Bright medium red-ruby. Urgent aroma of redcurrant and crushed blackberry lifted by slightly herbaceous notes of pepper, mint and wild herbs. Juicy, spicy and light on its feet, with very good vinosity and energy but only modest stuffing to its primary berry and spice flavors. Put on some weight with air but still on the lean side on the finish, which shows slightly drying tannins but subtle fruity sweetness. **88**

2008 Xanache Franschhoek (50% merlot, 26% cabernet sauvignon, 9% cab franc and 9% petit verdot): Moderately saturated bright medium red. Currant, tobacco leaf, bitter chocolate, licorice and pepper on the slightly herbal nose. Juicy and on the lean side, more about cut than stuffing. There's a touch of sweetness to the berry and tobacco flavors but this is more of a savory blend, with slightly edgy acidity and lightish tannins more than adequate to support the wine's mid-palate material. **87**

2009 Xanache Franschhoek (a blend of 43% cabernet sauvignon, 39% merlot, 9% cabernet franc and 9% petit verdot): Moderately saturated red-ruby. Deeper, richer and riper on the nose than the 2008, offering black fruits, tobacco, licorice and chocolate mint. More texture and depth too, with a fine-grained palate-coating quality to the flavors of dark berries, violet, graphite and mint. This bright, firmly structured, youthful wine seemed to tighten up in the glass. I'd give it two or three years to expand in the bottle. **89(+?)**

2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Franschhoek (this wine is made from the same cabernet sauvignon that goes into the Xanache blend and is also aged in all French oak, one-third new): Bright medium red-ruby. Lively aromas of black plum, cassis, blackberry, pepper, mint and fresh herbs. Slightly more herbal than the 2009 Xanache, without quite that wine's sweetness and floral lift. But there's very good intensity to the spicy black cherry and red and darker berry flavors. A bit clenched on the finish, in need of three years of patience. **89(+?)**

2009 Shiraz Franschhoek Bright dark red, a bit pale at the rim. Blackberry, licorice, mint, violet and pepper on the nose, showing both a candied hint and a green quality. Juicy and penetrating but not hard, with moderate stuffing to the berry and spice flavors. An elegantly styled cool-climate shiraz that finishes with dusty tannins and a repeating blackberry note. **88**

MAN Vintners

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Pale bright yellow. Pungent aromas of gooseberry, lemon and lime, plus a hint of fig. Juicy and fairly intense, with a slightly sweaty, varietally typical aspect to the gooseberry and curry powder flavors. The uncompromising finish is quite dry and a bit tart. **88**

2010 Chenin Blanc Coastal Region Bright yellow. Cool aromas of melon, kiwi, lime zest, dusty herbs and licorice. Juicy and densely packed, with a bit of sweetness balanced by brisk acidity. A crisp, clean midweight with a dusty texture and a ripe nectarine flavor on the lively finish. Terrific value. **88**

2010 Chardonnay Coastal Region Pale lemon-yellow color. Fresh nectarine, lime and pungent brown

spices on the nose. Juicy and just off-dry, with lovely intensity and lift to the apple, spice and floral flavors. Very subtle use of oak. Lovely chardonnay for eleven bucks. **88**

2009 Pinotage Coastal Region Medium red. Dark berries, plum and a whiff of woodsmoke on the nose. At once silky and juicy, with good intensity to the plum and mocha flavors. Finishes broad, with a fine dusting of tannins and a hint of chocolate. **87**

2009 Cabernet Sauvignon South Africa Bright ruby-red. Crushed blackberry, blueberry, licorice and smoky oak on the nose, with a whiff of flowers. Supple, broad and easy to drink, with an enticing dark berry sweetness nicely buffered by lively herb and flint notes. Finishes with rather soft tannins and lingering notes of redcurrant and plum. **88**

2009 Shiraz Coastal Region Bright dark red. Liqueur-like blueberry and exotic spices on the very ripe nose. Fat, sweet and lush, but with harmonious acidity giving shape to the cassis, blueberry and mocha flavors. Finishes broad, with a fine dusting of tannins. A distinctly creamy shiraz with immediate appeal. **88**

Migliarina

2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch Deep red-ruby. Smoky dark chocolate, coffee, mocha, leather and game on the wild nose; more northern Rhone syrah than shiraz in style. Then supple, silky and intense, with violet and pepper hints perking up black raspberry, dark chocolate and game flavors. A bit of unabsorbed CO2 hardens this midweight wine a bit but accentuates the impression of energy. Give this a year or two to absorb more of its acidity or serve it now with food. (An earlier bottling was distinctly more *sauvage* in its leathery, gamey character.) **89**

2008 Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Good full red. Spices and pepper dominate the nose. Nicely focused wine with good energy to its berry and pepper flavors. Today the shiraz component dominates, but this is a successful blend with a light touch. Finishes with substantial but fine tannins and solid structure. I like this style. Much less funky than the 2007 shiraz bottling **90**

Meerlust Estate

2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Full, bright yellow-gold. Musky, carnal aromas of peach, hazelnut and spicy oak, with a touch of Burgundian funk. Fat, rich and nicely concentrated, with good energy to the peach and spice flavors. Smooth, savory wine with a dry, lingering finish. Not a particularly fruity style but built to age. **88**

2007 Merlot Stellenbosch Bright, deep red. Sexy aromas of black plum, currant, licorice, spices and menthol. Juicy and intense but youthfully tight, with a leafy, savory quality currently dominating the middle palate. Firmly structured, classically dry merlot, finishing with strong dusty tannins. This needs a good five years in the bottle to unwind. **88(+?)**

2007 Rubicon Stellenbosch (74% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot and 11% cabernet franc): Bright, saturated ruby-red. Brooding aromas of cassis, dark chocolate, licorice, violet and pepper. Dense, broad and sweet, with youthful medicinal reserve to the intense flavors of dark berries, tobacco and spices. Already shows a plush texture but there's terrific sappy energy at the core. Finishes very long and aromatic, with fine, building tannins and the structure for long aging. **92(+?)**

Meinert Wines

2007 Pinotage Printer's Ink Devon Valley (includes a bit of merlot): Full deep red. Plum, mulberry, redcurrant, spices and mint on the nose. Juicy, spicy and clean, with saline, savory red fruit and nutty oak flavors and an absence of the funky burnt notes that plague so much pinotage. Finishes with a fine dusting of light tannins. **88**

2007 Merlot Devon Valley Medium red. Red cherry, redcurrant, mint, pepper and tobacco leaf on the nose. Suave, sappy and moderately dense, with firm acidity framing the slightly leafy flavors of redcurrant, milk chocolate and flowers. A rather restrained and slightly green style--a bit aggressive today owing to its firm acid spine and dusty tannins. **88**

2006 Synchronicity Devon Valley (58% cabernet sauvignon, 28% merlot, 12% pinotage and 2% cabernet franc; aged in all-new French oak for two years): Bright dark red. Plum, currant, mocha, coffee and tobacco on the nose, complemented by sweet nutty oak. Rich, mellow and smooth, with the nutty

oak sweetening the plum and milk chocolate flavors. Finishes with broad, suave tannins and lovely subtle length. This has the sweetest fruit of the current set of red releases from Martin Meinert, although the new oak here no doubt is playing a role. I'd give this three to five years in the cellar. **90(+?)**

Mischa Estate

2008 Eventide Cellar Shiraz Wellington Bright, medium red-ruby. Cassis, licorice, dusty herbs and spices, plus a chocolate mint quality that reminded me of American oak (no new oak was used here). Juicy and leanish but with adequate acidity; flavors follow directly from the aromas. Could use a bit more stuffing to support the oak-influenced tannins. **87**

Morgenster Estate

2005 Lourens River Valley Red Stellenbosch (Morgenster's second, but different wine, with a higher percentage of merlot in a more Right-Bank style; the last vintage made by the former winemaker): Good medium red. Plum, mocha and woodsmoke on the nose. Then silky, lush and sexy in the mouth, but with firm acids framing the flavors of mocha and woodsmoke and giving the finish good grip. Cheval Blanc's Pierre Lurton consults here, and it's good to have these wines back in the U.S. market. **89**

