



Issue #196 | Reviewed by Neal Martin | August 31, 2011

## BUITENVERWACHTING

*Originally part of the historic Constantia estate, Buitenverwachting produces a wide portfolio of wines.*

### 2010 SAUVIGNON BLANC

The 2010 Sauvignon Blanc has melon, grapefruit, and grass clippings on the nose. The palate is crisp on the entry with touches of asparagus and nettle. There is an attractive race to this Sauvignon Blanc with a lovely crisp, Loire-like finish that shows good persistence. Drink now–2015. **88**

### 2007 HUSSEYS VLEI SAUVIGNON BLANC

The 2007 Husseys Vlei Sauvignon Blanc is a single vineyard, 2,400-liter bottle production with gooseberry, green asparagus and a touch of Vervaine tea on the nose. The palate is well balanced with a strong asparagus element on the palate. Very distinct and well balanced, it segues towards a spicy, tertiary finish that lingers in the mouth. Not for everyone, but then why should all Sauvignons be the same? Drink now–2017. **90**

### 2010 HUSSEYS VLEI SAUVIGNON BLANC

The 2010 Husseys Vlei Sauvignon Blanc has a very subtle bouquet with crushed stone, a touch of dried herbs, green asparagus and green bell pepper. The palate is well balanced with subtle herbaceous aromas, good acidity and crisp gooseberry and lime mixed with a touch of passion fruit on the finish. It is a distinctive expression of Sauvignon, not to everyone's liking but true to itself. I am intrigued to see how this will develop in bottle. Drink 2012–2018. **91+**

## DE MORGENZON

*Classical music drifts over the vineyard to entertain the vines at De Morgenzon and encourage them to bear quality fruit. Perhaps that is no surprise since proprietors Wendy and Hylton Appelbaum own Classic FM radio. In 2010, Carl van der Merwe joined as head winemaker from Quoin Rock, though previous winemaker Teddy Hall remains in an advisory role. They offer an entry-level range from younger vines under the -DMZ- label, but De Morgenzon is best known for their outstanding Chenin Blanc sourced from their 40-year old vines. Carl uses an oxidative technique, fermenting the wine in barrel and not topping it up for six months, giving angels 3% share. The wine is raised in around one-third new oak and usually has 4–5 gms/L residual sugar. Carl took me through a vertical of their Chenin Blanc, but we began with the DMZ range.*

### 2010 DMZ CHARDONNAY

Aged 20% in new oak for 10 months, the 2010 Chardonnay would benefit from a little more delineation on the nose that has a leesy veneer. The palate is medium-bodied with ripe tropical fruit on the entry. It has racy acidity, nice depth and length, plus an attractive waxy finish. This is good value. Drink now–2013. **88**

### 2010 DMZ SYRAH

The 2010 DMZ Syrah was aged 75% in barrel (25% of which new oak) for what will be 18 months, blended with 15% Grenache and Mourvedre. It has a fine, lifted, pure bouquet with blackberry, bilberry and a touch of hung game courtesy of the Mourvedre. The palate is full-bodied with -chunky- Syrah, dry tannins and lots of extract, demonstrating good weight towards the finish. This is a well-made commercial Syrah at great value. Drink now–2014. **87–89**

### 2005 CHENIN BLANC

The debut 2005 Chenin Blanc has an intense nose with secondary aromas beginning to drive the aromatics with scents of wet wool, pink grapefruit, shaved almond and a little dried honey. The palate is medium-bodied with fine delineation on the very harmonious entry with

touches of lemon curd, orange peel, apricot and spice whilst the finish is long and persistent. This is an outstanding maiden vintage that seems to be aging beautifully. Drink now–2016+. [93](#)

#### 2007 CHENIN BLANC

The outstanding 2007 Chenin Blanc has a slightly lighter bouquet than the 2008, with grapefruit, orange-blossom and jasmine aromas, with very fine definition, if not quite the intensity of the ensuing vintage. The palate is very fresh and very pretty: a floral, honeysuckle entry infused with heady orange essence, apricot and white peach flavours. There is a wonderful sense of symmetry towards the finish, making this a superb Chenin Blanc. Drink now–2018+ [94](#)

