

2012 Jordan Wine Estate Harvest:

Far below the lights of Cape Town flicker brightly as the city slickers stir and ready themselves to brave the morning traffic. A Cape Eagle Owl hoots approvingly as I walk through the vineyard taking samples and the scattered porcupine quills in one of the Nine Yards Chardonnay vineyard rows are a dead giveaway that the grapes are almost ready to harvest.

As the sun rises I can see False Bay in the distance, 14km away as the crow flies and as I turn my head slightly I can see Table Bay 24km away. Standing in the Sauvignon Blanc vineyard named 'The Outlier' (situated on a geological outlier with younger rocks surrounded by 600 million year old granite) I can see five different wine regions all around me. I wasn't wearing a sweater and start to shiver as a cold breeze blows through the vineyard bringing the sound of the Perkins diesel engine ever closer. A familiar shape appears in the dawn light and I see my dad Ted, driving the French-built Pellenc harvester in the adjoining vineyard. I am reminded why we harvest the Jordan Sauvignon Blanc so early in the morning ... making great wine is not just about site, variety and clonal selection, but also about the temperature of the grapes at harvest. As I walk from vineyard to vineyard I am also reminded that at 76 years old Ted is still way more fit than me.

Grape samples in hand, I reflect on the build-up to what is starting to feel like the vintage of the decade. This has been one of the coolest yet driest growing seasons in living memory in Stellenbosch. Our usual average annual rainfall in the vicinity of 750mm of rain has dwindled to only 440mm. To top it all we experienced 17 days of relentless heat of over 30 deg C in January. Thank goodness for drip irrigation – dryland vineyards would have experienced serious crop losses as the heat and lack of water would have literally turned the grapes into raisins. All one needed to do was keep the vines happy, not increase berry size or canopy density. Let nature do the rest! You had to think like a grape!

The 2012 vintage at Jordan started off two weeks later usual, the slow ripening suggesting the possibility of a great year. Tropical Sauvignon Blanc flavours have been exceptional and acidities are balanced. Harvesting conditions have been perfect, with cool nights and mild days allowing the team to harvest the grapes at their best.

Also already in the cellar is the 2012 Chameleon Rosé, a blend of Shiraz and Merlot grapes specially grown for the rosé. The parts of the vineyards used for this wine are selected using satellite and aerial images enabling the identification of the more vigorous vines which are then harvested at slightly lower sugar levels, resulting in wines with a lower alcohol level and yet a wonderfully balanced, fruity dry wine, ideal for our summer climate.

The Real McCoy Riesling 2012 is also safely in the cellar– aptly named after the 'Just Riesling' group petitioned government and won the right to call Riesling just that – Riesling. Before that we had to call it Weisser Riesling or Rhine Riesling. This is one of

the varieties that benefits from cold soaking on the skins where most of the aromatic flavours are concentrated.

The first 2012 chardonnays are fermenting well, both in tank for the Jordan Unoaked Chardonnay as well as in barrel for the more complex Barrel Fermented Chardonnay. The fermentation locks releasing carbon dioxide from the barrels bubble away like an orchestra of frogs in the underground cellar. At Jordan, we don't believe in the technique of using skin contact on our Chardonnay – 5 months on the skins in the vineyard is long enough! The juice is therefore drained immediately to tank for cold settling before fermentation and this captures the wonderful limy citrus flavours, without adding coarseness often found on over-extracted chardonnay.

The new barrels have arrived from Burgundy and are eagerly unwrapped. The complex aroma of sweet vanilla and smoky fire-toasted French oak is enough to send shivers down one's spine. Despite the strengthening of the Rand, a new barrel still costs the same as a return trip to Europe! After 5 fills it is then cut in half and used for pot plants so it is important to identify which of the vineyard blocks are concentrated enough to benefit from being fermented and aged in barrel. The Whole Nine Yards Chardonnay is a serious barrel fermented style, yet judiciously oaked so you don't have to be a carpenter to get through a glass! We literally go the whole nine yards to make it! Elegant yet powerful it gives the best wines from France and in particularly from Burgundy a serious run for their money.

Cobblers Hill, a single vineyard site overlooking Cape Town and Robben Island is usually the last vineyard to be harvested, and is planted to the 3 red Bordeaux varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Honouring my great-grandfather who started Jordan Shoes, this is always a big mouthfilling wine with densely layered ripe tannins, beautifully balanced and refined and the ultimate expression of the Jordan terroir. Even at this early stage I am confident that the 2012 vintage would have made him proud!