

GOLD MEDAL WINE CLUB

Taste the Adventure!

Paarl, South Africa





SOUTH AFRICA IS ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC WINE PRODUCING COUNTRIES WITH AN INDUSTRY REFLECTING BOTH THE CLASSICISM OF THE 'OLD WORLD' AND THE CONTEMPORARY CULTURE OF THE 'NEW WORLD!'



While the South African wine industry's origins can be traced back more than 350 years to the early efforts of the Dutch East India Company, it is slightly less than thirty years that the present South African wine industry can count as absolutely productive and competitive in the eyes of the world.

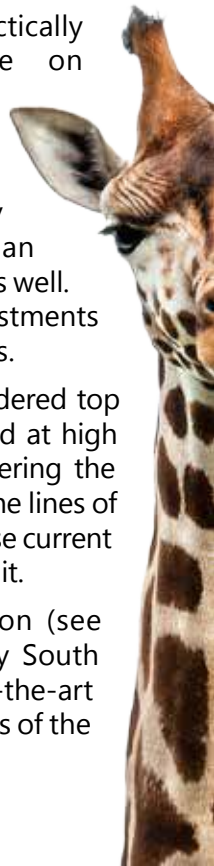
When South Africa's Apartheid was ended in 1991, the South African wine industry was again afforded the opportunity of competing on the world's wine stage. This is not to say that many great wines were made in the country during the Apartheid period, but international sanctions and negative world press played an important role in relegating the country's wine well below its true quality levels on an international basis.

Since South Africa's excellent portfolio of wines had been practically unavailable internationally for three decades, their reemergence on world markets spurred interest around the world in South African wines. In under thirty years, a high number of South African wines have vaulted into the top echelons of international wine prestige.

Along with this renewed interest came a boom in new wine industry enterprise. Numerous small wineries and farms (vineyards) began sprouting up and the South African Wine Industry's production soared as well. As in many other countries, enterprising young South Africans made investments in land and equipment that further enhanced their country's wine exploits.

Today, South Africa ranks alongside other countries that are considered top quality producing locales, and South African wines are consistently graded at high levels along with their peers in international competitions. When considering the relatively short time period (28 years), this accomplishment borders along the lines of remarkable. The future continues to be extremely bright for the country whose current political system embraces all facets of wine production rather than hinders it.

South Africa has also become a hot spot for experimentation (see Spotlight Section), both in farming and winemaking techniques. Many South African winemakers have enjoyed winemaking stints abroad and state-of-the-art procedures are now commonplace throughout the wine-producing regions of the country.



Kudos to South Africa and this month's International selections from the country. It is our pleasure to introduce these marvelous wines to our International Wine Club members.

REGION SPOTLIGHT: PAARL

The Paarl Wine Region is arguably South Africa's finest wine producing region and has been the most honored for the past five decades or more. It is located on the coastal area of South Africa's Western Cape, about 35+ miles northwest of Cape Town and is home to many of South Africa's most celebrated wineries. The entire area is often called the Cape Winelands.

The key to Paarl's extended success is the huge variation of terroir that can be found within the boundaries of the Paarl wine region. This difference in soils allows the wine farms (as they are called in South Africa) the ability and opportunity to experiment with practically every wine varietal imaginable - and to produce blended wines that are much sought after by national and international wine aficionados.

Paarl comes from the Dutch word for *pearl* and refers to the huge Paarl Mountain, a shiny granite massif that actually glistens immediately after rain falls in the area.

The Paarl wine region was originally farmed by French Huguenots around 1689 and grapes have been cultivated within its boundaries since that time. It is part of the fertile Berg River Valley and was granted 'Wine of Origin' status in 1972.

Today, more than 40 thousand acres are under vine within the Paarl wine region and contain practically all known varietals. Foremost are the Pinotage, Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay. Many South African wines are blends of multi-varietals and the finest varietals are picked from the area's elevated vineyards.

