

BELOW: Rosa Kruger and the late Prof. Eben Archer appraise the vines at Spice Route's Klein Amoskuil in the Swartland. This is the oldest existing South African Sauvignon Blanc vineyard and although the historic block yields only 3.0 tonnes per hectare, grapes from its bush vines are used to make both The Amos Block Sauvignon Blanc and The Amos Block Sauvignon Perpetual Reserve.

WEST COAST

Fryer's Cove Sauvignon Blanc 2022

Fryer's Cove must be one of the most unusual wineries in South Africa, if not in the world. Situated close to the icy Atlantic Ocean at the old fishing *dorp* of Doringbaai on the rugged West Coast, the vines are perked up by north-westerly gales and constantly exposed to the salty sea air. You have to see this wine area to believe it. Ideal for growing Sauvignon Blanc, Fryer's Cove offers an individual expression of this isolated maritime site. These hardy conditions produce grapes of intense varietal concentration packed with gooseberry, grapefruit and a touch of green guava. Not surprisingly, this beautiful wine also shows a tender kiss from the ocean with a slight and intriguing salinity and captivating brush of oyster shell. A memorable wine, made even more so when sipping it at the Fryer's Cove winery right at the water's edge.

COOL, FRESH AND LIFE-AFFIRMING, SAUVIGNON BLANC IS THE KIND OF WINE THAT AWAKENS THE MOUTH AND ALL THE SENSES WITH SHOWY SPLASHES OF CLEAR AND EVOCATIVE FRUIT FLAVOURS STRUNG ON A TAUT LINE OF ZESTY ACIDITY.

defined as an exuberant, lively and aromatic wine. This is possibly why it is so popular with consumers, as when they see 'Sauvignon Blanc' on the label, they know they are going to find certain aspects in the wine to which they can relate."

On the other hand, different climates, aspects and soil structures exude specific and unique features within that framework of familiarity. "Cooler regions, such as Darling, Durbanville and Walker Bay, produce a greener and more mineral note in the wine," adds RJ. "Think cut grass, nettle and white flowers. Warmer regions, such as Breedekloof and Robertson, tend to offer a tropical air, with passion fruit and gooseberry coming to the fore.

"However, South Africa is a country of sun and I think there is a bright charm that extends across the full spectrum of Sauvignon Blanc wines here. This has led to local and international recognition for South African Sauvignon Blanc and the quality of the wine supports the most important part of the wine business, namely profitability."

RJ's bullishness on quality is shared by Bartho. He has not only played a role in Cape Sauvignon Blanc with his own wines, but also led the way in placing Cape Sauvignon Blanc alongside the best from New Zealand and Sancerre in France to see how the local wines measure up against the world's perceived best.

"Since 1993 I have been holding celebratory events, bringing in international wines and arranging tastings alongside South African Sauvignon Blancs," says Bartho. "Looking back now and going through the scores from these informal 'competitions', it is amazing to see how many times the South African Sauvignon Blancs have come out tops against the best that New Zealand and France have to offer."

Erica Crawford, a leading light in the New Zealand wine industry who helped start Kim Crawford Wines, one of the country's largest Sauvignon Blanc brands, and now makes her own Loveblock range in Marlborough, agrees that South African Sauvignon Blanc is getting attention in the global wine market.

"Your Sauvignon Blancs have truly improved over the past decade," says Erica, who is a regular visitor to the Cape. "South African viticulturists have always been at the top of their game and if you combine this with the Cape's tremendous variety of regions and terroir pockets, you have a great match. Sometimes I think the South African Sauvignon Blancs could show more fruit upfront but, then again, there are consumers in New Zealand who are asking us to make more restrained wines with a whack of minerality."

Consumers may love Sauvignon Blanc, but some wine critics still regard it as just a one-dimensional commercial offering. Thys from Diemersdal, however, reckons the styles of wines currently emerging in South Africa are leading to a new era of critical acclaim for the variety, especially after two of his Sauvignon Blancs achieved five-star ratings in this year's *Platter's South African Wine Guide*.

Both the Diemersdal five-star *Platter's* wines – Wild Horseshoe 2021 and The Journal 2021 – are wooded wines, like most of the other *Platter's* Sauvignon Blanc laureates.



© VISUALCULTURE.CO.ZA/JACO ENGELBRECHT