



Wine Club Tasting Notes October 2007

2007 Robertson Winery Chenin Blanc South Africa

There are certain regions in the wine world that are growing by leaps and bounds, with one of those regions being South Africa. In fact, I've been pleasantly surprised at the increasing quality of the wines being produced here. Intrigued enough so to do a little research on this fascinating area of the world. I've always felt that knowing a little bit about the history of any bottle of wine that you're drinking can make the experience much more worthwhile, especially when the region's wine history is as colorful as South Africa's. The following is an excerpt from April 2006's South African wine industry history notes.

Being a lover of history and (sometimes) useless trivia, I feel compelled to give you a little information on the wine history of South Africa. Most people have only recently become aware that South Africa is producing tasty wines that are incredible values. Well, my friends, you may be amazed to know that South Africa has been producing wines since the 1600s! The first people to introduce viticulture to the Cape were the Dutch. Unfortunately, these first attempts were useful only to "irritate the bowels," as one diarist wrote. A few years later, however, a group of French Protestant Huguenot refugees came to South Africa and brought their winemaking expertise with them. After many years, South Africa became known for making exquisite dessert wines. Fast forward to the early 20th century when a cooperative was formed that initially stabilized what had become an out-of-control wine economy, but ended up limiting what types of grapes winemakers could grow. By the mid 1980s, regulations were eased and importation of quality vine cutting was permitted. The abolition of Apartheid further helped the wine industry gain a solid foothold in the world market. Finally the stage was set for what is becoming one of the most interesting wine regions in the world! Growers were now free to experiment and grow the grape varieties they knew were best suited to their terrain.

South Africa's most widely grown grape variety is Chenin Blanc (also commonly referred to as Steen) and it produces an astonishing spectrum of wine styles – dry, sweet, botrytised, sparkling, brandy and sherry types. For this

month's selection, we have chosen a dry style that has an appealing light straw color and is full-bodied, with delicately powerful flavors of pineapple, passion fruit, melon and green apple. It wraps up with excellent structure balanced by lovely acidity. The 2007 vintage was one of the best to date, so this wine will be delicious on its own or paired with smoked salmon, garlic-rubbed sea scallops or herb-roasted chicken.