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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">ORDRE MONDIAL DES GOURMETS DÉGUSTATEURS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>THE ÉCHANSON'S TASTING</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">On 4 December 2016, an Open Tasting of BLENDED WHITES<br/>at the cellar of George Parkes' Knysna home</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Coordination of the wines was done with Peter Bishop<br/>Catering was plated and served by Ilse van Staden<br/>from dishes supplied by Francois Ferreira (ill) &amp; Denise Lindley</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Article drafted by PeeBee</p>   |  |
|  | <p><b>Present:</b> George Parkes Echanson Honoraire; Peter Bishop Vice-Chargé de Presse; Denise Lindley Vice-Conseiller Culinaire; Jan Johnson Bailli Honoraire; Paul &amp; Annelie Kruger Chevalier and Dame de la Chaine respectively; Conrad Louw - Cape Wine Master; Niel Els Bailli Honoraire ; Ilse van Staden Chef de Table.</p>  |  |
|  | <p><b>NB.</b> You will find two reports on the tasting, firstly the detailed notes on all the wines and then from Page 7 a conventional report.</p>  |  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wines were not covered in the normal blind-tasting bags but served – open - in flights of 3 or 4.</li> <li>• The original intention was to taste ‘only 12’</li> <li>• A year ago, the big buzz in the Cape was on ‘Blended Whites’, especially with the impact of Eben Sadie &amp; the Swartland winemakers – focusing more on the weird and wonderful from the warmer regions - rather than what had set the mold with stunning Vergelegen’s White of 2001 and the Cape Point Vineyards’ Isleidh of 2001.</li> <li>• It is worth postulating that – in the New World’ – the blending of White wines – or at least the way it is done with no common geographic links - could very well be unique to South Africa – as unique as Pinotage. And this for a very definite reason. Since 1995, Charles Back of Fairview demanded that the warmer regions admit their heat, and consequently pursue the Rhone and Mediterranean varieties. It was to take 2 decades, but – be they Red or be they White, blended wines from older vines ‘discovered’ in the warmer vast Swartland region. It is these wines that are behind all the excitement and focus on Blended Whites.</li> <li>• History has proven the classic blend (as in Bordeaux) as Semillon / Sauvignon Blanc, but – that said - such is the way of marketers that any &amp; everything stands on the corner under the Red Light and winks. And the Blends sell!</li> <li>• It achieves nothing to take sides, but the tasting showed that there are ‘Paint by Number’ blends. A bit of this, a bit of that and let’s see how something else works, almost as if the marketer’s intention and</li> </ul> |  |