#### 2008 CHENIN BLANC

The 2008 Chenin Blanc has impressive aromatic intensity with beeswax, jasmine and honeysuckle aromas. The palate is medium-bodied and showing a little more tautness and tension than the 2009 with a ripe, waxy-textured finish that lingers beautifully. It is more forward compared to the other vintages, but it is drinking well now. Drink now–2015. [91](#)

#### 2009 CHENIN BLANC

The 2009 Reserve Chenin Blanc (the renamed Chenin Blanc) has a light golden hue. The nose is muted at first but opens up to offer honeysuckle and candied orange peel aromas. The palate is very pure and well balanced with good acidity, apricot, clementine and a touch of lime zest that leads to a very poised finish. This is a consummate Chenin Blanc, although I suspect that the 2010 will be even better. Drink now–2017. [93](#)

#### 2010 CHENIN BLANC

Due to be bottled the next week, the 2010 Reserve Chenin Blanc has a very pure bouquet that likes to unfurl in the glass: peach, dried apricot and a touch of jasmine breaking through all with fine definition. The palate is well balanced with good acidity. It has a lovely slightly viscous texture with a complex finish of apricot, citrus peel, lime and just a touch poised: what a sublime Chenin Blanc this will be! Drink 2012–2017+. [92–94](#)

### EXCELSIOR

*This Robertson based winery owned by Freddie and Peter de Wet offers two sub-ten dollar wines that are worth every cent.*

#### 2010 CHARDONNAY

The delightful 2010 Chardonnay has a light floral bouquet with white flower, apricot and a touch of lemon curd all with fine delineation. The palate is simple but well crafted with good acidity and crisp, vanilla tinged fruit towards the finely tuned honeysuckle finish. Drink now. [88](#)

### GLENELLY

*When the indefatigable May-Elaine de Lencquesaing purchased the 128-hectare Glenelly Estate in 2003, a new chapter opened up for her upon the slopes of the Simonsberg Mountain. The following year, 60-hectares of red and 5-hectares of white grape varieties were planted, although it was not until 2009 that the state-of-the-art winery became operational. The first release was a Cape Blend from imported grapes and, to be honest, I remember the quality not being up to standard. However, the appointment of Luke O’Cuinneagain, who had worked at Chateau Angelus, Screaming Eagle and Rustenberg, plus the consultancy of Adi Badenhorst has had an immediate impact, and I was very impressed by these wines. She will be giving her old Deuxieme Cru a run for its money soon (and let’s not even think about comparing prices!)*

#### 2010 GLASS COLLECTION CHARDONNAY

Raised on its lees, the 2010 Glass Chardonnay has a slightly herbaceous bouquet with some “mulchy” aromas in the background. The palate is well balanced with a touch of spice on the entry. It is nicely focused with a hint of hazelnut towards the crisp, satisfying finish. Drink now–2015. [89](#)

#### 2009 GLASS COLLECTION CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The 2009 Glass Collection Cabernet Sauvignon is matured for 12 months in oak with racking every four. It has a lifted, slightly “briny” bouquet with good definition. The palate is full-bodied with firm tannins, a grainy texture with a dry, quite austere tobacco-laced finish. Showing impressive grip and persistence, I suggest leaving this for another 12 months in bottle. Drink 2013–2020. [90](#)

### 2007 GRAND VIN DE GLENELLY

Cropped at 44 hectoliter per hectare, the 2007 Grand Vin de Glenelly is a blend of 44% Shiraz, 31% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot and 1% Petit Verdot raised for 18 months in one-third new oak. It has a very ripe, broody bouquet with blackberry, iodine, cassis and a touch of brine that handles the oak very well. The palate is medium-bodied with good acidity and very impressive harmony, the oak is seamlessly integrated and leads to a very seductive, tobacco and spice-tinged finish. This should age well. Drink now–2017. [91](#)