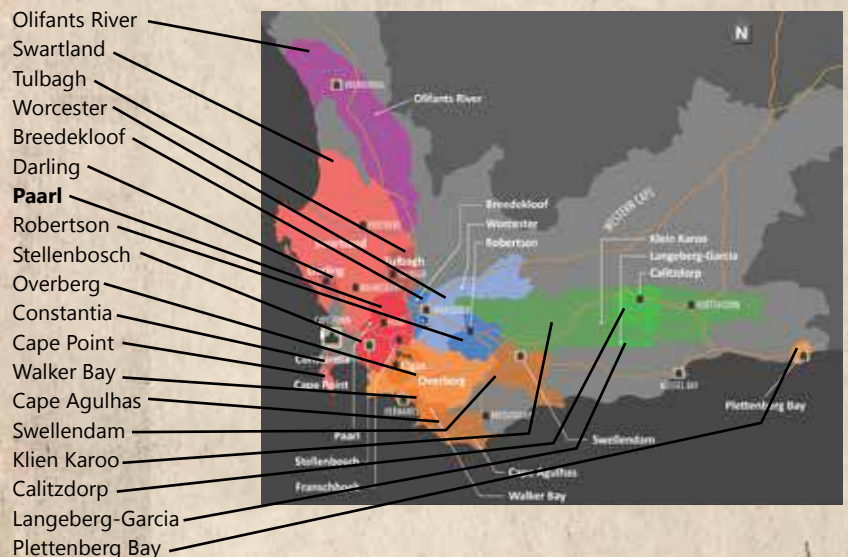


The mostly granite-based soils, along with sandstone and shale, afford excellent drainage and the Mediterranean climate (very similar to that of France's Rhone Valley) provides moderately warm summers that are cooled by winds off the Atlantic Ocean.



WINE REGIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's vineyards are mostly situated in the Western Cape near the coast. Here, the winegrowing regions are influenced by one of the two mighty oceans that meet at this southernmost tip of Africa - the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. The maritime influences of regular coastal fog and cooling sea breezes, along with a moderate Mediterranean climate, distinctive and varied topography, and diverse soils makes for an ideal setting to produce wines of unique character and complexity. South Africa has a winemaking tradition and history dating back over 350 years that blends the traditional elegance of the Old World with the fruit driven, experimental styles of the New World.



South Africa: Fun Facts!

- South Africa's Cape Winelands have over 500 wineries. Included in the region is Route 62, which is considered the longest wine route in the world.
- South Africa's brewery, SABMiller, ranks by volume as the largest brewing company in the world.
- The Cape Floral Kingdom is one of the world's six floral kingdoms, and the only one which is wholly contained within a single country.
- South Africa is home to deserts, wetlands, grasslands, bush, subtropical forests, mountains and escarpments.
- There are more than 2,000 shipwrecks off the South African coast, with most dating back at least 500 years.
- The Karoo region in the Western Cape is home to some of the best fossils of early dinosaurs. In fact, it is estimated that some 80% of the mammalian fossils found to date were found in the Karoo.
- Pinotage is a South African grape varietal that was developed in 1926. Its 'parent varietals' are Pinot Noir and Cinsault.
- South Africa's wildlife is legendary, including the famous 'Big Five' - lions, leopards, rhinos, buffalo and elephants. The world-renowned Kruger National Park, established in 1898, provides a sanctuary for an exceptionally diverse mix of species. On a safari here, you can expect to see elephants, lions, buffalo, hippos, giraffe, zebra, hyena, wildebeest, warthog, baboon and antelope.
- South Africa is extremely rich in mining and minerals and is considered the world's leader with nearly 90% of all the platinum medals on Earth and around 41% of all the world's gold.