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| <p>mind-set was ‘the more, the better and hence - more expensive.’ A bit more of this ... a bit less of that ... And yet there were very honest and honorable blends. There is indeed place for the category – but there is space for critical thought. Those who do the experimental blends can attest to the effect of even a 5% change in any one component – but what cannot be assessed in the cellar, is what the passage of time will do to the Blend. This was to emerge as the crucial issue, as the 2 ‘older wines’ lost structure, and the majority of 2 year old wines ‘needed time.’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We did have feelings about the list of component being as long as the Litany of The Irish Saints. George’s insistence was – however - on whether ‘the Sum Of The Parts was Greater than the Whole’ or not. There were a few ‘Nots’.</li> <li>• We tasted what we had chilled in the cellar and obviously Vergelegen ‘s latest and Eben Sadie’s blends ought to have been there – but the Knysna traffic boys are sharp, and one had to have to limit intake somewhere. We thus culled the list.</li> <li>• We passed opinion and recorded same. As Pontius Pilate said: “Quaerant dicit, dicit.”</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>Flight A; Wine A1: GROOT CONSTANTIA GOUVERNEUR’S RESERVE 2014.</u></b> (Brought by PeeBee). A blend of Semillon &amp; Sauvignon Blanc. This was to stand as the most compelling wine of the day – intrinsically identifiable with food. The Semillon (76%) was so well interpreted. A white wine that can replace any red at a meal – and replace a Chardonnay – except Boela’s own Groot Constantia Chardonnay of 2013, of course. PB (19); GP (19); JJ (18); DL (17,5). Conrad spoke of ‘creaminess, fullness’. We came back to Wine A1 so many times as the point of reference.</p> <p><b><u>Flight A: Wine A2 : Cederberg’s THE BOWLINE OF GHOST CORNER 2014</u></b> (Brought by PeeBee). Whereas the Semillon controlled Wine A1, that intense Elim Sauvignon Blanc flintiness dominated Wine A2. A degree of oak. Though delicious – making ‘a nice wine’ indeed – it was only when re-tasting after the formal tasting that one could sense the role of the Semillon. Grapes are picked at Elim (near Cape Agulhas) and brought overnight along the 375 km road to the high West Coast Cederberg winery to vinify. PB (17,5); GP (16,5); JJ (16,5), Conrad (17). That flinty minerality just DOMINATED so there was no space for complexity. In its youth. I liked what I drank &amp; went home with the ‘dregs’. Really needed a few years in the bottle.</p> | <p><b><u>Flight B: Wine B1 : RALL 2015 :</u></b> (Brought by Denise). Chenin Blanc, Verdelho, Chardonnay, Viognier. The youth of the wine had some folk saying that the components were still ‘fighting each other’ – but as one ‘got into the glass’ and on to the after-party, this wine stood out as the most perfect ‘BLEND’ – a true success in what was attempted – by tall Donovan Rall - despite the disparate geographic origins of the 4 components. Excellent cellar work and understanding. Dignified and RESTRAINED – and hence a success. Conrad (16) got bitter edges – his reaction to Chenin Blanc. Jan (17,5) said it was over-wooded. NE (18) commented ‘integrated, lanolin, perfumed.’ GP (17,5) felt components were fighting each other. AK regarded it as flat. NE saw it fitting a salad dish. A tad young at this stage –</p> |
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but as said – it has been released to the market. I liked that restraint.  
**Flight B: Wine B2: STELLENBOSCH HILLS 1707 Reserve 2014.** (Brought by PeeBee). Chardonnay, Semillon, Viognier. 10 months in new oak barrels. Only R150. This is the previous Vlotenberg Co-op outside Stellenbosch. A lovely vibrant colour. I got a unique apple mint. Quite bold on taste. Others liked the honesty in the wine – clean. CL (17,5) said ‘lovely, creamy’. GP (18) said ‘gorgeous wine with a creaminess from malolactic fermentation’. PK said ‘creamy and will go well with food’, but JJ said ‘over wooded’. A decent enough blend if the phase continues.

**Flight B : Wine B3 : MURATIE LAURENS CAMPHER 2014.** (Brought by George). This stood like the librarian’s assistant going to the Matric Dance. It struggled with itself. A blend of Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Verdelho and Viognier. Mixed reception. GP ((18) said ‘gorgeous with fresh stone fruit and complex mouthfeel’, as did NE who said that the blend works. CL spoke of peaches and cream and complexity. I saw it as simple rather than complex, begging the question: Can these Cape White blends reach complexity or is Simplicity their virtue? Simplicity can be a virtue!

**Flight B: Wine B4: Thorne & Daughters 2014 Wild Rocking Horse** (Brought by Denise). A blend of Roussanne, Chardonnay, Semillon and bush-vine Chenin Blanc. This was another case of the components fighting each other. Like teeny boppers fighting to win the You Tube hero’s smile – but wiping each other out in peevishness. Sure it was young -2014- but it has been released, hence can be assessed. I see the 2015 got 5 stars in Platter 2017. CL (17,5) spoke of multi-layered. JJ (18) got perfume peaches and simplicity. GP (17) saw potential with time. The taste was interesting, but the components were fighting each other.

**Flight C: Wine C1: A A Badenhorst 2007.** (Brought by PeeBee, who purchased it at the Cape Winemakers’ Guild Auction Charity section of circa 2011). It was one of only two blends that were bottle aged. Strangely it suffered from that very factor. Such a pity. It lacked a skeleton – something to give grip and/or substance. A multi-blend of Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Viognier, Chenin Blanc, and Sauvignon Blanc. The 2015 has 9 different components. Almost each person commented on a bitter aftertaste (the chenin factor) & some of us felt that a wine that we all expected to excel, had failed to improve in the bottle. It had been properly cellared. So the word was ‘disappointed’. The modern multi-blenders could well question the longevity of their blends. Like, let them bottle-mature & determine your blend – not for the star ratings, but for longevity.

**Flight C: Wine C2: Nederburg Ingenuity 2009.** (Brought by Denise). It consisted of 8 cultivars including Sauvignon Blanc and Grenache Blanc. This was Paint By Numbers in capital letters. It just lacked class. A wine and probably an occasion for the media to get a high. Interesting that both ‘older wines’ fell.

