

"It's one of the very few activities left in a complex world of manufacturing and distribution that is totally integrated, where the producer prepares his own land, grows his own raw material, transforms it into a finished product, packages it, markets it and takes care of sales and distribution. The outcome depends wholly on the participants in the activity, and thus it provides a unique sense of fulfillment."
John Dunkley, original proprietor of Riecine, Chianti, Italy.

December 2006

NEWSLETTER

STELLENZICHT'S FLYING WINEMAKER

Pieter Adams's horizons have been broadened forever thanks to the Patrick Grubb Scholarship.

Pieter, a supervisor in the Stellenzicht cellar, was awarded the Patrick Grubb scholarship at the 2005 Nederburg Auction. This scholarship provides funding for previously disadvantaged employees in the wine industry to work in cellars in the Northern Hemisphere during their harvest season, covering the air ticket, board and lodging. Pieter was fortunate enough to be offered a position at Riecine, a top class wine farm in Chianti, Italy.

While Pieter has travelled on an aeroplane within South Africa, he had never flown overseas before. Neither had this son of vineyard workers had to wrestle with travel documents, train time tables and volatile Italians, but he seemed to take it all in his stride and managed to transport himself all the way to the village of Gaiole, Chianti without a hitch.



Unlike the large Stellenzicht cellar with a 1 400 ton capacity, the 62 ton Riecine cellar staff consisted of the winemaker, assistant winemaker, a male student from Australia and a female student from New Zealand.

"There was no fancy equipment," explain Pieter, "everything was done by hand and we used only natural yeasts."

When asked how the Riecine harvest differed from the Stellenzicht harvest, Pieter was quick to mention the working hours. While in South Africa, the cellar would open at 07:00 in the morning and work would continue right up until 23:00 at times, work in Chianti is always halted for the customary siesta between 13:00 and 16:00. Winemaker Sean O'Callaghan would make lunch for the cellar team and together they would sit down to bowl of steaming pasta, cheese and wine (of course). "Every lunch time we would have a blind tasting and so I got to taste many wines from around the world. I took some bottles of Stellenzicht with me, and they were very impressed," he adds proudly.

CAPULEGENDS



Besides the odd Italian phrase, Pieter says he has learnt a lot. "I learnt that there are other ways of doing things. The harvest conditions are so different there, that you learn to be flexible and adapt."

Pieter also managed to fit in a bit of sight-seeing too. A highlight for this soccer fanatic was their trip to Turino to watch a soccer match: "The atmosphere was fantastic. Everyone was cheering and the drummers were awesome."

Back on Stellenzicht, Pieter feels he can approach the 2007 harvest with new insight. He's also inspired his fellow-workers to work harder so they too can experience how the other half lives and makes wine.

PROFILE: LAUREN SNYMAN, NEETHLINGSHOF'S ASSISTANT WINEMAKER

If she makes wine as beautiful and complex as her smoky eyes, then Lauren Snyman will soon become an 'award-winning' winemaker.

However, upon closer inspection, Lauren offers a lot more than just a pretty face. She matriculated in Port Elizabeth and then headed for Stellenbosch University to study chemistry. But she soon realised that there was more to life than sitting in a laboratory all day, so she switched to a B. Sc. in Oenology and Viticulture, graduating in 2005. She spent the first half of this year minding the Diemersfontein cellar, arriving at the Neethlingshof cellar door in August.



Chief winemaker De Wet says he employed Lauren because she seemed capable of running the show while he was away, and she quickly proved him right. In fact, in her first month at the cellar, De Wet was away most of the time and simply left a TO DO list for Lauren to complete. She managed to whiz through the list in record time and then, instead of twiddling her thumbs, she organised to take the cellar workers on the wine route for a little benchmarking exercise: "It was great fun, and we all learnt a lot about wine and about each other," she says.

Why winemaking? Well, Lauren says its because the job is so varied. Each day she moves from experiments in the lab, to quality control in the cellar, to stock control in the store. And then of course, she has to present tastings where she gets to show off Neethlingshof's extensive range of wines. All in a day's work for this young lady, but one she definitely enjoys.

When she's not in the cellar Lauren enjoys hiking in nature, watching sport on tv with her friends and she's going the Jefferies Bay for Christmas. Never a dull moment it seems.

Carpe Diem, Lauren!

NEW RELEASES

We have put together some wonderful gift packs for Christmas so look out for them in wine shops everywhere.



And if you're stocking up on wine to tide you over the festive season, look out for the following new releases. There are some crisp Sauvignon Blancs that will be ideal for al fresco meals, a Chardonnay for crayfish, complex reds for sit-down dinners and even a Port to wash down the Stilton after your Christmas feast.

Uitkyk Sauvignon Blanc 2006

Pale straw with a greenish yellow tint, this wine displays delicate herbaceous aromas, green pepper and fig leaves, backed by granadilla and litchi. The palate is lively and smooth with ripe melon and tropical fruit flavours.

Uitkyk Chardonnay 2004

Concentrated citrus aromas of lemon and lime predominate on the nose with hints of peach and melon. Having spent a considerable time in wood there is an added aroma of butterscotch, nuts and caramel. The citrus and pineapple follow through to the palate, with vanilla undertones.

Hill&Dale Sauvignon Blanc 2006

Nostalgic aromas of freshly cut grass are enlivened with gooseberries, green peppers and herbs on the nose, the lively fruit flavours repeating on the vibrant, youthful palate.

Alto Cabernet Sauvignon 2004

Ripe blackberry and plum with a hint of mint develop into sweet cherry flavours on the palate, balanced by a good tannin structure from 18 months spent in French oak barrels. Subtle oak and vanilla on the mid-palate support the fruit. This wine will mature well over the next 8 to 10 years.

Allesverloren Port 2003

This delicious fortified wine is an intense ruby colour with a slight tawny rim. Wafts of coffee and mocha on the nose are enhanced by raisins, concentrated blackcurrant with nuts and dark berries. This is a well-balanced wine with an effortlessly smooth palate, delicious dark prune, mocha and savoury-nutty flavours.

Allesverloren Cabernet Sauvignon 2004

18 months in French oak resulted in a wine where the juicy red berries are enhanced by wood spice and cigar box aromas. On the palate there is an abundance of prune and cherry flavours with dark chocolate and a good tannin structure.