2005 Morgenster Stellenbosch (the estate's flagship wine; two-thirds cabernet sauvignon and one-third merlot): Dark red. Musky plum, mocha, tobacco, licorice and herbs on the complex nose: shades of Cheval Blanc? Sweet, suave and penetrating, with compelling nuance to the seamless flavors of plum, herbs and tobacco leaf. This saturates the palate without any heaviness. Wonderfully suave and long on the aftertaste, with suggestions of candied fruits and tobacco. This one also struck me as more Right Bank than Left, though obviously with a firmer spine for extended aging. A beauty. **94**

2006 Morgenster Stellenbosch (roughly one-third each cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon and merlot): Saturated medium ruby. Aromas of crushed cassis, licorice, violet and woodsmoke, with hints of wild herbs adding to the impression of energy. Concentrated, suave and light on its feet, but more primary today than the refined 2005. The brooding black fruit flavors and serious dusty tannins call for several years of bottle aging, but the wine's harmonious acidity prevents it from coming off as hard. Today I find the 2005 to be a bit more minerally and expressive but this should age beautifully too. **92**

Mulderbosch Vineyards

2009 Chenin Blanc Western Cape (made with a touch of noble late-harvest chenin blanc): Pale bright yellow. Subdued but ripe aromas of honey, musky pineapple, peach and smoky oak, with some oak influence showing. Sweet (7.7 g/l r.s.), fat, silky and broad, with the honeyed character continuing in the mouth. Offers lush fruit but finishes with a surprisingly firm edge. This wine spent four months in new American and Hungarian oak, then went into second-fill barrels. **89**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Rather uncompromising, high-toned nose shows a strong peppery quality and a whiff of asparagus. Dense and supple in the mouth, sweeter and riper than the nose suggests, with an exotic suggestion of pineapple. Could use a bit more nuance and grip, though. Not really harmonious today or especially long. **88**

2008 Chardonnay Stellenbosch (this wine did not go through malolactic fermentation): Bright medium yellow. Subdued but complex nose hints at nectarine and musky oak-influenced caramel, smoke and nuts. Supple, broad and concentrated, with nectarine and brown spice flavors showing a distinct sweetness (actually 6.7 g/l r.s.) that's supported by firm acidity. Boasts a slightly oily, mouthfilling texture yet avoids coming off as heavy. Finishes with very good persistence and a firm edge of acidity. **90**

2007 Sauvignon Blanc Noble Late Harvest Stellenbosch (includes a percentage of botrytized berries; aged six months in new French oak): Full medium gold. Extravagant aromas of honey, dried apricot and orange peel. Very sweet (151 g/l r.s.), high-toned and inviting, with exotic flavors of apricot, tangerine, nuts and resin framed by vibrant acidity. There's an almost *rancio* ripeness here but this wine has the sheer energy to support it. **91**

2007 Faithful Hound Stellenbosch (a blend of 62% cabernet sauvignon, 10% each malbec, petit verdot and merlot, and 8% cabernet franc): Dark red. Currant, blackberry and licorice aromas lifted by a leafy quality. Suave, silky and light on its feet, with redcurrant and menthol flavors nicely framed by

harmonious acidity. Gentle and easy to drink now but has the energy to age. The savory finish features smooth tannins. **90**

Muratie Wine Estate

2009 Chardonnay Isabella Stellenbosch Bright medium yellow. Sexy oak notes of coconut and smoke compete with fresh fruit aromas of lime and peach. Then round, dry and suave, with rather laid-back flavors of ripe peach and smoky oak. Not really forthcoming today, or is it simply dominated by its smoky, vanillin oak component? Some slightly advanced notes limited my enthusiasm. **88**

2008 Cape Vintage Stellenbosch (from a field blend of port varieties): Good deep red. Black cherry, Kahlua, maple syrup and clove on the slightly medicinal nose. Just a bit warm but very sweet and essentially smooth in the mid-palate, with cassis, clove and mocha flavors in need of a bit of patience. A touch raisiny on the somewhat aggressive finish. **87**

Mvemve Raats

2008 Mr De Compostella Red Wine Stellenbosch (a blend of 32% cabernet franc, 24% cabernet sauvignon, 20% malbec, 16% petit verdot and 8% merlot): Bright, full ruby. Highly aromatic nose of crushed boysenberry, licorice and violet; showing its petit verdot element today. Lush, sweet, vinous and deep, with superb energy and floral lift to the intense dark berry, licorice and mineral flavors. Perfectly integrated acidity gives this wine a light touch. Finishes with firm, suave tannins and outstanding subtle persistence. The components of this wine were assembled after a year in barrel and then aged another year in oak, one-third new. A beauty. **93**

Neethlingshof Estate

2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Pale, bright yellow. Apricot and ripe citrus fruits on the nose, complicated by vanilla and nutty nuances that obviously do not come from oak. Lovely peach and fresh apricot flavors are perked up by a bit of unabsorbed CO₂. Pliant and pure chardonnay with an echoing finish. **88**

2009 Malbec Stellenbosch Ruby-red. Blackberry, dark plum, licorice, pepper and mint on the slightly medicinal nose. Supple and fruit-driven if a bit one-dimensional, with good acidity and a light woodsmoke character contributing to the wine's impression of restrained sweetness. Finishes brisk and dry, with fine-grained tannins. Aged in 70% new French oak. **89**

2010 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Pale yellow. Fresh apricot and peach aromas complicated by brown spices and mint, plus a whiff of candied ginger. Quite round, almost glyceric, on entry, then slightly disjointed in the mid-palate, with spicy apricot and peach flavors showing a faint bitter edge today. I'd give this six months or so to organize itself. **87**

2010 Malbec Stellenbosch Bright dark red. Aromas of crushed red fruits, woodsmoke and a whiff of rubber that quickly dissipated. Supple dark berry, tobacco and woodsmoke flavors show enticing sweetness and expand nicely in the glass. The smoky quality carries through to the finish, which features dusty tannins. **88**

Neil Ellis Wines

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Groenekloof Very pale silver-yellow color. Pungent, uncompromising aromas of lemon zest, fresh herbs and minerals. Dense, suave and packed with gooseberry, citrus and *fynbos* flavors. Really dusts the palate on the long, subtle finish but the overall impression is one of weightlessness thanks to the wine's racy acidity and cut. Still a bit of CO₂ to be absorbed. **91**

2008 Chardonnay Elgin Pale bright yellow. Sexy nose offers pineapple, nectarine, intriguing leesy nuances and smoky, vanillin oak. Broad, suave and fine-grained, offering lovely palate presence without any impression of weight. The flavors of stone fruits, spices, wild herbs and grilled nuts are deceptively showy today, but this silky wine has the acid structure to support several years of development in bottle. Finishes with sneaky persistence. **90**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Sincerely Western Cape Pale, bright yellow. Pungent herbaceous aromas of pepper and resin, with a hint of asparagus. Then surprisingly ripe and easygoing in the mouth, with good breadth to the flavors of fresh herbs and lemon. Shows more volume than intensity or cut, but

finishes with good length. I'd drink this within the next year. **88**

2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Pale, bright yellow. Pure, subtle aromas and flavors of vineyard peach, lemon drop and ginger. Round and broad, but with nicely integrated acidity and sexy oak spices giving the wine a light touch. Not the last work in cut or intensity but balanced from the outset. Finishes with hints of grapefruit and pineapple. **89**

2008 Pinotage Stellenbosch Deep, bright ruby-red. Crushed dark berries and toasty oak on the nose. Dense, juicy and surprisingly dry, with enticing mulberry fruit complicated by spices and woodsmoke. This rather laid-back pinotage finishes with dusty tannins and a light note of burning tobacco that tempered my enthusiasm a bit. **89**

2009 The Left Bank Western Cape (a blend based on 47% cabernet sauvignon and 35% shiraz): Dark red. Expressive aromas and flavors of crushed dark berries, tree bark, licorice, pepper and spice cake. Offers lovely sweetness but the mid-palate is also given good shape by a firm edge of acidity. I find this both riper and more structured than the last vintage I tasted, the 2007. Finishes with substantial but ripe, broad tannins. **89**

2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Bright, saturated ruby-red. Pungent aromas of cassis, mint, licorice, wild herbs and menthol. Juicy, brisk and on the lean side, with slightly green flavors of cassis, licorice and herbs. Finishes firmly tannic and youthful, with a hint of bitter chocolate. Still rather clenched for a 2006 **88(+?)**