This does not say much for the category & maybe needs a critical assessment. The wine was regarded as stark, almost clumsy, where the wood seemed to be the desirable bond of disparities. Paul took it as his best – smooth.

*\* My opinion is that if you fiddle in a cellar blending this with that until a magic moment, it can be interesting, but if you add peachy viognier –or a bit*

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| <p><i>of paint by numbers, the components can restrain themselves and hence bottle maturation cannot – well did not - occur. So – don't chase the markets. Must be the reason that the classic producers of Europe – with its traditions – have not followed that path.</i></p> <p><b><u>Flight C: Wine C3: Sijn 2013.</u></b> (Brought by Jan). Chenin Blanc (74%), Viognier, and Roussanne – all bush vines. From Malgas. Lovely bright yellowish hue. Suppressed, rather than restrained – a bit custard – simple and clean. Conrad said 'elegance; apples'. Denise (17) spoke of potential. GP (18) liked the wine positively – as a successful blend.</p> <p><b><u>Flight C : Wine C4: Keermont Terrace 2014.</u></b> (Brought by PeeBee). Chenin Blanc, Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. This was like the young rugby flank forward before coming on as Alistair Coetzee's substitute to experience defeat against England. Probably the most New World – very overt, but one can accept this. It had personality and expression. The fight between the components showed signs of being a winning blend. In the process of integrating. Mango. Not so refined but overt and very New World. PK spoke of orange peel. CL said elegant but bitter end of Chenin Blanc.</p>   |  |
| <p><b><u>Flight D: Wine D1: White Leipzig 2014.</u></b> (Brought by Paul). A blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier. A holiday destination near Worcester (Nuy region). An easy drink that was not disparate but did not reach heights. JJ got peaches. DL was disappointed</p> <p><b><u>Flight D: Wine D2: David &amp; Nadia Sadie - Aristargos 2014</u></b> (Brought by PeeBee.) A blend of Chenin Blanc, Rousanne, Clairette Blanche, Viognier &amp; Semillon. There were calls of 'Complexity'. It was a work in progress, but showed too fatty and lanolin. It needed the factor of time, as did most of the wines, but it has released onto the market, justifying a criticism. Another Platter 5 star wine. CL spoke of quince, floral and a good structure, saying it would develop.</p> <p><b><u>Flight D; Wine D3: Mullineux &amp; Leeuw (Unfiltered) 2014</u></b> (Brought by PeeBee); A blend of Chenin Blanc, Clairette Blanche, Viognier &amp; Semillon. When I scored it 19/20, someone questioned if I would have done that had I not known the label. Good question. I scored it 19 despite this knowledge, as I would have loved the level of competition in the tasting to be streets higher. The nose was commanding. The exemplar of where a modern Cape (non-Vergelegen style) could / should go. It had grip &amp; could handle a meal – as in Wine A1; The 2014 earned 5 stars. JJ loved the wine – balanced. With lovely grip. DL had high expectations but scored 16+ with fresh fruits. GP was impressed by the integration of the different cultivars and they definitely added to the wine's complexity. 18+. More delicate than overt.</p> |  |
| <p><b><u>Flight E: Wine E1: Nurok (Charles Back of Fairview) 2013.</u></b> (Brought by PeeBee). A blend of Chenin Blanc, Viognier, Rousanne, Grenache Blanc. The grand pappy of Rhone / Spanish blends in the Cape is Charles Back who guided a younger Eben Sadie at Spice Route Winery. Charles is the owner of Fairview Winery. This scores 4 and a half in Platter. We read it as comfortable – with a sweetish kiss (a-la- Bukettraube). Nobody got very excited. It lacked grip and was just too easy.</p> <p><b><u>Flight E: Wine E2: White Wine from Bulgaria 2015.</u></b> (Brought by Niel Els). No information provided on the label, nor on Internet. It had a decent</p>   |  |

