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### **Tipping Point**

September is a great month in the Cape of Good Hope – spring brings sunshine and blue skies, and the vineyards burst into life. As one walks around the vines you feel the heat on your back, and you know another season with all its potential for the next vintage has begun. Always an exciting month.

September also brought us Cape Wine 2015, a huge trade event which brings the wine world to South Africa every three years. Attending the show it became clear to me that the South African wine industry is at a 'tipping point' - a point in time where the positive trends in terms of quality and consumer demand finally become firmly established and recognised. These changes have their roots in the SA wine renaissance that began 21 years ago when Nelson Mandela was elected and the New South Africa began. The wine industry which had existed for several centuries but had missed the exciting rise of New World wines due to apartheid, now began to make up for lost time.

In the late 90's a focus on best practice in the vineyards and cellars began to take root, utilising the Cape's rich and extremely diverse soils and biodiversity. This led to a dramatic upward shift in quality. Less than five years ago the top wine critics around the world began to take notice. The common message from them was that South Africa was becoming the most exciting New World wine region with outstanding quality.

On my travels around the world, from Singapore to New York, launching Oldenburg Vineyards into new markets, I have noticed this message is finally reaching consumers on a much broader scale! Restaurant wine lists with no South African wines are now looking to fill this gap because their customers ask for our wines – fantastic news, and to my mind this is a permanent change, one which I believe we are just getting started with! We have reached a point where an acceleration in the positive perception towards South Africa's wines has taken root, and it leads to a big upward shift in demand for top quality wines from our beautiful country.

### Kingdom of Cabernet

As part of Cape Wine we hosted a few clients and wine critics to a vertical tasting of our first six vintages of Cabernet Sauvignon: 2008 - 2013. These tastings are always a bit of fun, although slightly nerve wracking as a proprietor! The question lingers of how the wines will show? How will they be received? The good news is that everyone was delighted with the wines, but the highlight to me was our 2008 vintage, which had finally begun to show early signs of the wonderful aging characteristics which Cabernet Sauvignon is famous for. Everybody concurred – it was not just my pride overtaking things!

This experience crystallised some theories I have been having over the past year or so – that older vintages of South African wines are a hidden secret and a potential really big treat and opportunity for those lucky enough to try them. I will be exploring this theme in greater detail in due course. At Oldenburg we are now looking at ideas around this matter, but one thing for sure is that I would advise you to seriously consider adding South African wines to your cellars. More on this in time...



During Cape Wine the inaugural Kingdom of Cabernet was hosted by the Stellenbosch Wine Route. A panel selected the 20 best Stellenbosch Cabernets to be showcased at the event, Oldenburg's being one of them. The idea was to showcase Stellenbosch's terroir as close to perfect for producing not only South Africa's finest Cabs, but also wines capable of competing with some of the best in the world – at least according to some of the invitees to the event. The evening demonstrated how Cabernet had chosen Stellenbosch as the best place for it to be made, rather than vice versa!

### The Magic of Banghoek (Bunhook)

Finally on Cape Wine, another first occurred – that of Banghoek Uncorked. It was the first time the wineries in our small and beautiful part of the Winelands clubbed together to show guests the real potential of our valley. The Banghoek Ward is a tiny appellation - less than one third of one percent of South Africa's vineyards. For its miniscule size it receives a disproportionate amount of top accolades – something which clearly demonstrates our outstanding terroir. Ours is a region with a cooler climate due to altitude and mountain cooled summer breezes, resulting in higher quality wines. I look forward to closer collaboration in the future with our neighbours.



### ... And in General

The 2015 winter has been drier than normal, which has caused discussion about rationing of water to farms. This is not an issue for us, given the abundant mountain and sub soil water we have. We are also watching closely to see the effects of the El Nino weather pattern in the Pacific with it's far reaching impact on all global climate systems.

During winter we replaced vines that had fallen prey to the mealy bug and leaf roll, one of the larger vineyard problems faced by the industry. By getting on top of this quickly and aggressively we hope to eradicate any issues, and over the course of the next few seasons eliminate it completely. We continued with turning all the pruned canes to mulch. In time this will be worked back into the Mother Earth to provide enhanced nourishment and ultimately healthier vines.

As I've already mentioned, we have been quite busy introducing new markets to the pleasures of Oldenburg wines! In August we launched our wines in Singapore and Malaysia, followed by an Oldenburg launch in New York. Both Asia and the US are key markets for us, and we are excited by the potential and opportunities offered there.

Last but not least, our Oldenburg Team saw a few changes. Raymond and Ina decided to pursue new



adventures after many productive and loyal years at Oldenburg Vineyards. I would like to thank both of them for their commitment and dedication – we wish them success in the future.

We consequently appointed Anetha Volschenk as Brand and Marketing Manager, and David Wibberley as our new Sales Manager for South Africa. I am sure you will be meeting or hearing from one or the other, either already or in due course.

One more thing! - we managed to pick up three trophies at the IWC competition in London this year. Our Syrah 2012 won the trophy for Best South African Syrah, as well as the trophy for Best Stellenbosch Red Wine, while our Chenin Blanc 2013 raked in the trophy for best Banghoek Chenin Blanc. And, just in case you are lucky enough to find yourself on BA Club to and from SA, you will be served with our Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 – having just had the pleasure of tasting it in the air – I can thoroughly recommend it!!

Until next time, thanks for your support and as always feedback, without which Oldenburg would be a lesser place!

Warm wishes in wine!

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