2008 Sincerely Shiraz Western Cape Dark red. Dark raspberry, chocolate, mocha, pepper and herbs on the nose. Juicy and energetic, with an acid streak running straight through the wine. The fresh flavors of dark berries and spices are a bit clenched today, almost tart. Finishes with good length and lift though. **87(+?)?**

2008 Shiraz Elgin Bright red-ruby. Tight but pure nose hints at dark berries, white pepper, licorice and nutty oak. Juicy, sweet and vinous, with lovely restraint and a light touch to the chewy, tactile dark fruit and pepper flavors. Finishes bright and long, with good breadth and a smoky sweetness. This serious wine deserves bottle aging. **90**

Niels Verburg

2007 Shiraz Western Cape Bright red-ruby. Knockout syrah nose combines berries, mocha, cocoa, pepper and sexy *fynbos* hints, all lifted by a floral element. Very rich but suave, with lovely integrated acidity energizing the flavors of blackberry, chocolate and bacon fat. Wonderfully silky and light on its feet. Classically dry and very young wine, with a superb future ahead of it. Most of the fruit that goes into this wine now comes from the cool Bot River region. This vintage of this consistently terrific shiraz, which is bottled under the Luddite label in South Africa, seems more refined than earlier releases. **93**

Oak Valley Wines

2009 Pinot Noir Elgin Medium red. Strawberry, raspberry, mint, rose and a whiff of underbrush on the nose. Suave, silky and light on its feet; not hugely complex but the lightly saline red berry flavors, pliant texture and acid/tannin balance convey excellent varietal character. Finishes with good juicy persistence. **89**

2006 The Oak Valley Blend Elgin (51% merlot, 34% cabernet franc and 15% cabernet sauvignon): Medium-deep red. Expressive, pure, merlot-dominated aromas of redcurrant, licorice, mocha, mint and menthol. Plump, sweet and harmonious, with plum and tobacco leaf flavors nicely framed by supporting acidity. Finishes with dusty tannins. Accessible now but has the balance for at least a few years of aging. **90**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin Very pale straw color. Highly aromatic, bracing nose displays citrus peel, jalapeno pepper, anise and dusty, flinty minerality. Rich, tactile and slightly wild, with pungent herb and pepper notes framing and extending the grapefruit pith and flinty mineral flavors. This dense, glyceric but almost painfully taut sauvignon has a strong acid spine for aging. Finishes long and minerally but not hard. **92**

2008 Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon The Ov Elgin Pale lemon-yellow color. Expressive, open-knit nose dominated by musky leesy and smoky nuances. Fat and rich but a bit loose-knit compared to this winery's 2010 sauvignon blanc bottling, with a leesy complexity to its orange blossom, flint and smoke

flavors. Shows a sexy semillon component but doesn't have quite the intensity or cut for 90 points. **89**

2010 Chardonnay Elgin Pale bright yellow. Expressive nose offers ripe yellow peach, orange and a hint of honey. Juicy, fruit-driven flavors of peach and orange wear their oak element gracefully but haven't yet harmonized their acidity. Will this pick up more flesh with 6 to 12 months of additional time in bottle? **89**

Oldenburg Vineyards

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Bright full red. Currant, black cherry, mocha, licorice and herbs on the slightly high-toned nose. Sweet, pliant and fine-grained, with a satisfying savory character to the flavors of redcurrant, tobacco and fresh herbs. Finishes with a fine dusting of tannins and good sweet persistence. Balanced and structured to evolve slowly in bottle. **89**

Painted Wolf

2010 Chenin Blanc The Den Coastal Region Pale bright yellow. Peach, honey and a minty note on the lively nose. Sweet and easygoing in the mouth, with nice concentration and immediate appeal to the flavors of peach, pineapple, honey and lanolin. Just enough acidity to give shape to the wine's fruit **87**

2009 Jemma White Wine Coastal Region (51% chenin blanc, 26% viognier and 23% verdelho; 25% barrel fermented): Pale straw-yellow. Ripe peach, yellow flowers and honey on the nose, with some oak notes of butterscotch and vanilla. Then juicy and serious in the mouth, showing more energy and less easy sweetness than the chenin blanc bottling. The wood element gives the wine good grip without overpowering the fruit. Finishes with slightly spiky acidity but good intensity and length. **89**

2009 Pinotage Guillermo Swartland Bright red-ruby. Dark berries, pepper, meat and smoke on the nose, with a spicy lift. A supple and rather restrained style of pinotage (not a bad thing!), with a firm edge of acids and tannins framing the flavors of crushed berries, plum and peppery spices. Finishes with decent length. **88**

Paul Cluver Estate

2009 Riesling Elgin Bright golden-yellow. Yellow peach and dusty brown spices on the nose. Juicy and surprisingly dry, with good energy and cut to the sappy, spicy core of stone fruit flavors. This just off-dry riesling finishes dusty and persistent. **89**

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Elgin Pale bright yellow. Classic sauvignon aromas of grapefruit pith, gooseberry, white pepper and capsicum. Juicy, peppery and light on its feet, with terrific intensity and cut and a tactile impression of extract. Some ripe citrus notes contribute to this wine's immediate appeal. Finishes with sneaky length. An outstanding value. **92**

Plaisir de Merle

2009 Chardonnay Paarl Good pale bright yellow. Sexy flinty minerality and smoky oak scents are lifted by a limey topnote. Fresh apricot and peach flavors are joined by dusty spice notes. This moderately deep wine's sweet vanillin oak and bright limey citricity still need a year or so to harmonize. **89**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Paarl Bright, full red. Redcurrant, plum and tobacco leaf on the nose, lifted by a spicy element. Supple, smooth and generous on the palate, with moderate complexity to the plum and woodsmoke flavors. A nicely plush wine with sweet tannins, solid underlying structure and good persistence. But not quite the complexity or grip for 90 points. **89**

Porcupine Ridge

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Pale, bright green-tinged yellow. Precise aromas of lemon peel, spearmint, anise and fresh herbs. Moderately intense and slightly green-edged but fresh and easygoing, with hints of citrus fruits and herbs. Dry but not hard. Finishes with modest length. **87**

2008 Syrah Bright deep red. Dark raspberry, pepper, caramel, woodsmoke and mocha on the nose, plus an exotic whiff of spicecake: very syrah. Then lush, chocolatey and easygoing, with an attractive sweetness to the middle palate. Finishes with dusty tannins and a note of woody soba broth. A lot of syrah for \$13. **88**

Raats Family Wines

2009 Original Chenin Blanc Unwooded Coastal Region (from soil rich in decomposed granite): Pale green-tinged yellow. Complex nose melds pear, guava, candied pineapple and minerals, plus a peppery nuance that reminded me of gruner veltliner. Supple and pliant but juicy; surprisingly dry and fat-free after the sweet nose. Lemon and ginger flavors carry nicely on the aftertaste. Just 2.2 grams of r.s. here. **89**

2008 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Medium yellow. Ripe, musky aromas of honey, wildflowers, butterscotch candy and ginger. Then surprisingly dry and youthful on the silky palate, with a rather laid-back texture and excellent depth. Finishes tactile and long, with intriguing stone fruit flavors. This would still benefit from a year or so of additional aging. Three-quarters of this wine (the portion from granite soil) was done entirely in stainless steel, while the 25% from sandstone soil was fermented and aged in 300-liter French oak, 20% of which was new. **90(+?)**

2008 Cabernet Franc Stellenbosch Deep red-ruby. Brooding aromas of blackberry, cherry, licorice, leather and mint, plus a whiff of tobacco leaf. Juicy, intense and sharply delineated, with enticing floral lift to the dark berry and mineral flavors. Very sexy, bright, refined wine with a firm tannic structure and excellent precision and lift. This was aged 18 months in French oak, 25% new, and bottled without fining or filtration. May well merit a higher score with three or four years of additional cellaring. I'd like to see this in a blind tasting with its Loire Valley counterparts. **91(+?)**