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| <p>structure, with baked apple mouthfeel. It succeeded more than some of the more composite wines that we had tasted. GP proposed that it was possibly from young vines – but well made and very drinkable.</p>   |  |
| <p><b><u>Flight F: Wine F1: Gabrielskloof Noble Late Harvest 2013.</u></b> (Brought by George). Blend of Viognier and Semillon. Glorious apricot, dried apricot, dusty, floor polish, but exciting. Burnt orange peel, Organic perfumes.</p> <p><b><u>Flight F : Wine F2: Grand Constance 2013 (of Groot Constantia)</u></b> – a blend of Red Muscadel de Frontignac and of White Muscadel de Frontignac. (Brought by PeeBee). Gee, this was deservedly exciting. Sure it costs over R500, but Vin de Constance (from Klein Constantia) is nearer to 4 figures. I scored this 19 just on that wonderful enduring nose and its golden lustrous hue. A tad oily as if it was going to wait 50 years. Almond, nougat, soft marzipan – gee I am describing Arsenic &amp; there is a link. We had to convince the audience that it was not a botrytis wine. CL said ‘gorgeous’ sweet spices but NOT a Sauternes! GP (19+) got the floral tones – great acidity – and balance with stone fruit and floral notes – a fantastic wine and a great example of a Special Late Harvest wine. Denise got that orange peel. JJ scored it 19,5 – roses, orange &amp; balance. Bottled sunlight</p> <p><b><u>Flight F: Wine F3: Lafaurie Peyraguey 2001.</u></b> (Brought by George). Sauternes – a blend of Semillon &amp; Sauvignon Blanc. Sure it has Sulphur – but it’s NICE. We wanted that Sulphur, as the Noble Late Harvests in S.A. simply do not complexity, never mind survive, because the sulphur is restricted. Almonds. Dark yellow. An eternal nose – the sulphur makes it seem like pine resin. Thank you George</p> |  |
| <p>That was 18 wines &amp; a few others had to stay in George’s Cellar. The theme next year will be <b>R-I-E-S-L-I-N-G-</b> We were welcomed with <b>Bramon Sauvignon Blanc MCC of 2014.</b> From The Craggs near Plettenberg Bay Crisp &amp; creamy. Still young.</p>  |  |
| <p><i>During the rest of the evening – for those who slept over George opened his cellar and opened a host of wines. Barbequed duck breast, with mashed sweet potatoes and summer salads were presented. Add to that the tasting morsels presented by Francois Ferreira during the tasting in the afternoon – Soup of tomato and basil; Risotto ball with Aranthini, peas and Mozarella; Pulled duck spring rolls with soya sauce and puff pastry tarts with oven roasted tomatoes.</i></p> <p><b><u>Wine 20: Lieben Pinot Noir 2012</u></b> (of Alwyn Liebenberg)<br/>As George says: ‘A Grand Cru style’. It has so much of the Burgundian pyrazines. Cloves. A wine that succeeds, and is developing. Circa R168</p> <p><b><u>Wine 21: Herold Pinot Noir Reserve 2013:</u></b><br/>A very decent wine, better than many in Stellenbosch – a bit ‘hard; as if skins pressed a bit too hard to increase volume. The stalkiness showed. There is an underlying elegance in the wine. Made by Nico Fourie in the Herold region of George that is 63 km from Knysna.</p> <p><b><u>Wine 22: Ghost Corner Pinot Noir 2012</u></b> from David Nieuwoudt.<br/>Really benefitting from that extra time in bottle. Cherries. True balance.</p> <p><b><u>Wine 23: Lord Jackal Cabernet Franc 2015 :</u></b> A new release emerging from the hinterland of Mossel Bay, 120 km east of Knysna. Expresses fruit. Quite rich and tight, needing time to evolve.</p> <p><b><u>Wine 24: Newton Johnson 2009 Family Pinot Noir:</u></b> Shows charm and</p>   |  |

great balance as acids and tannins integrate. GP said: "Superb example of a locally produced Pinot Noir". The latest vintage that has been released from this estate, was awarded the 2<sup>nd</sup> best Pinot Noir produced outside of Burgundy by the Decanter magazine this year.

**Wine 25: Vriesenhof Pinot Noir 2009:** What a command performance. – for me as I like that strength. Needs cellaring and within a decade you might proclaim that it is of the best Cape Pinot Noir – with Burgundian paintbrush strokes. GP feels that it is not in the same league and quality as the 2007. The different vintages of Vriesenhof do 'differ' more than on other estates.

**Wine 26: Gevrey Chambertin. Cuvee Bertin from Lignier-Michelot 2011.** Young and graceful. Showing typical Gevrey Chambertin characteristics. Good acids and balance. GP rated it as 18+.

**Wine 27: Doisy Daene 2007. A Grand Vin de Barsac** of Denis DuBourdieu. A tasty sweetness, but so very far away from being cutting edge. A lower degree of sulphur. Fruits and nuts. Simplicity.

