

The Times

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Dutch treat

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The Good-Value Guru Road Trip: Episode Four

Overgaauw, Mooiplaas, Kaapzicht, Altydgedacht ... deep in Dutch country, our intrepid explorers discover the best wine of the trip

The GVG is a bit like Brian Eno's Fat Lady of Limbourg, whose "sense of taste is such that she'll distinguish with her tongue the subtleties a spectrograph would miss".

Given a glass of amber liquid at Overgaauw by winemaker David van Velden, the GVG pronounced "Steen, and an old one at that."

Of course, he was correct — it was a 1982 chenin blanc. Still remarkably fresh and honeyed (even though bone dry) with acids still firm. Once the label was revealed, the resemblance to an old Vouvray from the Loire was obvious.

The red was easier. Overgaauw is a pioneer of merlot and, indeed, Van Velden poured a 1982, the first single varietal bottling of this grape in SA. Although vibrant, the merlot was a pale shadow of the chenin, the most remarkable wine of the trip. The 2008 is available at R39 a bottle and small children should raid their piggybanks so they'll have something wonderful to drink in 26 years .

Overgaauw's second-label wines, called Shepherd's Cottage, are in much better condition than the cottage itself, which had a huge oak tree fall on it earlier this year. The 2007 blend of chenin, sémillon and chardonnay is good value at R29 but the best value lies in a trio of reds: a complex, minerally merlot 2005 (R85) with hints of celeriac and crushed seashells; 2005 cabernet (R99) with intense cassis and a combination of the two, the flagship Tria Corda blend (R138) with some perfumed cabernet franc spicing up the dark fruit of cabernet and minerally merlot.

The next morning found us white as two milk bottles on the doorstep of Simonsig. A limey 2007 chenin blanc (R28) impressed as did the Adelberg 2006 Bordeaux blend (R30).

At Beyerskloof, the GVG noted with pleasure the Field Blend had gone up R100 a bottle after its Platter five-star rating (GVG bought his stock before Platter queered the pitch) while at Hartenberg the 2007 rosé (R30), iced tea for grown-ups, impressed.

Whoever named Mooiplaas at the top of the Bottelary Hill wasn't joking, for beautiful it surely is — as are the wines. And good value, especially the 2007 Berry White (the name of the late, great US soul singer in S'effriken). A blend of chenin and sauvignon blanc, it has an intriguing mustard spiciness. The same R27.50 buys you a bottle of 2007 Berry Red, a Cape blend of pinotage, cabernet and merlot made for the Dutch market. Alas, pinotage is out for future vintages as the Dutch find the flavours too sweet. They'll surely prefer the Mooiplaas cabernet franc 2005, which is classic city, but won't be impressed with the price — R72 (but well worth it).

Down at Kaapzicht, the 2008 chenin is better than usual with fresh



TOPS OF THE TRIP: David van Velden of Overgaauw, and Shepherd's Cottage, fixed after a tree fell on it



HE GUESSED IT: Van Velden's Steen couldn't fool the GVG



“Small children should raid their piggy banks so they'll have something wonderful to drink in 26 years”

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flavours of pears and value for money at R28. R1 extra buys a blend of chenin and sauvignon blanc that ameliorates the boiled sweet flavours of chenin with grass-green sauvignon.

Hazendal looked closed, but at Groenland, Oom Kosie put on his hat to greet us. The GVG was quite taken with his 2008 sauvignon blanc (R36) as well as the Antoinette Marie red blend 2005 (R85).

The old joke about Altydgedacht in Durbanville is that if you want to see how wine was made in the Cape 50 years ago, visit Altydgedacht in 10 years' time. We were pleased to see nothing had changed. The 2008 sauvignon blanc (R35) is a stunner: limes, citrus and greengage while the 2005 pinotage shows the civilised face of this sometimes wild varietal: light and chewy red fruits for R48.

After a comfort stop at Bloemendal (recently sold to billionaire Tokyo Sexwale, its reds are going for under R50 at www.getwine.co.za), we pushed up the hill to Hillcrest, where the 2007 sauvignon blanc impressed with flavours of sour figs (R55).

Leuco red and white at Nitída, named after a species of Protea, are good value at R45 and R40 respectively and the new Cassia restaurant was doing a roaring trade. Lunch being for wimps, we headed off to Diemersdal, where the 2007 chardonnay reserve appealed at R65, as did the 2005 Private Collection red blend for R75: austere, lean and tight.

At Kloovenburg, the olives were excellent and the sauvignon blanc 2007 rich and full of tropical fruit flavours. Het Vlok Casteel was an enigma. A brick carbuncle, it took us ages to find the front door and then the wines seem to come from Stellenbosch and we'd done that already.

After a quick stop at Riebeek Cellars, where the Barbarossa cabernet 2005 has gone from R42 to R25 (worth double that), we pointed the car in the direction of the Simonsberg and our date with Le Bonheur winemaker Sakkie Kotze and a snoek.

■ Next Week: Historical wines and an excellent dinner at Le Bonheur, in spite of the best efforts of ghosts to upset proceedings. We check into Ryneveld Lodge in Stellenbosch where, unbeknown to us, a Jimi Hendrix wannabe plus backup band were tuning up for a 3am concert. The next day was looking challenging: Charles Withington had laid on a small tasting of 60-odd wines for us at Koelenhof.

Contact Details

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- Mooiplaas Estate: www.mooiplaas.co.za; 021-903-6273
- Kaapzicht Estate: www.kaapzicht.co.za; 021-906-1620
- Groenland: www.groenland.co.za; 021-903-8203
- Altydgedacht Estate: www.altydgedacht.co.za; 021-976-1295
- Nitída Wines: www.nitida.co.za; 021-976-1467
- Diemersdal Estate: www.diemersdal.co.za; 021-976-3361
- Kloovenburg Estate: www.kloovenburg.co.za; 022-448-1635
- Riebeek Cellars: www.riebeekcellars.com; 022-448-1213

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