### 2008 GRAND VIN DE GLENELLY

Cropped at 40 hectoliter per hectare, the 2008 Grand Vin de Glenelly is a blend of 40% Shiraz, 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot and 14% Petit Verdot raised for 18 months in one-third new oak. The higher proportion of Cabernet lends the aromatics a more austere, Old World personality that is more reserved than its predecessor. The palate is very well balanced with good acidity and very well integrated oak. In terms of finesse, this is a step up from the 2007 without compromising on fruit intensity. For under \$25 per bottle, one has to ask why you would bother with Bordeaux? Drink now–2018. [93](#)

### 2008 LADY MAY

The flagship 2008 Lady May is a blend of 91% Cabernet Sauvignon and 9% Petit Verdot that is raised for 24 months in new French oak. It has a very controlled, refined bouquet with intense blackberry, raspberry and cedar aromas with just a slight pepper/herbaceous edge. The palate is full-bodied with firm, grippy, austere tannins and superb balance that makes this so fresh and vibrant. There is a sense of symmetry and control that May-Elaine has imported from Pauillac. With great tension and persistence on the finish, this is a Bordeaux blend that merits cellaring. Drink 2014–2020+. [93](#)

### 2009 LADY MAY

The 2009 Lady May is due later this year. It has an introverted nose at the moment with blackberry, leather, cedar and a touch of mint, all with very fine definition and unfolding with each swirl of the glass. The palate displays very fine tannins, very well integrated oak and a beautiful, pure, caressing finish that really satisfies both in terms of the senses and intellect. This is a succinctly crafted Bordeaux blend that will age with grace. Drink 2014–2020+. [94](#)

## KANONKOP

*Kanonkop is named after the hillock from which a cannon was fired in the 17th century. This Stellenbosch estate is one of the region's grantees, specializing in red varieties including a highly respected Pinotage, crowned by their flagship "Paul Sauer" and "Black Label" labels. Winemaker Abrie Beeslaar has been at the helm since 2002.*

### 2007 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

It has a very well-defined nose with ripe red-berried fruit, and a touch of mint and cedar with very good lift. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannins and very fresh. Whilst not a complex Cabernet, it is very restrained and has a pleasing, slightly muted cedar and black currant finish. This well crafted Cabernet should age nicely over 8–10 years. Drink now–2018. [90](#)

### 2008 PAUL SAUER

The finish is quite dry, just missing the delineation and freshness that might have been there a few years ago. The 2008 Paul Sauer, a blend of 69% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Cabernet Franc and 9% Merlot, matured for 24 months in new oak. It has blackberry, cedar, sandalwood, and a touch of undergrowth on the nose. The palate is medium-bodied with firm tannins, moderate definition with a seductive succulent finish. Very classic and perhaps old fashioned in style but well made, drink it 2012–2020. [90](#)

### 1999 PINOTAGE

To attest to the longevity of the varietal I was poured a 1999 Pinotage that was matured in 80% new oak. It has a well-defined, fresh bouquet with blackberry, and a touch of mocha and undergrowth. The palate is well balanced with fine, slightly furry tannins. It is graced with a very sensual mouthfeel and good acidity with a harmonious, tarry, Medocian finish. Case proven! Drink now. [90](#)

## KEN FORRESTER

*Whilst I have enjoyed more than my fair share of legendary Bordeaux wines, Ken Forrester provides a pertinent reminder that great Cabernet can be made for under ten-dollars. You could count the number of Bordeaux chateaux offering equivalent QPR on one finger. This, and the rest of his portfolio represent everything that can be achieved in South Africa: cleanly made, expressive wines at unbeatable prices interspersed with one of two flagship wines that mean business. If you have never tried South African wine before, then I cannot think of a better place to start than here.*

### 2010 PETIT CHENIN BLANC

Sourced from their 50-hectare Stellenbosch vineyard bought in 1993, the 2010 Petit Chenin Blanc has a light lemon and pineapplescent bouquet with fine definition. The palate is well balanced with generous pineapple, citrus peel and almond with good acidity. This commercial Chenin Blanc is well-crafted and the bottom line is: it's delicious! Drink now. [89](#)