## **On Blended Whites at the Cape**

The top white wines of temperate regions – Burgundy, Germany – are of single cultivar wines. Bordeaux favour the classic Sauvignon Blanc with Semillon blend. New World countries tend to follow that model.

Way back in 1995, Charles Back, owner of Fairview in the warm Paarl region, formally stressed that South African vineyards are not temperate. Accordingly he advocated the direction of the Rhone, Southern France and the Mediterranean lands. He employed the young Eben Sadie to explore the vast Swartland lands spreading to the West Coast. Finding vines of Syrah, Grenache, Tinta Barocca, Carignan, Cinsault with new imports of Mouvedre, Tempranillo, Nebbiolo, Sangiovese the spectrum widened to the extent that consumers followed the ‘Swartland Revolution’ direction and left the Cabernet Sauvignon of Stellenbosch and the Pinot Noir producers of the Hemel-en-Aarde (Hermanus) wondering whether to imitate the Swartland – or fight for what they are known for.

On the side of white blends, Andre van Rensburg of Vergelegen produced the famous Vergelegen White 2001 that just stunned. It remains a cutting edge wine. Duncan Savage of Cape Point Vineyards – attained similar recognition with the Isliehd 2001. It seemed that the style was set.

Initially Charles Back and Eben Sadie (who even developed his own farm at Priorat – near Barcelona in Spain) had found Grenache (the wine of Chateauneuf du Pape), Syrah and the graceful Cinsault that had given charm to the Cabernet Sauvignon of 4 decades ago. With the adventurous Adi Badenhorst following the adventure into White Blends by Eben Sadie and inspiring others like Chris and Andrea Mullineux (who focused on old bushvine Chenin Blanc and Clairette Blanche) as well as Chris Alheit, Donovan Rall and a myriad of others.

Grenache Blanc, plus new plantings of the Rhone blenders Marsanne, Viognier and Roussanne, the Iberian Verdelho joined in the queue with Chenin Blanc. Currently Eben Sadie is exploring Eastern Mediterranean cultivars, so the game is not over.

Astute marketing and imaging made these blends the rave. Top Restaurants called for more. Blended whites were in. It was imperative that the Ordre Mondial members attending the tasting, ‘taste and see’.

We do not consider any other country – Old World nor New World – being as adventurous and as variable as the Cape producers are doing with White Blends. The reason is simple. The other nations would not admit that they are not temperate. With our built-in inferiority complex, we (in the figure of Charles Back in 1995) had the humility to concede and hence are in a position to ride high.

More suddenly than surreptitiously, the high end market was flooded by multi-blends that were White. Sadie’s list read as Palladius, ‘T’ Voetpad, Skerpioen and

there are more in the pipeline. One cannot argue against the beautiful aromas and the uniqueness of his wines. The wines appealed to more than the curious.

Not being able to beat the Swartland, Stellenbosch joined them – as did cool area Elgin – producing a horde of white blends. The market was expecting to see white multi-blends. Wine writers and marketers found a winning horse, with the category matching Syrah in the 4,5 and 5 star rated wines.

This democratic revolution has increased the scope of wines suitable for food or for conversation, and reflective of their place of origin. Nobody felt haunted by that immortal phrase: “Do not be the first on whom the new is tried, nor the last to lay the old aside”

From our tasting experience, we postulated

- that there is a definite place as a fine wine for the traditional Bordeaux-style blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc;
- that there is a place for an adventure into (other) multi-blended whites - that are so very South African in winemaking style;
- that some of the new-direction multi-blends seem to have the components fighting each other in their youth and thus neutralizing the role of some components so that one ponders if the wine(s) would really benefit by bottle maturation;
- that there can be a tendency to multi-blend just to catch an easy market
- that there seems to be the tendency to think that the more components, the greater will be the demand, or even the greater the quality and hence the higher the price. This insults the intelligence – but marketers are not concerned about that. It becomes a selling point.
- that the multi-blend movement might be more than a blessing in disguise as it brings in the sales and provides diversity and jobs!
- that these wines are rated high by ‘experts’ and panels

The wine industry is on a strong footing at the moment mainly due to the effort of the top red wine producers to raise their prices to 4 figures so that the image and price-bracket of their wine in New York and in London shows up stronger. This results in consumers looking to middle market wines, and the increasing number of life-style and low-priced red wines – that go down to R30 in some supermarkets. Else they can look to Blended Whites.

