

Out of Africa: The wines perfectly lined up to score for the World Cup

Olly Smith von der renommierten Englischen Zeitung The Daily Mail war kürzlich in Südafrika und war begeistert von den Weinqualitäten und dem Land. Hier sein enthusiastischer Bericht in Englisch.



Waterford, The Jem, Stellenbosch 2005's sleek, bold structure makes this red a winner

I recently spent a week in South Africa pretending to be on holiday but I ended up doing quite a bit of wine-tasting and visiting wineries.

My dad came with me and we had a blast - there is an enthusiastic buzz around South African wine-making, some of which is down to the attention the World Cup is bringing, but my hunch is there's something richer, deeper and more significant afoot. There is confidence - not just in know-how and delivering quality wine, but in a pioneering sense of adventure.

Part of South Africa's conundrum is the huge range of soils they have - a jigsaw for winemakers that takes years to piece together. That said, already you can see trends emerging, even in regions that have only recently been planted with vines.

Cooler climate areas such as Hemel-en-Aarde and Elgin are gaining a reputation for zinging Sauvignon Blanc and reds with a sense of freshness; warmer places, such as the vineyards around Riebeeck Kasteel in Swartland are pumping some plumper Syrah along with whites such as Chenin Blanc blended with such grapes as Viognier, Clairette,

Grenache Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne and more.



The potential for blending ground-breaking and uniquely South African wines is huge. Semillon seems to do brilliantly in South Africa and I'd love to see a whole lot more of it - as in the case of the genius Steenberg Semillon Constantia 2008 (£21.99 from armit.co.uk but only available in cases of six) with its uplifting zing and subtle oak complexity.



South Africa is blessed with a number of larger-than-life winemaking personalities: bon viveur Ken Forrester is the self-styled king of Chenin Blanc; gentle giant Bruwer Raats is a legend with his Chenin, red blends and awesome Cabernet Franc; talented Eben Sadie creates his flagship world class Palladius 2007 white blend or his vibrant Sequillo White 2007 (£15.50, thewinesociety.com); and Adi Badenhorst's wines are well worth tasting.

And there are new kids on the block - John Seccombe is the only English-trained winemaker in South Africa, recently arrived at quality winery Iona. John's barrel and tank samples of the 2009 vintage look very promising - the common thread is vivid fruit and freshness. Rikus Neethling is an up-and-coming boutique winemaker at Bizoe whose white Henrietta 2008 Semillon/ Sauvignon is around £10 a bottle on cellardoorprice.com with impressive nutty, zippy complexity. And Chris and Andrea Mullineux have recently broken out on their own venture with Mullineux Family Wines.

Chenin Blanc and Syrah are the two grapes for white and red that I loved the most on my trip - hunt down the FMC Chenin Blanc 2007 (£15.99, Waitrose), with its rich toasty fruit, or for a special treat Boekenhoutskloof Syrah 2007 (£28.99, Oddbins) - it's as deep, dark and thrilling as riding Space Mountain in the buff .

Chenin and Syrah both achieve stylistic differences, depending on where they're grown and withstand the climate admirably. But for me, blends remain key turf to push the boundaries of South African wine.

The best news for wine lovers is that 2009 was among the best vintages ever for both reds and whites - perfectly lined up to score for the World Cup.



Waterford, The Jem, Stellenbosch 2005 £44.99, oddbins.com

I'm a fan of this winery, and the vision of front man Kevin Arnold. This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Mourvèdre, Merlot, Malbec, Sangiovese and Barbera is thrilling. Dark berry fruit, almond and a savoury almost coffee-like niff, with a sleek, bold structure that makes this red a winner.



Eben Sadie Palladius 2007 £41, bbr.com

How good is this wine! It's a magnificent unique white blend with a bundle of interesting stuff in the glass. Richly textured with straw-like niffs and nutty edges, pristine mineral-like ping when you sip it, it's weighty yet refreshing and that's what I love: it's a wine that presents you with a number of aspects to consider.

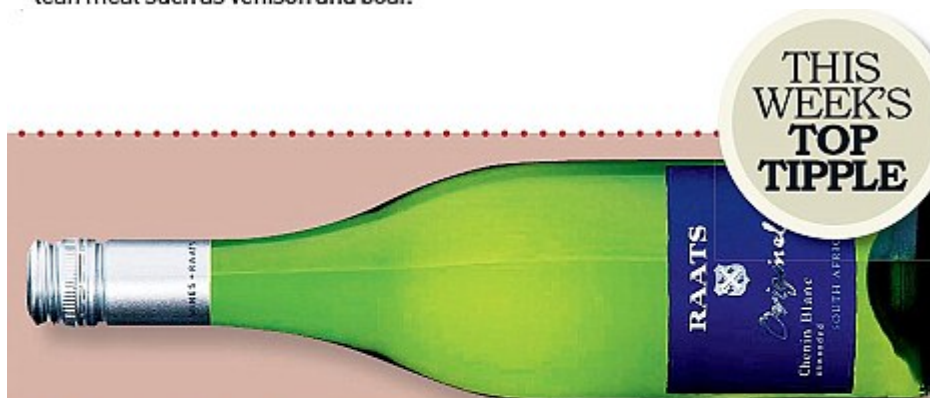




Springfield Life From Stone Sauvignon Blanc 2009 £9.72, bibendum-wine.co.uk
 Superbly intense, crisp and bursting with energy. The lime zing on the palate would put any Mojito to shame and there's a subtle tang of smoke in there too. But be warned: it's searingly zingy and highly charged with flavour – my dad took one sip of this and his eyebrows started wriggling like electric eels.



Kanonkop Pinotage 2007 £18.99, majestic.co.uk
 I reckon these guys currently make some of the best Pinotage in South Africa. Pinotage is a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault and where some examples can be meaty and smoky, this vino is more deft. It's still packed with flavour though: vibrant red berry with a touch of smoky and vanilla complexity. Lovely to match with rich yet lean meat such as venison and boar.



Raats Original Chenin Blanc 2009 £8.99, nakedwines.com
 This is impeccable wine that I've been sipping ever since my return from South Africa to remind me that the sun is still shining somewhere out there. I reckon it's one of Bruwer Raats' best original Chenins to date – and from a cracking vintage. It is packed with Golden Delicious apple freshness with a lean refreshing pineapple-like tang – no oak at all, just pure, glorious, sunny fruit. Magnificent with mildly spiced dishes such as stir-fry noodles or just as a refreshing, top-quality aperitif.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1244716/olly-smith-out-africa--wines-perfectly-lined-score-world-cup.html#ixzz0e4QCPTa9>

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