

FOOD & WINE

by: Joanne Gibson

LYNX WINES

Joanne Gibson visits Lynx Wines, one of Franschhoek's smallest wine farms but also one of its most popular.

It was along the R310 between Franschhoek and Paarl that Nelson Mandela took his first few steps of freedom after being released from Victor Verster Prison (now the Drakenstein Correctional Centre) in 1990. Now you too can take the not-so-long Walk to Freedom during Franschhoek's annual Bastille Festival, and your first stop should be Lynx Wines, about 1.5km before you reach the R45 running through the Franschhoek Valley. (You can drive there any other day of the year too, needless to say!)

Named after the shy, nocturnal lynx or caracal still seen in the valley from time to time, this former table grape farm was purchased by Dieter and Diana Sellmeyer in 1997. Boasting spectacular views across the Franschhoek Valley to the Simonsberg mountain range, it immediately captured the imagination of the Spanish-born engineer and his qualified photographer wife, who had previously lived in London, Hong Kong, Johannesburg and Munich.

They soon uprooted the table grapes in order to plant 11 hectares of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Shiraz and Viognier, and their maiden vintage was 2003 when they produced 500 cases of red wine – their debut Shiraz achieving a 4½ Star rating in the annual Platter's guide.

Having sold innovative products to the wine industry for a number of years, Dieter knew exactly what equipment he needed to achieve top quality. For example, in 2000 he was the first to import a polyester foliage wire from France, used for Vertical Shoot Positioning. This involves training the vine shoots to grow straight upwards, ensuring that all leaves are exposed to either the morning or afternoon sun. 'It's crucial for successful ripening of the grapes,' he insists.

His cellar, on the other hand, remains small and simple (albeit highly functional). 'We use a lot of traditional equipment like open concrete fermenters and a basket press. The open tanks bring out the primary fruit flavours that our wines are so well known for.'

Indeed, when you consider that Lynx is still one of the smallest wine farms in Franschhoek, its wines have become well known in a remarkably short time. Dieter firmly attributes this to the personalised experience enjoyed by visitors to the farm: 'The cellar tours and wine tastings are only done by me or my assistant winemaker, Helgard van Schalkwyk, so always someone knowledgeable and passionate. This is why we've been voted #1 Thing to Do in Franschhoek on TripAdvisor for a few years. Wine sales follow automatically.'

Boasting two Bordeaux-style blends in its portfolio, namely flagship The Lynx (only 900 bottles made from the top three barrels of the vintage) and Xanache (named after daughters Alexandra aka 'Xan', Charlie and Anna), Lynx has also had unanticipated success with its single-varietal bottlings of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot.

Further unexpected success has come with the Viognier, the white variety Dieter originally planted in tiny quantities for blending with Shiraz and Mourvèdre to produce his Rhône-style red blend, SMV. First bottled in its own right in 2008, it sold out within a couple of months, and it remains one of South Africa's most popular whites among wine lovers – voted 'Favourite White Wine of the Show' at both WineX Johannesburg and WineX Cape Town for two consecutive years!

Yet Dieter insists it will remain the only white wine in his range. 'It's a personal thing,' he explains. 'I don't like Sauvignon Blanc and there are already too many good Franschhoek Chardonnays to compete with. We aim to remain small, continually producing premium, memorable wines.'

Tastings and cellar tours (also available in German and Spanish) take place between 10am and 5pm from Monday to Friday, and by appointment on Saturday and Sunday.

Lynx Wines, +27 21 867 0406, www.lynxwines.co.za





Lynx Cabernet Sauvignon 2012

Alcohol by volume: 14.66%

Cellar door price: R130

Only eight barrels of this sumptuously dark wine were produced using traditional methods. It has a hint of vanilla as well as savoury leather and tobacco notes from spending 12 months in French oak (one-third new barrels, the rest second, third and fourth fill). Tannins are silky, the wood seamlessly integrated with black berry flavours.

‘One of my favourite food matches is ostrich tenderloin with a spicy green pepper sauce,’ says Dieter. ‘Roughly chop about half a jar (35g) of green Madagascar peppers, then fry in a teaspoon of oil. After turning down the flame, add a good shot of brandy and simmer briefly before putting a match to it to flambé. Add half a tub of Crème Fraîche plus a teaspoon of Bovril for colour and taste.’



Lynx Viognier 2012

Alcohol by volume: 13.96%,

Cellar door price: R100

This rich and aromatic white wine was fermented using a red wine yeast, 50% in French oak and 50% in stainless steel tanks. Six months on the lees prior to bottling has resulted in a viscous mouthfeel, balanced by refreshing acidity, with floral, jasmine tea, juicy pineapple and apricot notes.