In the actual tasting, ***Groot Constantia Gouverneur's Reserve 2014*** and ***Cederberg's Ghost Corner Bowline 2014*** represented the Semillon blend with Sauvignon Blanc, with the Groot Constantia being the best on the day to replace a red wine at the meal. General scores were 18 & 18+. The beautiful crispy Ghost Corner was dominated by the flinty Sauvignon Blanc with the grapes travelling 375 km overnight from near Cape Agulhas to the high peaks of the Cederberg near the West Coast, for vinification. It was only later in the day, on re-tasting that one sensed the Semillon. A charming wine.



The two older wines **AA Badenhorst 2007** (the modern release has 8 components) and the **Nederburg Ingenuity 2009** (a massive 9 components) showed up as more stark – with the zip having fallen. We had all expected more excitement. Were the components neutralizing each other over time? In feeling disappointed, we were postulating that – over the passage of time – the wines failed to complexify. Yet, in almost all of the other wines on offer, we were calling for longer bottle maturation. This is quite paradoxical. Perhaps a study could be made on the ability of blended wines to benefit from maturation.

In a number of cases, we sensed a clash between the various components. These wines were less than 2 years of age – and yet released onto the market. The **Rall 2015** had a beautiful restraint and dignity – yet some felt the clash between the Chenin Blanc, Verdelho, Chardonnay and Viognier pushing for their place. We took to the clean and neat inexpensive (R150) **Stellenbosch Hills 1707 Reserve 2014** – a wooded blend of Chardonnay, Semillon and Viognier, showing a balanced creaminess. Another Stellenbosch wine to show decidedly New World leanings was the overt **Keermont Terrace 2014** of Chenin Blanc, Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier. **The Sijnn White 2013** of David de Trafford sporting 74% Chenin Blanc with Viognier and Roussanne seemed restrained but it opened out to be rather sizeable – demanding the passage of time. Baked apple, and custard nuances.

An obvious highpoint was the **Mullineux White Blend 2014** that had added the bland Clairette Blanche to Chenin Blanc, Viognier and Semillon – a great nose. It had the grip to handle a fine meal. It is the closest opposing style to match Vergelegen White 9 a Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon classic).

Other wines tasted were **Muratie Laurens Campher 2014** that had comments varying from ‘Gorgeous’ to ‘Simple’ to ‘Complex’ to ‘Tasty’ Verdelho was one of the four components. The **Thorne & daughters Rocking Horse 2014** from Elgin needed a few more years to see why the Platter Guide have it 5 stars. Again – the components seemed to clash with each other. The 4 components were from different wine regions in South Africa – a feature that is not uncommon.

Roussanne, such a great blender in the Hermitage, was a component in each of **David Sadie’s Aristargos 2014** and **Fairview’s Nurok 2013** of Charles Back. The former had calls of ‘Complexity’ but it is more a work in progress – a bit of fatty lanolin. One could feel that this would earn the 5 stars it receives in 2 to 3 years. The Nurok had all Rhone cultivars – true to the 1995 philosophy of Charles Back – Chenin Blanc, Viognier, Roussanne and Grenache Blanc. The resulting wine was calm and eminently drinkable.

Another easy drinker was from the warm Worcester inland area – the White Leipzig 2014 with Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Viognier competing.

The sweet flight was a revelation and a reward. A **Gabrielskloof Noble Late Harvest 2013** blend of Viognier and Semillon was exciting – orange peel, apricot and almonds. Those of you who have tasted Klein Constantia’s Vin de Constance

(first produced in 1988 by the late Ross Gower) would need exposure to the **Groot Constance 2013** – made by Boela Gerber of Groot Constantia. Wowee! Sunlight in a bottle! Almond, nougat, apricot, gentility – a blend of red and of white Muscadel de Frontignac - the very wine favoured by Napoleon Bonaparte and Emperor Frederick of Germany and the Tsar of Russia. The wine will go on for decades! The wine is made in the Natural Sweet style. The story goes that Otto von Bismarck dominated Europe's politics from 1870 to 1890 because he controlled Frederick. When the sometimes ill Frederick appeared to be going under, Bismarck would give him a spoon of Cloete's Constantia. The only trouble was that the new Emperor Wilhelm did not fall for the ruse and chose to 'drop the Pilot.'

To keep the flag of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc flying we ended with a **Lafaurie Peyraguey 2001** – another eternal (though sulphury) nose. It seemed strange that a group of South Africans sat there 'loving the Sulphur!' Sadly, the limits on added Sulphur means that most of our botrytised wines flatten out over time.