

Oldenburg Newsletter Spring 2012

Budburst again...

The tentacles of winter have retained their grip unusually late this year. September normally brings clear blue days, some nice warmth, and a very clear message that winter is over. However this year, even in early October snow can be seen on some of the taller mountains surrounding us. Nonetheless the vineyards are waking up and growth is yet again surprisingly rapid.

On a personal note, over the winter my grandmother passed away, five days before her hundredth birthday. Being a keen gardener, spring was always her favourite time of year, and anyone who ever visited her in her garden at Old Nectar, just outside Stellenbosch, would easily understand why.

Over the years I very much enjoyed sharing quality time with her, chatting about a wide variety of topics from politics, economic and financial issues, to gardening and of course wines and winemaking. Her knowledge on current affairs was impressive and she always had an interesting opinion, impressive for someone of that age! Her infectious interest in the beauty of nature, gardening and her love of the Cape and Stellenbosch in particular, were inspirational to me and definitely also countless others. It is not often one has the opportunity to have lengthy and interesting discussions with someone of an age that has spanned such an enormous period of time – I will certainly miss these moments.

Over winter the vineyards have hibernated and rebuilt their strength, whilst keeping us busy with their pruning. This year we added to the workload by initiating a program to remove the majority of 'canes' from the vineyard. These are the shoots that come out each spring to form the vines' canopy that bears the fruit. These canes are then shredded and used as the foundation for compost – soil mulch. The mulch will be put back into the vineyard rows during the spring and summer months – yet another large task. This process is part of our bio-viticulture program, which not only nourishes our vines, but also helps create a healthier soil structure, which in turn protects the vineyard from pests and diseases. The volume of plant material is enormous but the benefits will definitely find their way into healthy grapes, and eventually higher quality wines.

In September Cape Town played host to Cape Wine – a non-consumer exhibition of South African wine producers and their wines, attended by a global audience. This is usually held every two years but due to the 2010 World Cup, it had not been held for four years. The result of which was that a common comment expressed a sense that there had been much change, in particular a big upward shift in overall quality of wines, made by those who had not visited since 2008. We feel this is in fact what is happening and it is part of the renaissance of the South African wine industry – a trend that is gaining momentum. Rebecca Gibb a Master of Wine (MW) and a writer for winesearcher.com wrote an article picking her top 10 wines from the show, and named the Oldenburg Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2009, as her favourite Cabernet Sauvignon for its 'purity, finesse and elegance' (<http://rebeccagibb.com>). We indeed agree!

The show also sealed our first distributor for Switzerland. Andy Zimmerman from KapWeine was almost in tears (of joy and by his own admission) when he tasted a yet to be released Syrah 2010. KapWeine will have wines for sale on their website and in their Zurich shop by the end of this year. Our wines are now becoming available in Denmark, through the Tholstrup group of restaurants as well as in the Philippines, Bulgaria and Sweden.

We hosted a braai (BBQ) – to my mind very much a gourmet BBQ, on the Sunday prior to Cape Wine. It had a good attendance of wine writers, critics and some trade buyers, from all parts of the world. Richard Hemming MW, a critic and writer for Jancis Robinson, posted the following amusing clip of his week in the Cape (<http://bit.ly/PYImYd>). Simon's dog Tobie is definitely the star!

We will soon be releasing our first vintage of Merlot. The Oldenburg Vineyards Merlot 2010 will only be available at the Cellar Door due to the small quantity of production in 2010. Also and with much excitement, we have begun to assemble the 2012 white wines – the Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay. This is a process of combining the different elements of the wine from different types of barrels to ensure a great result. A tasting of these wines last week left Simon doing summersaults with enthusiasm. The wines are looking great, with complex flavours and purity of fruit – in particular the citrus expressions. We expect to release them in early December.

Finally I would like to encourage anyone in our vicinity to drop by and not just taste some wine, but also enjoy the view, which is currently enjoying some added colour with our spectacular Fynbos Garden (fynbos are indigenous shrubs such as proteas that grow in the Cape) in full bloom – quite stunning.

As winter turns to spring, a vineyard such as ours is a spectacular place to be!

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