Rietvallei Wine Estate

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Special Select Western Cape Pale silvery yellow. Pungent, varietally expressive aromas of lemon and grapefruit zest, capsicum and minerals. Tactile, dusty and rather powerful, with strong notes of anise and citrus peel. There's a touch of sweetness in the middle, but this well-concentrated wine finishes dusty, dry and long, with an almost tannic impression **90**

2010 Natural Chardonnay Robertson (unwooded): Light, bright yellow. An explosion of fruits on the nose: ripe peach and candied apricot complicated by a whiff of brown spices. Then supple, round and slightly sweet, with the peachy flavor carrying through to the persistent finish. Not especially complex or vibrant but offers delightful fruit and good definition. **88**

2010 Chardonnay Special Select Robertson Pale yellow. Ripe pear, white peach and lovely lime zest aromas are complicated by subtle spicy, vanillin oak. Silky-smooth and fruity in the mouth, with moderately concentrated stone and citrus fruit flavors complemented but not overwhelmed by a kiss of oak spice. Accurate, broad chardonnay with a light touch and a firm edge on the finish. This would make a good by-the-glass pour for a restaurant. **89**

2009 Shiraz/Petit Verdot/Viognier Robertson Medium bright red. Sexy subdued aromas of red berries, cherry, pepper and pungent herbs, plus an exotic whiff of peach (from the viognier?). Juicy, spicy and brisk, with strong, almost tart acidity giving excellent clarity to the red berry flavors. A rather uncompromising, adult blend with no easy sweetness. Finishes savory and firm but not hard. **89**

2008 Esteanna Robertson (a blend of cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and petit verdot): Cassis, cherry, plum syrup, cedar and woodsmoke on the nose. Lush, broad and sweet; a very ripe style of 2008, with the slightly syrupy character following through on the palate. But there's nicely integrated acidity to enliven the sweet, almost roasted plum and berry flavors. Finishes with fine-grained dusty tannins and good mouth coverage but just misses out on the definition and eclat for a 90-point rating. **89**

2008 Muscadel 1908 Robertson (reportedly made from the oldest red muscadel vines in South Africa, planted in 1908; 241 g/l r.s.): Amber-tinged red. Carnal aromas of raisin, mocha, dried flowers and maple syrup. Viscous and round but not heavy; hugely sweet but with excellent balancing acidity. Boasts a glyceric palate feel but the floral and clove high tones give lift to the red berry flavors. Finishes very long, with a red cherry flavor and virtually no obvious tannins. This wine reminded me of Philip Togni's Ca' del Togni. **92**

Rudera Wines

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Bright medium ruby. Wild crushed blackberry, black plum and woodsmoke on the nose, along with some high-toned chocolatey, porty ripeness. Fat, dense and very ripe, with the high-toned quality carrying through in the mouth. The crushed berry, dark chocolate and

woodsmoke flavors offer noteworthy concentration but the tannins come across as a tad dry. Seems youthfully disjointed today. **87(+?)?**

2009 Chenin Blanc De Tradisie Western Cape (barrel-fermented with wild yeasts, and bottled without cold stabilization or filtration): Pale yellow with a golden tinge. Sexy aromas and flavors of apricot, orange blossom and vanilla, with more exotic notes of honey and pineapple emerging with aeration. Almost shockingly dry on the palate, but with a honeyed quality to the chewy fruit. This gained in richness as it warmed up in the glass. **89**

Rudi Schultz Wines

2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch Ruby-red. Ripe aromas of boysenberry and smoke. Velvety-rich but not heavy, with a fine-grained texture and a distinctly savory quality to the flavors of dark berries and sweet spices. A large-scaled wine with a fairly soft palate feel. Finishes with broad, sweet tannins and enough structure for mid-term aging. **90**

Rupert & Rothschild

2008 Classique Coastal Region Medium red. Complex and expressive aromas of redcurrant, tobacco leaf, cedar, smoky oak and espresso, with a plummy quality emerging with air. Suave, dry and lightly vegetal, conveying a distinctly cool-vintage character. There's a distinctly Old World aspect to this savory cabernet/merlot blend. Unfortunately, the flagship 2007 Baron Edmond bottling is unlikely to reach America, and the 2006 was sold mostly to China. **89**

2008 Baroness Nadine Chardonnay Western Cape (80% barrel-fermented, one-third new): Full medium yellow. Ripe apricot, leesy hazelnut and nut oil aromas reflect the barrel treatment. Pure, broad, round and lush, with a captivating sweetness to the ripe pear, honeysuckle and sexy nutty, vanillin oak flavors. Finishes smoky, savory and subtle, with lingering hints of nutmeats and sweet oak. **90**

Rustenberg Wines

2009 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Medium straw-yellow. Lovely perfumed lift to the aromas of citrus peel, nectarine, nutty oak, marzipan and spices. Harmonious acidity gives cut to the nectarine, citrus and sexy oak flavors, with a hint of minerality contributing grip. Still a bit youthfully tight but seems a bit more showy early on than previous vintages. Finishes subtle and long. This was aged in 40% new and 60% one-year-old French oak for a year. **91**

2007 John X Merriman Stellenbosch (47% cabernet sauvignon, 39% merlot, 7% petit verdot, 4% cabernet franc and 3% malbec): Bright ruby-red. Aromas of plum, minerals, graphite, licorice and mint. Big and rich but firmly structured and tight. Bright acidity--and a smaller percentage of merlot than usual--give this Bordeaux blend a youthful toughness. Finishes savory, solidly tannic and long. Lay this down and forget it for a good seven or eight years. **91(+?)**

2005 Peter Barlow Stellenbosch (100% cabernet sauvignon, aged 20 months in new French oak): Good full ruby-red. Vibrant aromas of cassis, licorice and wild spices, with complementary hints of chocolate and mocha. Sweet, creamy and deep, with a layered, mouthfilling quality to the cassis and cigar box flavors. Remarkably lush wine for this structured vintage. The broad, palate-staining finish features plenty of suave tannins. I'd give this at least another couple of years before pulling the cork; it should evolve at least through the early 2020s. **94**

2008 Chardonnay Five Soldiers Stellenbosch (aged 15 months in French oak, 70% new): Bright pale yellow. Captivating aromas of peach, nectarine, flinty minerality, nutmeg and sexy oak. The palate offers lovely restrained sweetness and concentration, with the strong mineral component giving the wine terrific life in the mouth. Finishes long and supple, with a note of marzipan. This very sexy young chardonnay needs a bit more time in bottle to gain additional complexity but does not seem to be high in acidity. This was the first vintage vinified by Randolph Christians, who was assistant winemaker here for years until Adi Badenhorst left to begin his own operation. **92**

2006 Peter Barlow Stellenbosch Full bright ruby. Sexy aromas of cassis, cedar, menthol, chocolate and earth, complicated by a smoky minerality. Dense, lush and sweet but the medicinal cassis and licorice flavors are dominated today by a powerful spine of chewy tannins. Boasts excellent ripeness and outstanding length, but this superb cabernet sauvignon is almost painfully backward today.

Finishes with lovely violet perfume. **93(+?)**

Rust en Vrede Estate

2009 Merlot Stellenbosch Deep, bright red-ruby. Lively aromas of cassis, black cherry, loganberry, chocolate, mocha and mint. Juicy, sappy and intense but young--in fact, almost medicinal today but pliant and seamless. Finishes suave and firm, with dusty tannins and very good length. Give this very promising merlot a couple more years in the cellar. **90**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Bright, dark ruby-red. Plum, licorice, menthol and cigar box scents, complicated by sexy smoky oak and herbal nuances. Lush but firm, with a layered texture and very good definition and grip to the pure dark fruit flavors. Deeper than the merlot, with plenty of stuffing to support its all-new French oak. Finishes firmly tannic and long. This should expand with several years of bottle aging. **90(+?)**

2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch Bright ruby-red. Medicinal dark fruits complemented by chocolate and coconutty oak and lifted by pepper and minerals. Lush, broad and pliant in the mouth, with mellow oak harmonizing nicely with the plum, chocolate and mint flavors. I like the restrained sweet and moderate weight of these Rust en Vrede releases. A rather polite style of shiraz but with good texture and depth. Finishes with ripe, chocolatey tannins. **89**