### 2010 PETIT CABERNET/MERLOT

A blend of 65% Cabernet and 35% Merlot, the marvelous 2010 Petit Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot has a herbaceous, Cru Bourgeois-like nose but is fresh, well-defined and full of energy. The palate is vibrant on the entry and embraces Old World freshness and vitality better than most Bordeaux! It has a delicious, crisp peppery fruit with a touch of cedar and graphite on the well-defined finish. The only thing "Petit" about this superb wine is the price. Drink now–2014. [90](#)

### 2009 CHENIN BLANC

Aged in 20% new French 400-liter French barrels, the 2009 Chenin Blanc is sourced from 37-year old vines and has a ripe, well defined nose with lemon peel, grapefruit and a touch of dried apricot. The palate is well balanced with a zesty/cordial entry: fresh lime and citrus lemon with just a hint of brioche from the oak. With good length and vibrancy, this is a fine Chenin Blanc even if I do admire its "Petit" sibling just as much. Drink now–2014. [89](#)

### 2009 MERLOT

Sourced from Ken Forresters' 15-year old vineyard blended with 8 or 9% Cabernet Franc, the 2009 Merlot has a slightly smudged red fruit nose with a hint of strawberry. The palate is well balanced with ripe, rounded crisp Merlot fruit, and the absence of new oak renders this a fleshy, vibrant and fresh varietal. Drink now. [88](#)

### 2006 RENEGADE

A blend of 50/50 Syrah and Grenache (the latter from 52-year old vines) the 2006 Renegade has a crisp nose of mulberry, white pepper and tertiary notes that unfold from the glass. The palate is medium-bodied with a sappy, fresh entry: bright red-berried fruit, vibrant acidity. However I would like just a little more complexity towards the finish. Drink 2012–2016. [91](#)

### 2009 THE FMC

Sourced from Chenin Blanc vines planted in 1967, with natural wild yeast fermentation, and raised in about 85% new oak, the flagship 2009 The FMC has a beautifully defined, intoxicating bouquet with lemon curd, frangipane, almond and just a touch of nutmeg. The palate has a rounded, waxy texture with wonderful harmony and precision. There are subtle flavors of dried apricot, brioche, vanilla, a touch of honey (perhaps a little botrytis) and a hint of spice. Seductive, harmonious and very focused, The FMC is a sublime expression of South African Chenin Blanc. Drink now–2020. [93](#)

### 2007 THE GYPSY

From 50-year old Grenache and 30-year old Syrah vines matured for 24 months in barrel, the marvellous 2007 The Gypsy has a rustic, natural, earthy bouquet with touches of mulberry and white pepper. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannins. It is still a little tight considering its age, but very focused and utterly fresh and elegant. Drink now–2020. [93](#)

## KLEIN CONSTANTIA

*One of South Africa's most iconic wineries, in the 18th century the sweet wines of Constantia were esteemed in the same way as China covets Lafite-Rothschild. For decades the wines were forgotten, but are now once again, highly coveted. The good news is that a recent bottling does not cost the thousands of dollars of an 18th century bottle. Just days after I visited, the Jooste family sold their shares to Zdenek Bakala and Charles Harman, from the US and UK respectively and I tasted the wines with Adam Mason, who will continue his role as winemaker.*

### 2006 VIN DE CONSTANCE

Klein Constantia's most famous wine, the 2006 Vin de Constance underwent several tries during picking in order to eliminate green fruit, and the 2006 includes 10% raisined berries, some as Aszu and 80% whole bunches. It has a heavenly bouquet with apricot blossom, honeysuckle, elderflower and pear drop that is mesmerizing. The palate is vibrant and animated with notes of raisin, fresh fig and Seville orange marmalade. It has a life-enhancing silver thread of acidity and a long waxy, honeyed finish that lacquers the mouth but is imbued with great freshness and vitality. It is easy to see why this elixir was so coveted 200 years ago. Drink now–2050+. [95](#)

## MVEMVE RAATS

*Mvemve Raats is a joint venture inaugurated in 2004 between Bruwer Raats and Mzokhona Mvemve. I must confess that adrenaline began rushing as I tasted two vintages of their stunning Bordeaux blend: De Compostella. I began to wonder why I spent two weeks down in Bordeaux assessing self-aggrandizing Cabernets?*