‘It’s great with spicy Thai dishes,’ says Dieter, particularly recommending his Spicy Calamari Salad. ‘Using gutfeel rather than following a recipe, I flash-fry thinly sliced, scored calamari steaks with quartered tomato, cubed cucumber, thinly sliced red onions, finely chopped chilli (to taste), garlic and plenty of coriander. I allow it to cool a bit before serving with a dressing of equal parts olive oil and sesame oil, plus lime juice, salt and pepper.’

GOOD FOOD, GOOD WINE, GOOD COMPANY...

by: Francoise Steynberg

Chaine des Rottiseurs is an old age European tradition of friends coming together for a night out, enjoying good food, good wine and good company.

This is exactly what happened on a beautiful sunset evening in February at the Am Weinberg Restaurant in Windhoek, presenting the Peter Falke wine pairing dinner.

It was indeed a wonderful culinary experience with the finest gourmet and excellent wines joining together, just as members of Chaine des Rottiseurs of the Middle Ages would've enjoyed it.

Am Weinberg and Peter Falke Wines presented the perfect marriage in mouths with a seven course dinner, pairing wines.

Owner of Am Weinberg Dr Roland Lösch gave a warm Namibian welcome to guests, while head chef Thuti Garoeb explained each course. Lize-Marie Nieman of Peter Falke Wines described the different Peter Falke Wines, pairing the dishes.

Guests were welcomed by a true Namibian aperitif, crumbed omajova (mushrooms growing on termite hills) on salmon mousse, joined by the Blanc de Noir 2012. It has vibrant flavours of strawberries, candy floss and cream. The palate is refreshing, well rounded and ends with lovely cherries on the aftertaste.

With the first course guests were spoilt with fois gras Am Weinberg style on micro greens and home baked crackers, accompanied by Peter Falke's Signature Exclusive Blend 2009. The Exclusive Blend is the Rolls Royce of Peter Falke Wines. Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon make this an exquisite blend. The bouquet reveals red berries with hints of pencil shavings and blue gum. Flavours of bramble berries, underlying minerality and rounded tannins linger on the palate. This exquisite wine is a silver medal winner at the 2012 Michelangelo International Wine Awards and included in the John Platter Wine Guide.

The second course was a treat of tiger prawns and half shelled New Zealand green mussels broth, crowned with a white asparagus foam. Peter Falke's Sauvignon Blanc 2013 with a typical lemon grass character, is a perfect match for seafood. Vibrant and fresh, the wine displays nuances of pineapple and passion fruit with hints of guava and the tropical fruits on the palate, full bodied leaves a satisfying lingering mouth feel.

Guests were then treated with homemade ravioli filled with feta cheese and summer young squash, tossed in Porcini mushroom sauce, served with parmesan cheese and white truffle oil. The Ruby Blend 2011 with deep notes of spice, aniseed, plums and mulberries set a classy tone. The luscious tanning structure adds substance to the core of sweet berry fruit.



The pan seared roulade of Dover sole and Norwegian salmon, accompanied by sautéed baby spinach, artichoke and a saffron butter lace, was the favourite dish of the evening. It was accompanied by Peter Falke Pinot Noir 2012. It has an elegantly light ruby colour with pink edges, cherries with spicy and earthy flavours. The palate is well rounded, soft structured and fruity.

The Signature Syrah 2009 with its spicy flavours is a good companion for game: Char grilled Springbok fillet accompanied by a herbal mild Gouda cheese dumpling, roasted root vegetables and a port thyme reduction. The Signature Syrah is finely crafted with cinnamon, red cherry and pepper aromas on the nose.

Then it was time for something sweet and delicate: Again the Arabian date, stuffed with Gorgonzola Dolce Latte cheese and the Peter Falke Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 was a match made in heaven. The sad news is that the last 2 000 bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 were sold to the United States of America. The good news is that there are eight cases left in Namibia!

A beautiful night came to end with a dessert duo of banana chocolate chip Charlotte Royale and Rooibos crème brûlée. The dessert wine was RicketyBridge's Sweet Chenin Blanc 2010 where after everybody went home around midnight and had sweet dreams.

Chaine des Rotisseurs has around 20 members in Windhoek and it is about time that more Namibians have more events of good food, good wine and good company. Am Weinberg Restaurant is the perfect venue as it is one of the finest gourmet restaurants in Windhoek, with a well crafted menu in a homely, yet elegant atmosphere. Sip on one or more glasses of the wide selection of South African wines, while enjoying the beautiful sunset over the Klein Windhoek valley.

If you visit Stellenbosch again, the exclusive winery of Peter Falke is nestled against the majestic slopes of the Helderberg Mountains in the heart of the Stellenbosch winelands at Groenvlei Farm.

Two ranges of wine are brought to life at Groenvlei: The Signature range, with its contemporary mirrored label, attracts the discerning wine connoisseur, while the Peter Falke range embodies relaxed, stylish sociability, with a light multifaceted character that plays on the senses.

Tamasa Trading Wines visit Namibia often, bringing excellent wines to your doorstep with regular wine tastings at different venues.

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