2007 Estate Wine Stellenbosch (61% cabernet sauvignon, 30% shiraz and 9% merlot; 15% alcohol): Bright, deep ruby-red. Vibrant, precise aromas of cassis, black cherry, licorice, bitter chocolate, minerals, mint and sexy oak, plus a whiff of tar. Then sweet, chewy and very deep, with a compellingly lush texture giving it surprising early appeal. The biggest and deepest of this set of wines, and the longest, finishing with noble tannins and exceptional building sweetness. Offers wonderful richness and concentration without undue weight. Built for a long and graceful evolution in bottle. **93(+?)**

Sadie Family Wines

2009 Palladius White Wine Swartland (a white blend based on chenin blanc): Bright yellow-green. Brilliant aromas of lime, white peach, nectarine, flowers, green almond and pungent stony minerality. Rich but firm, with a tight, sappy core of white peach, minerals, honey and spices. Wonderfully intense and consistent from start to vibrant, palate-staining finish. With 24 hours in the recorked bottle, the wine showed a richer and more honeyed texture without loss of vibrancy. This should be even more complex in a year or so. **93(+?)**

2008 Palladius White Wine Swartland Medium gold. Nutty oak, orange blossom, leesy hazelnut and wet stone on the nose; showing less primary fruit and more earth tones than the 2009. Then supple, broad and rich in the mouth, with a slight sweetness to the glyceric flavors of honeycomb, sweet butter and spices. A bit more phenolic than the young 2009 and quite different in style. This would make a nice match for a mushroom risotto. This fascinating wine actually lightened in color rather dramatically and showed fresher apricot fruit and more lift with extended aeration. **92**

2008 Columella Red Wine Swartland (syrah with 20% mourvedre): Medium ruby. The nose offers compelling lift to the aromas of black raspberry and minerals. Really dances on the palate, showing a magically light touch and superb definition to the youthful dark berry, spice and mineral flavors. This has uncanny energy for South African syrah and finishes with compelling lingering perfume. One senses the wine's incipient complexity, but give it at least a couple years of additional cellaring. **93**

2007 Columella Red Wine Swartland Bright saturated ruby. Explosive aromas and flavors of blackberry, cherry pit, smoked meat, espresso, licorice, gravel, minerals and pencil lead; a real essence of earth (Pauillac meets Cote-Rotie?). Then hugely dense and young as a barrel sample, with the superripe suggestions of a Rhone wine from a warm year. As thick as it is, though, there's already wonderful detail and suavity of texture. The ripely tannic, expanding finish saturates the palate with a whiplash of fruit. A knockout. **94**

Saxenburg

2007 Merlot Private Collection Stellenbosch Good dark red. Musky aromas of plum, milk chocolate, cedar, tar and tobacco leaf, with complicating notes of truffle and pepper. Suave and silky in texture, with harmonious acidity giving shape to the flavors of plum, redcurrant, tobacco leaf and woodsmoke. A fresh, soil-driven wine in an Old World style, finishing with nice length and lift. This grew sweeter and

lusher with air, losing much of its greenness. **90**

2005 Shiraz Select Stellenbosch Full, saturated medium ruby. Blackberry, mulberry, cedar and licorice on the nose, plus some caramel oak. Lush, sweet, clean and deep, with rather polite flavors of black fruits and menthol and a strong oak influence. Finishes with broad, dusty tannins. Nicely made but I'm not sure I would have picked it blind as shiraz. **88**

Scali

2007 Pinotage Voor Paardeberg Bright, saturated ruby-red. Perfumed, rather syrah-like aromas of crushed dark berries, violet and licorice. Densely packed and vibrant, with terrific intensity to its blackberry, redcurrant and licorice flavors. This tightly wound, penetrating, very long wine really needs more time in bottle to expand. A real *garagiste* wine, made in a warm climate and vinified in open-top fermenters. **91**

2007 Syrah Voor Paardeberg Good deep red. Slightly high-toned aromas of redcurrant, blackberry, violet, licorice and bitter chocolate. The palate shows a port-like nuance to the dark fruit and licorice flavors but there's enough juicy acidity here to keep the wine a bit youthfully clenched. Finishes with strong licorice and black raspberry notes. I'd wait a year or two before pulling the cork. **88(+?)**

2006 Syrah Voor Paardeberg Deep red-ruby. Rather Rhone-like aromas of blackberry, bitter chocolate, licorice pastille, menthol and minerals. Juicy and penetrating, with subtle savory flavors of chocolate, licorice and black olive. Very sexy, food-friendly wine with a firm tannic structure for continued evolution in bottle. **90**

Sijnn

2009 White Wine Swillendam (a blend of chenin blanc and viognier): Bright medium yellow. Musky honey and apricot on the nose. Very rich, ripe, fleshy and full, with honey and hazelnut flavors. I would have guessed this was a white Rhone blend including viognier from its weight and fine-grained tannins. An attention-grabber. **90**

2008 Red Wine Swillendam (a blend of 40% shiraz, 29% mourvedre, 22% touriga nacional and 9% trincadeira): Good deep red. Blackberry, blueberry skin, licorice and a whiff of creosote on the nose. Densely packed and quite dry, with a light touch to the berry and tobacco flavors. More tightly wound and less showing today than the 2007, and needing time in bottle to harmonize. Finishes with broad, fine tannins. These wines are made by David Trafford. **90(+?)**

2007 Red Wine Swillendam (42% shiraz, 26% mourvedre, 21% touriga nacional, 10% trincadeira and 1% cabernet sauvignon): Deep ruby-red. Complex nose offers aromas of blueberry, tobacco, flint, dark chocolate and dusty stone. Glyceric and lush, with sweet berry fruit complicated by notes of smoke and pepper. More harmonious than the 2008 release and more complex today. Finishes with considerable spicy, dusty tannins and hints of honey and blueberry. **91**

Simonsig Wine Estate

2007 Pinotage Stellenbosch Good medium red. Dark raspberry, smoked meat, gunflint, pepper and truffle on the nose. Pliant and sweet, with nicely integrated acidity giving shape to the brambly berry and smoke flavors. A fruity, rather soft style of pinotage, finishing with broad tannins and a hint of licorice. Easy to drink already. **87**

2007 Red Hill Pinotage Stellenbosch Deep red-ruby. Superripe aromas of blackberry, mocha, chocolate mint and herbs; smells like there's some American oak here. Then big, rich and oaky, with some roasted, chocolatey, porty notes currently clashing with an herbal component. More intense than the basic pinotage but a bit disjointed today. Finishes with building tannins and hints of raisin and chocolate mint. **87?**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Sunbird Stellenbosch Pale silver-yellow. White pepper, anise and grapefruit zest on the nose. Juicy and penetrating, with some unabsorbed CO₂ and grapefruit acidity giving cut to the green tropical fruit and pepper flavors. Uncompromising, classic sauvignon. **88**

2010 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Pale yellow. Lime peel, peach and flowers on the perfumed nose and palate. Rich, round and slightly sweet, with some unabsorbed carbon dioxide giving lift to the wine's fruits and flowers. Essentially supple, ripe chenin blanc with a slightly edgy, nicely dry finish. **88**

Six Hats

2010 Chenin Blanc Western Cape Pale yellow. Ripe peach, pineapple and tropical fruits lifted by spices on the nose. Supple and seamless but with a grassy quality that reminded me of sauvignon blanc. A linear wine with a slightly tart stony edge and a hint of nuts on the finish. **87**

2010 Viognier Western Cape Medium yellow. Sexy, high-toned aromas of apricot and peach. A supple if one-dimensional fruit bomb with just enough acidity to maintain its shape. Finishes a bit warm. I'd drink this soon. **87**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Very pale color. Mint, melon, citrus zest and white flowers on the nose and palate. A bit lean but with good intensity for this price range. Finishes brisk and refreshing. **87**

2010 Pinotage Rose Western Cape Full deep orange-watermelon color. Aromas of strawberry and smoke. Sweet, supple red fruit flavors enlivened by firm acidity and wild herbs. Nicely fresh and persistent user-friendly rose. **88**

2009 Pinotage Western Cape Deep red-ruby. Aromas and flavors of plum, black pepper, bitter chocolate and licorice. Intense and juicy if a bit youthfully simple, showing some very ripe notes but displaying good balance. Densely packed and in need of another six months of patience. Not short. **87**