Photos, top to bottom, left to right:

- Avondale Farm's extraordinary cellar has become a striking feature of the estate. A century-old dry riverbed provided the inspiration for the ultra-modern cellar that is built two stories below ground. It allows the winery to take advantage of the naturally cool underground temperatures and the gravity flow system enables them to protect the estate's high quality grapes.
- The picturesque 160-hectare Avondale Farm has been under cultivation for more than 300 years. Today, the state-of-the-art winery produces extraordinary wines in an absolutely stunning, modern facility.
- Avondale's Tasting Gallery provides an elegant and comfortable ambiance where visitors can taste through the winery's estate wine selections. Just next to the Tasting Gallery at Avondale is *Faber*, a progressive South African restaurant with authentic, contemporary cuisine.
- Avondale strives for biodiversity throughout the farm, and particularly in the vineyards. The winery was actually one of the first South African wine producers to be awarded the Biodiversity in Wine certification.

THE FLAG OF SOUTH AFRICA



The flag of South Africa was adopted on April 27, 1994 after Nelson Mandela was elected President. It was designed to represent the new democracy of the country and its political transformation.

The flag has horizontal bands of red and blue that are separated by a central green band that splits into a "Y" shape. The "Y" embraces a black triangle on the hoist side. Narrow bands of yellow and white are also part of the design, making the South African flag one of the most colorful. Three of the colors - red, white, and blue - are shown in the old Transvaal flag, the Dutch Tricolor, and the modern flag of the United Kingdom. The "Y" shape is said to represent the convergence of South Africa's diverse society and the desire for unity.



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AVONDALE FARM

A stunning, picturesque estate in the heart of Paarl Valley, South Africa, the Avondale Farm takes a holistic approach to crafting their organically made, premium wines.



The property and operation known as Avondale Farm came into existence in 1997, when John and Ginny Grieve purchased a picturesque 395-acre property in the Paarl Wine Region of South Africa. The property had been under cultivation for more than 300 years and offered the couple an opportunity to enhance their existing businesses.

The Grieves were owners of Vital Health Foods, the leader in that country's health food industry. Their idea was to make the property, Avondale Farm,

their family farm and give their youngest son, Johnathan Grieve, an opportunity to live his personal dream. Johnathan had shown a propensity for farming at an early age and ultimately decided his future lay in developing his family's acreage into world-class vineyards.

"At first, we started conventional farming with fertilizers and chemicals," informed Johnathan Grieve. "But soon we realized there were far better methods of farming and maintaining a balanced ecosystem that basically gives back to the land. We constantly strive to create conditions that are conducive to Life."

To that end, Avondale Farm practices sustainable and natural viticulture. The end product of these practices is fruit that is both organic and bio-dynamic, practices that greatly enhance his family farm. Vineyards are actually 2 ½-acre blocks and are farmed and irrigated on the basis of specific varietal needs. Each block yields around 4 – 8 tons of quality fruit that varies with each varietal.

The fruit is certified as both USDA NOP (United States Department of Agriculture National Organic Program) and EU (European Union Organic Regulation) and Avondale Farm is a principle in numerous biodiversity, sustainability and wine initiative programs and activities both in South Africa and abroad.

Avondale Wines' first releases came in 1999 and a new state-of-the-art gravity-flow winery was built. The holistic, systems-based approach and attention to detail has made Avondale Farm a world-class production facility. A huge 500-ton cellar was dug out of the mountain that contains Avondale's barrel-ageing room and houses both a tasting facility as well as an art venue for visitors.

Amphora winemaking is also alive and well at Avondale. Clay from the farm is fired between 1100 and 100 degrees to make clay pot vessels whose heritage stretches back to both



Ancient Greece and Rome. Avondale's premium wines are made in this manner that allows for unique micro-oxygenation and a fruit-driven end product. Other wineries are developing this form of wine aging with excellent results.

On the lighter but equally important side, Avondale Farm is home to a band of white Pekin ducks who range through green vineyards on snail patrol. Now a famous fixture on the farm, the ducks are trained to mount a custom-made 'duck-mobile' that takes them out to a section of the vineyards to begin their workday. These ducks, known locally as the Duck Posse, happily waddle between the vines and forage in the cover crops for snails. The Anatidaes are considered highly effective and cost-efficient, not to mention the delight they provide visitors to the winery and vineyards. Would that more wineries could employ similar ducks that would provide wonderful experiences in the vineyards.