### 2007 MR DE COMPOSTELLA

The 2007 De Compostella is a blend of 32% Cabernet Franc, 24% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Malbec, 16% Petit Verdot and 8% Merlot aged for 24 months in 1/3 new oak barrels. It has a very sensual, almost understated bouquet that unfurls with cassis, raspberry, vanilla and dark plums. The palate is medium-bodied with very fine tannins and is much more refined than I anticipated with ebullient sweet cherry fruits on the beautifully focused finish. This is a very elegant yet intense wine that fully justifies its price tag. Drink 2014–2022+ [93](#)

### 2008 MR DE COMPOSTELLA

A blend of 37.5% Cabernet Franc, 37.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Malbec, 7.5% Petit Verdot and 7.5% Merlot aged for 24 months in 1/3 new oak barrels, the sensational 2008 De Compostella has a very pure, seductive nose that carries that oak discretely, displaying the intensity of precision of a top quality Claret. The palate is medium-bodied with very fine tannins, very fresh and seductive with a beautifully polished, seamless finish that is simply world-class. This sensual, consummate Bordeaux blend should age gracefully over a decade. Bravo! Drink 2014–2025. [96](#)

## RAATS FAMILY WINES

*"New World specialists of Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc" is the banner headline for Stellenbosch producer Raats that was established by brothers Bruwer and Jasper Raats. Bruwer bought out his sibling and has bought vineyards from Stellenbosch, Paarl, Durbanville Hills and the Paardeberg, seeking older vines above 250m sea-level. Theirs is a small portfolio that bears out Bruwer's dedication to winnow better terroirs. See also his collaboration with Mzokhona Mvemve: "Mvemve Raats."*

### 2010 ORIGINAL CHENIN BLANC

Sourced from 35-year old bush and trellised vines, the 2010 Original Chenin Blanc has a crisp, leesy bouquet with hints of pineapple and melon. The palate is well balanced with a very attractive, creamy entry with good acidity and weight. It exudes harmony and freshness towards the finish and, for the price, this Chenin represents great value. Drink now–2014. [88](#)

### 2009 CHENIN BLANC

One-quarter of the 2009 Chenin Blanc is fermented in 300-liter French oak and that shows within a lovely, ripe, melon and grapefruit bouquet with touches of pressed white flower and jasmine. The palate is well balanced on the entry with a hint of bell pepper and citrus (lemon). Nicely balanced with a touch of dried apricot, nectarine and spice towards the crisp finish, this fine Chenin Blanc brims with character and charm. Drink now–2016. [90](#)

### 2009 CABERNET FRANC

The impressive 2009 Cabernet Franc was aged in 25% new oak for 18 months and shows very fine delineation on the nose, capturing its herbaceous, peppery character without any sense of underripeness. The palate is full-bodied with a firm grip with notes of green bell pepper, a touch of spice and small dark berries. This leads to a well-defined fresh finish that epitomizes "New World Loire." It deserves a small round of applause the astute handling of this tricky variety! Drink 2013–2018. [92](#)

## RUSTENBERG

*Rustenberg is one of South Africa's oldest estates with a history dating back to 1682, and by 1781 it was producing 3,000 cases of wine. The estate was divided and fell into decline towards the late 19th century but it was brought back to life by John X. Merriman. In 1941 it was acquired by Peter and Pamela Barlow and their son Simon has run Rustenberg since 1987. They offer a strong, consistent portfolio of red and white wines based on classic varieties. Their flagship wines have gained international recognition and are built to last, so do not be afraid to cellar them for several years or more.*

### 2010 CHARDONNAY

Raised in 40% new 300-liter Burgundy barrels for 12 months, the 2010 Stellenbosch Chardonnay has a ripe, tropical fruit-tinged bouquet with hints of mango and fresh apricot intermingling with vanilla pod. The palate is medium-bodied with a rounded, vanilla

tinged entry and constitutes a commercially minded Chardonnay that ticks all the right boxes: low acidity, soft mouthfeel and a seductive smear of creamy new oak. In other words, a crowd-pleasing wine. Drink now–2015. [88](#)