2009 Shiraz Western Cape Good bright ruby-red. Aromas of black raspberry, pepper and chocolate. Dark berry, spice and pepper flavors are supple but also fresh, offering good cut and plenty of personality for the gentle price. Finishes with smooth tannins and a chocolatey nuance. **88**

Solms-Delta

2010 Solms-Astor Vastrap Cape Blend Western Cape (a blend of chenin blanc, semillon and riesling, partly aged in oak): Medium yellow. Aromas of honey, smoke, ginger, crushed stone and *fynbos*, lifted by citrus and floral nuances. On the lean side and a bit spiky, with juicy citrus and white peach flavors showing the riesling influence today. A distinctly different wine with a very firm texture, this blend needs another year in the bottle to harmonize. **87**

Southern Right

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Walker Bay Pale bright yellow. Subtle, pure aromas of soft citrus fruits, gooseberry, quinine, ginger and fresh herbs. Then supple, round and spicy in the mouth, in a rather laid-back, polite style. Subtly mouthfilling, dry sauvignon with a firm edge of acidity and little in the way of greenness. Finishes with subtle, dusty persistence. This winery was co-founded and is partly owned by Anthony Hamilton Russell. **90**

2008 Pinotage Walker Bay Bright, deep red. Dark raspberry, spicy oak and mint aromas begin a bit reduced and mute but clear with air. Silky on entry, then velvety and broad in the middle, with complex, soil-driven flavors of raspberry, blackberry, smoke and spices. Brisk acidity still needs a year or two to harmonize with the wine, but the classically dry finish is suave, vibrant and long, with a broad dusting of tannins and a whiff of woodsmoke. This highly individual pinotage from stony, clay-rich soil shows an almost pinot-like suavity of texture. **91**

Spice Route

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Darling Pale straw-yellow. Ripe but distinctly herbal nose combines green pepper, tropical fruits and a lightly resinous quality. Then round and full in the mouth, with dusty tropical fruit and wasabi flavors. A touch of sweetness is countered by a mineral dryness. This serious and idiosyncratic wine finishes with noteworthy length and a smoky nuance. **90**

2009 Chenin Blanc Swartland Full yellow-gold color. Pear and melon aromas complemented by vanilla and clove oak notes. In a round, plump style, with melon, citrus and spice flavors joined on the back by nutty oak. Like a chardonnay wannabe in weight, and in need of a bit more verve. **88**

2008 Pinotage Swartland Deep red. Slightly high-toned aromas of dark berries, fruitcake and spicy oak. Rich and spicy but a bit herbal and dry, with a strong oakiness currently overshadowing the wine's blackberry and blueberry flavors. A bit warm at 14.5% alcohol, but I don't find the fruit ripeness

suggested by that figure. Oak-driven tannins are a tad dry. **88**

Springfield Estate

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Special Cuvee Robertson Pale yellow. Tropical fruit, honeydew and nectarine aromas lifted by a floral topnote. Sappy, broad and concentrated, with rather easygoing, just off-dry flavors of gooseberry, tropical fruits, grapefruit pith and mint. Some unabsorbed CO2 contributes to the freshness of this medium-bodied wine. **88**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Life From Stone Robertson Palish golden-yellow color. Pungent aromas of orange peel, kiwi and minerals, with a ripe honeyed nuance adding complexity. Then very ripe but tightly wound, with sweet nectarine and mineral flavors complicated by a savory saline quality. Nicely deep and glyceric wine given lift and energy by strong acids and underlying minerality. **91**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Special Cuvee Robertson Full, bright yellow with a gold tinge. Nectarine and tropical fruits on the nose. Sweeter and gentler than the Life from Stone bottling, offering a silkier texture and an impression of lower acidity. No pepperiness to this creamy, easygoing wine. Lovely fat here but a bit less long and gripping than the more mineral-driven Life from Stone. **90**

2008 Chardonnay Wild Yeast Robertson Medium bright gold. Slightly high-toned aromas of apricot, honey and wild herbs, with a carnal suggestion of botrytis. Then chewy and fresh in the mouth, with exotic tropical fruit, orange and honey flavors enlivened by penetrating acidity, firm underlying minerality and some unabsorbed CO2. A very ripe style but with real life and verve. Almost tannic with dry extract on the slightly saline, dry-edged finish. **89**

2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Methode Ancienne Robertson Full red with ruby highlights. Aromas of currant, plum, cedar, mocha and mint. Sweet plum and tomato flavors are lifted by an herbal edge. Finishes with dusty tannins and notes of mocha and caramel. Old-style cabernet, with a slight vegetality. **87**

2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Whole Berry Robertson Moderately saturated medium red. Crunch berries, licorice and spices on the nose. Juicy and fruit-driven, with good intensity to its berry flavors. Finishes with oak notes of caramel and nuts. **88**

2004 The Work Of Time Robertson (45% cabernet franc plus cabernet sauvignon, merlot and petit verdot): Medium red. Wild aromas of dark berries, pepper, tobacco, licorice, iron, cedar and smoke. Juicy, intense and still quite young, with excellent clarity and inner-mouth energy to the berry, cherry and tobacco flavors. Idiosyncratic and intriguing wine with the structure for slow aging in bottle. I'd love to come back to this one in five or six years. **90(+?)**

Stark-Conde Wines

2007 Conde Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Saturated bright ruby. Cassis, black plum, licorice, dark chocolate and wild herbs on the nose. Dense, juicy and tightly wound, with slightly medicinal berry flavors, a sappy herbal element and a whiff of woodsmoke. Not at all a sweet style but finishes surprisingly pliant, with broad, fine tannins and attractive herbal perfume. I'd give this another couple years in the cellar. **89(+?)**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Three Pines Jonkershoek Valley (Aged for 22 months in French *barriques*, 70% new): Dark red. Musky aromas of crushed cassis, licorice and bitter chocolate. Sweet and supple but firm, with classic cabernet flavors of dark berries, mint, herbs and cedary oak, plus a whiff of dark chocolate. A deep and vinous wine with very good energy and spine. Finishes with sweet, building tannins and excellent length and lift. Fewer than 400 cases were produced. **91(+?)**

2007 Syrah Three Pines Jonkershoek Valley Deep ruby-red. Expressive aromas of dark raspberry, pepper, woodsmoke, licorice and wild herbs. Then suave, silky and seamless in the mouth, with lovely verve giving shape to the dark fruit and smoked meat flavors. Boasts excellent depth and a restrained sweetness that will take a few years to show itself. The broad finish features sweet tannins and excellent subtle persistence. **91(+?)**

Teddy Hall Wines

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch Pale metallic yellow color. Ripe fruit-driven aromas of orange peel, honeysuckle and brown spices. Then round and substantial in the mouth, with an almost

chardonnay weigh to the lemon, soft citrus and lightly herbaceous flavors. A rather easygoing, silky sauvignon blanc with a persistent, broad, lemony aftertaste. **89**

2009 Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Straw-yellow. Musky, low-toned aromas of flint and ginger, plus an almost fusel quality. Round and spicy but yet yet filled in, with smoke, flint and fusel qualities currently dominating pineapple fruit. Soft, broad and fairly dry chenin blanc with good texture. I'd give this some time in the cellar. **89(+?)**

Thelema Mountain Vineyards

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Sutherland Elgin Pale yellow. Rather laid-back aromas of pineapple and anise. Silky, ripe and pure, with strong fruit flavors of pineapple, lemon and stone fruits. Not the last word in complexity but fat, spicy and nicely balanced, finishing with sneaky length. **89**

2008 Chardonnay Sutherland Elgin Bright medium yellow with a green tinge. Nectarine, flowers and sexy musky oak on the aromatic nose. Bright on the palate but slightly disjointed, with citrus flavors and some acidity yet to be integrated. Finishes with a note of nutty oak. A wine of moderate texture and ripeness. **87**

2008 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Bright medium yellow. Crystallized lemon peel, peach, nutmeg, minerals and toasty oak on the lively nose. Then minerally, firm and backward, combining lovely grip and a light touch. Quite bracing for a chardonnay from Thelema, due in part to the cooler vintage. With its fresh acidity and strong underlying minerality, this very persistent chardonnay will be interesting to follow for the next several years. **91**

