

# TWELVE WINES OF CHRISTMAS

WITH FESTIVITIES UPON US, THESE ARE SURE TO ADD SOME SPARKLE TO YOUR TABLE, A FEW IDEAS FOR GIFTS, OR INSPIRED ENERGY BEHIND LAST-MINUTE GIFT-WRAPPING... AND OF COURSE, GOOD REASON TO GO CAROL-ING WITH OUR PARODY OF 'THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS'!

*On the first day of Christmas,  
my true love gave to me,*

## **A** **SILVERTHORN BY THE FIR TREE** *Silverthorn The Green Man 2008* (ARP R171)

Perfect for any celebratory occasion this festive season, and would make a great gift, as it is one of the lesser-spotted sparkling wines around.

A rather special MCC named after a spirit, 'half human, half nature, the Green Man is an ancient mythical figure representing the spirit of the forest, the continuous regeneration of life and the interdependence of all things.' In recent times, the Green Man appears with a new connotation: ecology. This is no Grinch! The spirit story and green tinge of Silverthorn's Chardonnay Cap Classique inspired winemaker John Loubser to break away from the traditional name 'Blanc de Blancs'.

A twirling bead of bubbles explodes on the palate, with fresh green apple and acacia, subtle hints of minerality and whiffs of freshly baked brioche.

Harvested in mid January 2008 in the early hours of the morning, grapes were whole-bunch pressed. Secondary fermentation occurred in the bottle, with the wine 28 months on the lees and a total production of 7 000 bottles.

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## **T** **WO TERROIR TROVES** *Crystallum Pinot Noir Peter Max 2008* (Cellar price R165)

If you don't find crystals among your presents this Christmas, have some Crystallum in your glass.

Elgin and Walker Bay produce these grapes, making up the fabulous Peter Max, with the name also derived from the two growers who provided fruit for this blend. Crafted from fruit sourced from two different sites; the first in Elgin, and the second in Walker Bay.

Both regions are characterised by cool, moderate climates with Elgin fruit ripening slightly earlier. Only 5 500 bottles were produced.

A cheery cherry colour with concentrated raspberry, and earthiness on the nose. Hints of flintiness, and a forest floor aroma. Spice bursts and cherry on the palate, some clove and cinnamon, and a nuttiness follow. Bright acidity with supple tannins and balanced with a good scope to develop further.

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## **T** **HREE FRENCH YEARS** *Guy Chabivin Rosé Premier Cru NV* (Cellar price: R400)

Experience the international and bring France into your time zone for New Year's.

The term 'Rosé de Cuvaison' is given when whole grapes are macerated for around 36 hours at the beginning of the fermentation process; a technique that is not very common. Around 10% of Chardonnay grapes are added to yield a lighter colour. The bouquet of assorted berries teases the palate and tickles your taste buds as the freshness cools you down during a hot SA Christmas.

The wine was left in the bottle 'sur la lie' for three years before disgorgement. With a fresh pink colour and a fruity bouquet of red berries and a hint of roses, the bead or bubble rises rapidly. A vibrant sparkle with delicate brioche mid-palate, all flavours are beautifully interwoven with each element bursting forth, but tightly and elegantly put together. The finish is perfection.

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## **F** **OUR BERRIES IN THE BOX** *Edgebaston 'The Berry Box' 2009* (ARP: R158 for the magnum!)

Wrapping up your last-minute pressies on 'The Night Before Christmas'? Get the magnum as it will keep your joyful juices flowing this Yuletide.



A medley of raspberry, strawberry, mulberry, blackberry are some of the juicy flavours that make up the Berry Box. A hint of anise and vanilla, evocative of wholesome Christmasy aromas, surround this wine in a way that is instantly gratifying. With a robust structure and tannic concentration largely the result of open-top fermentation with punch down routines and also closed fermentations and pumpovers, all to suit the needs of every variety in the blend: 34% Cab Sav, 24% Shiraz, 3% Malbec, 20% Cab Franc, 2% Petit Verdot and 17% Merlot. The result is apparent with soft tannins muted into the berry flavours. The blend is described by the winemaker as a composition of 'a modern, fruit driven wine'.

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**FIVE YEEEEAAAAR POTSTILL**  
Tokara five-year-old potstill brandy  
(ARP: R438)

This beautiful bell-shape bottle is distinctive. If Father Christmas passed by the milk and cookies last year, he will be sure to stop and sample Tokara's five-year-old potstill brandy this year!

Slow French oak maturation added to the unique characteristics of the first Tokara Potstill Brandy. The mellowed spirit abounds with subtle yet complex flavours of dried fig, peach and raisin, pot pourri floral aromas, orange blossom and vanilla notes, with spicy pepper and saffron overtones. Innovative final blending enhanced the balance and synergy of the subtle flavours to create a spirit with fine length and depth of aftertaste.

The base wine is Chenin Blanc grapes sourced from Stellenbosch. The brandy was left to rest and mature for five years. Prior to bottling in 2006, final blending took place and the brandy strength adjusted to 40% alcohol volume.

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**CHRISTMAS CHEER**

From left: Silverthorn The Green Man 2008, Crystallum Pinot Noir Peter Max 2008, Guy Chabivin Rosé Premier Cru NV, Edgebaston 'The Berry Box' 2009, Tokara five-year-old potstill brandy, 'The Goose' 2009 Sauvignon Blanc.