#### 2008 FIVE SOLDIERS CHARDONNAY

The excellent 2008 Five Soldiers Chardonnay is whole bunch pressed and undergoes complete malolactic. It has a well-defined bouquet with very well-integrated new oak (70% new) that dovetails into a very well balanced, vanilla-tinged palate with good acidity and a focused, apricot and shaved ginger-tinged finish. This is a Chardonnay with panache. Drink now–2018. [91](#)

#### 2009 RM NICHOLSON

A blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Syrah with Bordeaux varieties, raised in 20% new oak (both French and American), the 2009 RM Nicholson has ripe, dark berry fruit on the vigorous nose with a hint of mocha. The palate is full-bodied with a firm grip and nicely focused, the oak deftly handled towards the tannic but fresh finish. It is a little chunky for sure, but well-crafted and almost Medocian in style. Drink 2012–2018. [89](#)

#### 2008 JOHN X MERRIMAN

The iconic 2008 John X. Merriman is a blend of 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot plus a little Cabernet Franc and Malbec that was raised in 35% new oak French barrels for 21 months. It has a very ripe bouquet of blackberry, plum and a touch of tobacco that is perhaps a little disjointed and will need time to integrate. The palate is full-bodied with firm, dry, grippy tannins and a lot of tobaccotinged black fruit. It expresses commendable definition and freshness with a nice touch of austerity that should see it age over 7–10 years with ease. Drink 2013–2020. [93](#)

#### 2007 PETER BARLOW

The flagship 2007 Peter Barlow is a pure Cabernet Sauvignon from vines planted in 1990. The wine was raised in 64% new oak, the remainder 2nd and 3rd fill. It has an intriguing bouquet of roasted herbs, tobacco and a touch of dark chocolate and good definition. The palate is very well balanced with ripe plum and black currant on the entry. The black fruit is interlaced with dried herbs and fresh tobacco with firm and grippy tannins. It displays impressive weight towards the bold, structured finish and this 2007 is only just beginning to show what it can do. Drink 2014–2022. [93](#)

### THELEMA

*Thelema Mountain Vineyards was founded in 1983 when the McClean Family Trust purchased a fruit farm in the Helschoogte Pass, just outside Stellenbosch on the slopes of Simonsberg. Ex-chartered accountant Gyles Webb acts as both managing director and cellar master and in 2000, he was joined by winemaker Rudi Schultz. Thelema is renowned for their Cabernet Sauvignons and they did not disappoint, epitomizing Old World classicism with New World fruit intensity, wine with a propensity to age.*

#### 2010 SAUVIGNON BLANC

Fermented in stainless steel tanks, the commendable 2010 Sauvignon Blanc has a grassy, crisp nose with touches of orange rind and nettle. The palate is fresh and zesty on the entry with good acidity with hints of apricot and orange essence. This leads to a well-defined finish with attractive pithy fruit and bitter lemon. Drink now–2013. [89](#)

#### 2009 CHARDONNAY

Aged for 10 months in French oak (30% new) the 2009 Chardonnay has a luscious, creamy bouquet with touches of vanilla and almond. The palate is well balanced with a precise entry, good acidity and a linear, strict, leesy finish. Drink now–2015. [90](#)

#### 2008 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

In complete contrast, I feel that Thelema is far more adept with that other noble Bordeaux variety. The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon was aged for 18 months in 45% new oak and has a very succinct nose of ripe red berries, wild hedgerow and a touch of cedar all with very fine definition. The palate is medium-bodied with fine, supple tannins. It has good acidity and a lovely caressing, ironically Saint Emilion-like finish. This is a superb Cabernet Sauvignon drinking beautifully now. Drink now–2016. [91](#)

#### 2008 "THE MINT" CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The 2008 The Mint Cabernet Sauvignon was raised in 50% new French oak for 18 months and it does what it says on the tin with precocious scents of mint and cedar. The palate is medium-bodied with a supple, pure entry with plush ripe red-berried fruit, very well integrated oak and a silky smooth, caressing finish. This is a classy Stellenbosch Cabernet that should age well. Drink now–2018. [92](#)