2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch Good full red-ruby. Perfumed aromas of wild blueberry and licorice lifted by flowers and pepper. At once dense and juicy, with a restrained sweetness to its intense berry and pepper flavors. Shows a hint of meat but this is not a particularly animal style of shiraz. Bright acidity and a deep spice character give the wine energy and aromatic persistence. **90**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Full medium red-ruby. Cassis, licorice, wild herbs and spices on the inviting nose. Then ripe and sweet in the mouth, with good juicy definition and lift to the cassis and spice flavors. Finishes with sweet, well-buffered tannins and lovely persistence. Always an ageworthy wine but this vintage also offers plenty of early appeal. **91**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon The Mint Stellenbosch Bright medium ruby. Cassis, licorice and eucalyptus on the nose. Supple, sweet and lush but dominated by cassis fruit today; loads of early appeal here but not yet showing its complexity. Less minty in the mouth than some earlier vintages of this wine. Finishes broad and sweet, with surprisingly suave tannins and a late note of licorice. **91**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon The Mint Stellenbosch Bright red-ruby. Blackberry, bitter chocolate and violet on the nose, with the typical peppermint element of this bottling. Dense and deep but youthfully tight, with suave black fruit and mint flavors supported by harmonious acidity and a strong tannic spine. As young as it is, it's seamless from the start. A classic vintage for this wine, but it needs time in bottle. **91(+?)**

The Winery of Good Hope

2009 Vinum Africa Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch Pale golden-yellow. Aromas of yellow fruits, honey and spicy oak, with some exotic suggestions. Fat, rich and honeyed, with stone fruit flavors carrying a full load of spicy oak. There's good underlying citrusy acidity here but the finish comes off as a bit phenolic. **87**

Two Oceans

2010 Chardonnay Nectarine, fresh pineapple, lemon drop and spices on the nose, plus a hint of vanillin oak. A moderately intense but varietally expressive midweight with attractive aromatic lift to its stone fruit and floral flavors. Holds its shape nicely on the back end. **87**

Tierhoek

2009 Sauvignon Blanc Piekenierskloof Pale bright yellow. Slightly metallic aromas of citrus peel and white pepper. Quite dry and on the lean side, with very cool flavors of herbs, mint and stony minerality. Offers very good cut but comes across as a tad phenolic on the finish, in need of more pliancy and fruit.

88

2009 Chenin Blanc Piekenierskloof Bright pale yellow. Aromas of crisp yellow apple and flinty minerality, plus a hint of resin. Yellow fruit flavors are enlivened by an element of dusty minerality that carries through to the surprisingly bracing finish. Offers a lovely combination of honeyed sweetness and ripe balancing acidity. **89**

Uva Mira Vineyards

2008 Chardonnay Single Vineyard Stellenbosch Medium yellow. Ripe peach, lime, hazelnut and vanillin oak on the nose. Sweet, lush and sexy, with a seamless texture to the stone and citrus fruit flavors lifted by flowers. This seems more forward than the 2007 was at the same age; today I don't find quite the mineral grip. Has the stuffing to support its oak element, though, and spreads out nicely on the persistent finish. But does this have a hidden dimension? **91(+?)?**

2006 Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon Cellar Selection Stellenbosch (a 63/37 blend): Deep ruby-red. Plum, cassis and licorice on the slightly warm nose. Thick but lively on the palate, with sound acidity perking up the flavors of crunchy black fruits, licorice and shoe polish. A rather new-style wine but not yet complex and in need of more nuance and give. The oak-driven tannins are a bit dry. **88(+?)?**

2006 Vineyard Selection Estate Blend Stellenbosch (36% cabernet sauvignon, 24% merlot, 23% syrah and 17% cabernet franc): Bright deep ruby. Cassis, blackberry and licorice aromas lifted by a note of peppermint oil. At once dense and juicy, broad and suave, with powerful but extremely unevolved black fruit flavors dominating the palate. Finishes with serious mouthcoating tannins that call for at least five years of cellaring. I love this wine's airy quality. **91(+?)**

Vergelegen

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve Schaapenberg Vineyard Stellenbosch (from fruit grown on a windswept, south-facing, decomposed-granite-and-clay slope barely four miles from the ocean): Pale, bright greenish-yellow. Pungent aromas of gooseberry, grapefruit pith, white pepper and flint. Denser and sweeter than Vergelegen's regular sauvignon blanc, with a more glyceric, mouthcoating texture to the bracing, highly concentrated flavors of grapefruit and citrus peel, musky pepper and flinty, smoky minerality. Finishes very long and suave, with a magically weightless impression. There's no need to drink this silky but bracing sauvignon now. **93**

2009 Estate White Blend Stellenbosch (a 65/35 blend of sauvignon blanc and semillon, aged partly in new oak): Very pale yellow with a green tinge. Reticent aromas of lime, minerals and lees. Dense, layered and wonderfully rich but still an infant, with subtle spicy and leesy nuances already adding complexity to the mid-palate. The largest-scaled and most sophisticated of Vergelegen's white wines, finishing with unflagging length and an expanding quality that suggests this wine will evolve positively in bottle for many years. **94(+?)**

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Western Cape Pungent, steely aromas and flavors of gooseberry, kiwi, grapefruit rind and green pepper. Densely packed and bracing, with a weightless quality to the intense, pristine middle palate. A touch of leesy complexity is counterbalanced by enticing peppery thrust. Finishes brisk, energetic, clean and long. Classic sauvignon. **91**

2008 Chardonnay Coastal Region Full, bright medium yellow. Aromas of lemon drop and peach, complemented by sexy smoky, vanillin oak and musky lees. Broad, silky and dry, with a hint of lanolin adding texture to the flavors of underripe peach and ginger. Finishes smooth and lightly saline, with good lemony lift. Still a bit youthfully unforthcoming, with fruit in the deep background. **89**

2009 Chardonnay Reserve Stellenbosch Medium green-tinged yellow. Pure but reticent aromas of pear, lemon ice and hazelnutty lees. Dense, spicy and fine-grained, with powerful but well-integrated acidity punching up the citrus fruit and hazelnut flavors. There's some vanillin oak here, but more than enough supporting fruit and minerality. Very energetic, dry chardonnay with a fine, long, lemon and mineral aftertaste and firm spine. And still a baby: I'd wait three or four years before pulling the cork. **91(+?)**

2007 Merlot Reserve Stellenbosch (blended with bits of cabernet franc and petit verdot): Bright medium red. Complex aromas of redcurrant, coffee, chocolate, licorice, pepper and tobacco leaf. Suave and sweet but not at all glyceric or overextracted. Varietally expressive flavors of dark berries and plum, complicated by a whiff of woodsmoke. Nicely buffered tannins coat the mouth without leaving

behind any dryness. Good broad, seamless merlot with cut. **90**

2006 Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon Mill Race Stellenbosch Medium-deep red. Redcurrant, tobacco leaf, pepper and chocolate on the nose. Supple and pliant but with modest sweetness to the slightly stewy fruit flavors. Offers good acid bite but seems a bit disjointed, finishing with slightly dry tannins and notes of chocolatey, nutty oak. **87**

2007 Shiraz Stellenbosch Red-ruby. Sexy, expressive aromas of blackberry, bacon fat, woodsmoke and pepper. Supple, pliant and easygoing, with nicely integrated acidity framing the moderately deep berry and smoked meat flavors. In a distinctly forward style, finishing with attractive sweet persistence. I'd enjoy this now or over the next few years. **89**

2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Stellenbosch Good dark red. Blackcurrant, pepper, dark chocolate, coffee, mocha, licorice and a whiff of wild herbs on the inviting nose. Then savory, suave and dry, with a restrained sweetness to the complex flavors of dark berries, plum, pepper, licorice and minerals. This energetic cabernet really saturates the mouth with flavor, but it should put on more weight with time in bottle. Finishes lively and long, with a slight youthful austerity to the firm tannins. **91(+?)**

2004 Estate Premium Red Wine Stellenbosch Good dark red. Plum, chocolate, graphite, mint and menthol on the nose, complemented by a complex minerality. Lush, rich and seamless but still quite young, conveying an impression of bound-up energy. Wonderfully intense yet weightless wine with a powerful mineral spine to support its flavors of redcurrant, dark plum, minerals and chocolate. This savory, understated cabernet sauvignon-dominated Bordeaux blend really spreads out to saturate the palate on the finish, which features fine-grained, tongue-coating tannins and terrific grip. Wait a couple more years on this beauty and then enjoy it over the following decade. **94**

