

**Oldenburg Vineyards Autumn Newsletter
2013
Ten Years Old!**

A winemaker once told me about a dinner he had in Bordeaux - sitting next to the owner of one of the grand chateaux, he was explaining how he had been making his own wine in South Africa for a few years, and that he was finding it quite a difficult business. She replied saying that in the wine industry only the first one hundred years was difficult! A theory we aim to prove incorrect! Oldenburg Vineyards is turning ten this month. In March 2003 I bought the farm, and our journey began. With a decade now under our belt I feel that we have made some large strides towards becoming one of the recognisable wine brands in South Africa, and our ultimate goal of making outstanding wines continues to be realistic, as the terroir that we are fortunate to have, slowly reveals her strengths and secrets. Recognition of our wines continues to move in the right direction, even though our vineyards are only now reaching a modest age.

Some recent recognition included 93 Points for our Chardonnay in Robert Parker's Wine Advocate. Here's what Neil Martin had to say about it: "Look no further than the superb 2011 Chardonnay. It has a show-stopping exuberant bouquet of tropical fruit, guava, orange blossom and peach that is beautifully balanced and recalls a fine Chassagne-Montrachet. Yes, it is really that good". Also Richard Hemmings in Jancis Robinson's Purple Pages gave our 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon a 17+. Our Merlot 2010 made its way to the Top 6 in the Classic Wine Magazine's SA Merlot competition.

We are now half way through the harvest, with all the white grapes and some reds now in, we are still waiting on the Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. We had some nasty wind episodes in early December which did some extensive canopy damage. However Simon remedied this with an organic fertilizer administered through the irrigation system. The growing season has been slightly cooler (average 18 degrees vs. 18.3 degrees) and a little dryer (206mm vs. 326mm) than the 2012 season, which proved to be an excellent year. The ripening period has also been cooler than usual, so the fruit is hanging for longer, and the sugar levels rising more slowly. We are excited for what looks to be another great harvest.

This month we will begin to release our new vintages i.e. 2010 vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Syrah, as well as the 2012 Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc. We will also release our first super premium blend, Rhodium and a barrel selection Cabernet Sauvignon 2009. Rhodium is a noble element, mainly found in conjunction with platinum. A large majority of the world's supply of the metal comes from South Africa and is used for sustainable and luxury purposes - all of which we feel are embodied by this wine. Rhodium 2010 is a blend based on Merlot (50%), Cabernet Franc (40%) and Malbec (10%). Our Barrel Selection Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 has been made with 100% new French oak, with the wine having remained in barrel for two years. We feel that this has given it more gravitas and will also allow it to age for many years to come.

This year we have begun the renovation of the homestead. The original building dates back a few hundred years but has been continuously renovated over time. Our plan is to create a unique villa, somewhere where guests can stay and enjoy all the attributes of the farm and its spectacular setting. The building program is extensive and currently only a few original walls and parts of the roof remain. We will be opening The Homestead at Oldenburg Vineyards for business in early 2014, and we are excited to be adding it to our offering.

We have now made our first shipment to China, with our Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah on its way to the Shanghai Lihuang Trade Company. In Quebec, Canada our Chenin Blanc is listed with SAQ. In the US we are finalising our first importer. In the Cape we have our Chardonnay listed at La Colombe, one the top 50 restaurants in the world as per San Pellegrino's Best Restaurant guide. At the V&A Waterfront, City Grill, Greek Fisherman and Meloncino have all recently put Oldenburg on the wine list.

The Cellar Door recently hosted a Summer Soiree featuring the top final year chefs from the Institute of Culinary Arts. The evening was a great success and collaboration with the ICA will be something we repeat in the future.

The wine business is a difficult one. It requires much capital, plenty of time, and faith that the gods will be kind, as with farming, much is out of one's control. Over the past generation the global wine industry has been in over supply, ever year. This was primarily caused by the three largest producing nations, France, Spain and Italy cutting per capita consumption (whilst not production) quite drastically as lifestyles changed. In 2012 the global wine industry was slightly under supplied - the first time in a quarter of a century! This is indeed good news, as the emerging nations start to broaden and increase their wine consumption habits, the industry will clearly benefit. To our minds it is time to...fill the cellar!

As always, thanks to many of you who have kindly offered feedback and support. We always find it useful and often very encouraging.

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