Even the logo that is used on Avondale Wines' releases enforces the theme of the company's approach to farming and life itself. The logo is an Armillary Sphere, an ancient astronomical instrument used to show the position of stars around the Earth. The Armillary sphere represents Avondale's holistic approach to life on its farm, from the minerals in the soil to the stars in the skies. According to Johnathan Grieve and Avondale Farm, all is combined in an energized, living system.

To be sure, this unique selection of wines from South Africa's Avondale Farm are steeped in both modern and historical traditions and should be considered in a class by themselves. Our International Wine Club is proud to introduce you to these magnificent wines of Avondale Farm and to the reasons that make them so special.

Cornè Marais, Winemaker

A native South African from Johannesburg, Cornè Marais is one of a new breed of South African winemakers that is making a difference. Marais has been the winemaker for Avondale Farm for the past fourteen years and as such is responsible for the entity's continued success. A 2002 graduate of South Africa's Elsenburg Agricultural College with a Diploma in Cellar Technology, Marais also piloted Virginia's James Rivers Cellars for a year prior to joining Avondale Farm. Cornè Marais is an avowed Shiraz fanatic and has used the great Rhône varietal to great effect. He is on the leading edge of technology that affords the opportunity of producing a host of traditional wines that have garnered a host of awards for Avondale in the recent past. He considers the fact that Avondale features both organic and Bio-LOGIC grapes, giving him excellent flexibility in making the minimalist wines that have made his reputation so well-regarded within South Africa and abroad. His favorite wines are the great wines of the Rhône Valley, Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage and others - mostly crafted from his fantastic Shiraz grape.



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AVONDALE 2009 'SAMSARA' SYRAH

Paarl, South Africa

Samsara means 'to flow on' and pass through the states of life, death, and rebirth. A wine deep in character, the Avondale Syrah was named 'Samsara' to represent this eternal cycle of life and the perpetual renewal and revitalization of the Avondale Farm's living system. The Samsara Syrah is crafted with grapes from organically grown estate vines that range from 10 to 17 years of age. On the nose, the Samsara Syrah offers notes of soft wood and white pepper, violets, vibrant red berries and orange peel. Full-bodied and well balanced, this Syrah has an exceptional fruit-driven palate with flavors of plum, cherry, cloves, cinnamon and pepper that are carried through the finish with firm tannins. Aged 16 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2020.

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AVONDALE 2007 'LA LUNA' RED BLEND

Paarl, South Africa

Avondale's 'La Luna' Red Blend was named after the moon - a symbol for the way the universe influences Avondale Farm's living system. The soft suppleness of 'La Luna' reflects the graceful ways that this winery is attuned to following biodynamic practices and to being mindful of the astronomical influences on soil and plant life. Comprised of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petite Verdot, this Bordeaux-style Blend is velvety and elegant with pure scents of red and dark fruits, layered with clean cedar and tobacco notes. It has a full, fruit-driven palate with flavors of plum and mulberry that seamlessly blend with the soft, mouth-coating tannins. Aged 16 months in oak. Enjoy now until 2020.

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AVONDALE 2015 'ANIMA' CHENIN BLANC

Paarl, South Africa

The word 'Anima' refers to the vital life force or soul. Avondale's ethos "Terra Est Vita" - Soil is Life - follows their belief that the soil breathes life and soul into their wines. This Chenin Blanc is named 'Anima' because the lively minerals of Avondale's soils give this wine its own delicious, spirited character and extraordinary finesse. Avondale's Anima has a nose that develops intriguingly in the glass with notes of winter melon, pineapple, lime and a hint of honey that confirms the elegance and fullness of this softly wooded, supple wine. The palate is dense with fresh fruit flavors of gooseberry, quince and peach, are harmonizing together with the soulful minerality that gives this wine its name. Enjoy now until 2020.

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