2006 "V" Stellenbosch (90% cabernet sauvignon, with 5% each merlot and cabernet franc): Bright, deep red. Currant, plum, spice box, chocolate and mocha on the nose, along with a roasted herb element. Broad, lush and sweet, but with well-integrated acidity to frame the ripe dark fruit, chocolate and licorice flavors. Finishes very long, with fine-grained tannins. Vergelegen's more modern, internationally styled red blend is remarkably full and plush but showed some slightly funky truffle, herb and mocha notes with extended aeration, and less vibrancy than the classic estate red. **91(+?)?**

Vilafonte

2007 Series C Paarl (74% cabernet sauvignon, 11% merlot, 9% cabernet franc and 6% malbec; aged for 25 months in 94% new French oak): Full bright ruby. Crushed cassis, licorice and violet on the nose, complicated by minerals, mint and graphite. Juicy, intense and weighty, with a downright 3-D texture to its black fruit, bitter chocolate, mineral and mint flavors. This powerful and extremely unevolved wines needs time to harmonize its firm, slightly spiky tannins. Should be a knockout in five or six years. **91(+?)**

2006 Series C Paarl (54% cabernet sauvignon, 40% merlot and 6% cabernet franc): Full ruby-red. Sexy, sweet aromas of dark berries and chocolatey oak. Dense, plush, sweet and fine-grained, suavely combining its chocolatey merlot and cassis-and-herb cabernet sauvignon elements. Offers a bit less violet lift (cabernet franc?) than the 2007 but this is bigger and more generous today, not to mention more harmonious. Finishes suave, broad and long. **92**

2006 Series M Paarl (43% cabernet sauvignon, 39% merlot, 15% malbec and 3% cabernet franc): Bright ruby-red. Merlot-dominated aromas of plum, chocolate, mocha and lead pencil. Fat, broad and sweet, with a slightly medicinal quality to the plum and herb flavors. Finishes with rather serious tannins that call for at least a couple more years of bottle aging. **90**

Vrede en Lust

2007 Boet Erasmus Simonsberg-Paarl (a Bordeaux blend based on 52% cabernet sauvignon and 42% merlot): Good medium red. Slightly herbaceous, old-school aromas of plum, tobacco leaf and woodsmoke. Then silky, smoky and sweet in a suave Old World way, with integrated acidity currently suppressing the berry and herbal flavors. But this idiosyncratic wine boasts a velvety texture and finishes with very suave tannins. **90**

Warwick Estate

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Professor Black Stellenbosch Bright pale yellow. Ripe, expressive aromas of nectarine, peach, grapefruit peel and dusty spices, all lifted by a floral quality; showing the clean, fruity side of the variety, not the herbal, peppery one. Smooth, round and dry in the mouth, with good breadth and a seamless texture to the stone fruit and pineapple flavors. Sound acidity gives the wine a light touch and solid backbone. But this is delicious already. **90**

2008 Pinotage Old Bush Vines Stellenbosch Bright ruby-red. Sexy floral scents of dark berries, eucalyptus, cinnamon, pepper and licorice. Suave and vinous, with a compelling deep sweetness to the berry and cedar flavors. Smooth and classy pinotage with a light touch. Finishes with fine, mouthdusting tannins, excellent length and enough structure to support further improvement in bottle. **91**

2007 Three Cape Ladies Cape Blend Simonsberg (a blend of 35% cabernet sauvignon, 34% pinotage, 27% syrah and 4% merlot): Deep, saturated ruby-red. Burnishes aromas of plum, black cherry, currant, cedary cigar box and sexy oak. Lush, rich and deep, but with harmonious acidity framing the complex flavors of plum, chocolate, licorice and mint. This boasts a compelling sappy core of sweet fruit and superb energy for a wine that spent nearly three years in oak. Very sophisticated and very long, finishing with building tannins that call for patience. A beauty. **92(+?)**

2008 Cabernet Sauvignon The First Lady (cabernet sauvignon; no new oak): Good full medium red. Cassis, pepper, fresh herbs and graphite on the nose. Suave and silky but not at all overly sweet, showing a medicinal reserve to the flavors of plum, currant, licorice and mint. A laid-back wine with a rather light touch, in an Old World style. Finishes with dusty tannins. This needs time in bottle to expand. **90(+?)**

Waterford Estate

2008 Chardonnay Stellenbosch Pale bright yellow. Sexy, downright Burgundian aromas of stone fruits, hazelnut and musky lees. Rich, suave and fairly dry, with a subtle saline quality and a restrained sweetness to its flavors of peach, spices, licorice and nutty oak. The subtle wood tones harmonize nicely with this classy chardonnay, which finishes with terrific supple persistence. **91**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch Bright, deep ruby-red. Dark berries joined by pepper and a hint of green pea on the nose. Then concentrated and suave in the mouth, with nicely delineated flavors of currant, pepper and beefsteak tomato. This fine-grained, varietally accurate cabernet is most impressive today on the palate-saturating finish, which features a very firm tannic structure for extended aging. I'd hold it for at least a few years before pulling the cork. **91**

2008 Kevin Arnold Shiraz Stellenbosch Good bright medium red. Raspberry and mocha on the subtle nose and palate. Juicy and fine-grained, with a restrained sweetness and lovely balance to the mid-palate. Not yet especially complex, but this supple, savory wine has the spine of tannins to unfold in bottle over the next six to eight years. Finishes with noteworthy persistence. **90**

2006 The Jem Stellenbosch (a blend based on 60% cabernet; aged 18 months in French oak, 40% new): Good deep, bright red. Redcurrant, tobacco and fresh herbs on the nose. Juicy, bright and nicely focused, with lovely lift to the flavors of black cherry, red berries, smoke, licorice and mocha. Harmonious acidity gives the mid-palate a penetrating, primary quality. Sexy, vibrant wine, finishing with firm tannic spine and lovely palate-saturating flavor without weight. Lay this one down. **92(+?)**

Wildekrans Wine Estate

2010 Sauvignon Blanc Bot River Pale bright yellow. Aromas of grapefruit, pepper and lime. Supple, seamless and bright, with sound acidity leavening the wine's glycerol texture. A melony richness is perked up by an almost tart citrusy quality and good pungent minerality. Bot River is a cool area not far from Walker Bay. **89**

2010 Chenin Blanc Bot River Pale bright yellow. Lemon, grapefruit and pineapple are lifted by a floral element. At once glycerol and juicy, tactile and smooth, with lovely acidity framing and extending the fruit flavors. This has the palate feel and weight of a chardonnay. Finishes long and subtle. Try it with spicy southeast Asian cuisine. Much more successful than the 2009 bottling **90**

2008 Pinotage Walker Bay Medium red. Smoky plum and tobacco on the nose. Supple, broad and sweet, with spicy lift to the flavors of plum, redcurrant, licorice, smoke and tobacco. Shows a slightly aggressive pinotage character and some drying tannins but finishes with good length. **87**

2007 Pinotage Barrel Selection Walker Bay (these cool-climate sites are reportedly picked two weeks later than most pinotage vineyards; aged in 100% new French oak): Bright red-ruby. Black cherry, cassis, violet and licorice on the dark, ripe nose, with an overlay of sexy oak. Juicy, spicy and creamy in the middle, even a bit porty. But this tactile wine retains good freshness and finishes with suave, firm tannins and very good length. This bottling always comes from the same parcel of older vines. **90**

2007 Shiraz Walker Bay Deep red. Expressive, slightly high-toned aromas of raspberry and minerals. Fat, sweet and in your face, with moderately dense dark berry, licorice and smoke flavors. From a cool climate but a bit confectionery, and a wine of modest complexity. **88**

2007 Cabernet Franc/Merlot Walker Bay Good deep red. Musky berries, game and smoke on the nose. Then juicy and intense for the price range, with good definition to the dark berry, violet and licorice flavors. Offers nice leafy, floral cabernet franc lift in an easy-drinking package. Finishes with good persistence. **88**

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