**SIX GEESE A-PLAYING**  
'The Goose' Sauvignon Blanc 2009  
(Cellar price: R110)

The Goose Wines is known as the wine farm with the most consistently cold temperature in the country, and is also partly owned by world famous golfer Retief Goosen. Viticulturist Morné Jonker took the bold step forward, planting a vineyard in the cold apple-growing region of The Upper Langkloof Valley, behind the Outeniqua Mountain range outside of George. He teamed up with Dr. Werner Roux, a medical doctor turned businessman, professional South African golfer Retief Goosen, and Alwyn Liebenberg, the farm's winemaker and CEO, who during his time in the Douro, produced two certified Vintage Ports and became fondly known as 'the South African Port Maker'.

The wine is refreshing as an ap'e'retief' – there is a racy natural acidity of the fruit and the wine is therefore full of zest with a strongly mineral driven style. On the nose there is a faint aroma of fynbos and some tropical fruits, with hints of gooseberry. On entry the wine follows through with zesty fruits and there is a good length with a lingering finish.

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**SEVEN SPRINGS OF CHARDY**  
7 Springs Chardonnay 2010  
(Cellar price: R115)

The perfect match for roast turkey or chicken, and all those lusciously roasted vegetables just turning a caramel golden brown; this wine is perfect for a Christmas lunch or dinner.

Fresh and fragrant, with a delicate balance between honeyed cadences, crisp citrus fruits and subtle toasted oak flavours. It has all the elegance required of a classic seasonal spread, with a structure that stems from this special terroir and the cooling influences of the nearby Atlantic Ocean. Situated on the R320 Hemel en Aarde Valley road, between the seaside town of Hermanus and

the Spa Town of Caledon, it is between Shaws Mountain to the north and the Teslaarsdal Mountain Range to the south.

The wine was fermented and aged in second-fill 300-litre barrels and only completed 30% of malo-lactic fermentation. It was left to mature on the lees for 11 months with the lees being stirred every two weeks to help with the development of the creamy palate.

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## **E**IGHT MAIDS-A-BLENDING Bellingham Fair Maiden 2008 (ARP: R80)

A fabulous summer lunchtime wine, something on the lighter side that equally guarantees the notion you are spoiling yourself. It is indeed a just name for such a fair blend and will be loved by all the ladies, probably a few gents too.

Fair but feisty, there is an energetic green fruit core followed by tropical and citrus fruit, ripe peaches and soft floral and vanilla hints.

The wine is mostly made up of Rhône varieties Roussanne, Chenin Blanc, Verdelho, Grenache Blanc and Viognier – and these varieties are perfectly suited to the Paardeberg region with its granite soils. Each of these is separately matured in French oak with 50% in new and 50% in second-fill barrels for a further six months, to get the perfect wood integration. Already showing interesting secondary characteristics, the wine will age for up to five years.

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## **DANCING LADIES**

Right: Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2009 Cape blend.



Above from left:  
7 Springs Chardonnay 2010, Bellingham Fair Maiden 2008, Lord Neethling Cabernet Sauvignon 2009.

## **N**INE CAPE LADIES DANCING Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2009 (Cellar price: R115)

With at least three bottles at the party, you won't be surprised to find nine ladies dancing.

A beautiful ruby colour with dark berry and stewed fruit aromas, also a sprinkling of some spicy pepper flavours which work well together with the ripe tannins resulting in a full-bodied, complex wine. The blend brings the best of Pinotage (36%) to the classic varieties of Shiraz (31%), Cabernet Sauvignon (30%) and Mourvèdre (3%).

The grapes were picked at optimum ripeness and fermented till dry in stainless steel tanks with daily pump overs and punch downs. The wine was transferred to 225-litre French oak barrels, a third new, a third second-fill and a third third-fill. The wine was then blended. With its complexity it will age well for the next 15 years.

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## **T**EN LORDS-A-NEETHLING Lord Neethling Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 (Cellar price: R100)

Serious dinner-party stuff, make sure you put him at the head of the table and he will be sure to impress.

The Neethlingshof estate in Stellenbosch is named after its illustrious 19th century owner, Marthinus Laurentius Neethling, who served as mayor of Stellenbosch and was also a senator in the old Cape Parliament. His flamboyant bearing earned him the moniker 'Lord Neethling'. The estate is now owned jointly by Distell and LUSAN.

## PIPES AND DRUMS

Right: The Land of Hope Reserve Chenin Blanc 2009, Tête de Cuvée Galpin Peak 2009 Pinot Noir.



Planted in 1987 the vines that produced this wine are grown on north-westerly facing slopes 120m above sea level. There has been some serious re-planting on the farm, winemaker De Wet Viljoen says that nearly a third of the new vines are still to come into production.

The wine was matured in French oak barrels for 19 months. A ruby red colour with aromas of dark chocolate, tobacco and vanilla followed by cassis and blackberry. This is a full-bodied wine with further blackberries on the palate with a good tannin structure, and a lingering finish. The wine is ready to enjoy now or can be matured for a further two years.

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## **E** LEVEN MONTHS-MATURING Land of Hope Reserve Chenin Blanc 2009 (Cellar price: R139)

Either a brilliant night-before – New Year's Eve – or the perfect partner to a fresh start – New Year's Day celebrations after the bubbly has dissipated.

Co-Owner Alex Dale is an impressive wine grower with the Land of Hope Trust project launched in 2007.

The grapes were picked and sorted by hand, with the free run juice fermented and then matured on the lees in small Burgundian barrels for 11 months (only 20% new). A small portion of tank-fermented Chenin was added for the final blend, to enhance the fresh and mineral focus of the wine.

From old bush vines grown in the Helderberg area of Stellenbosch that are ocean-facing, there is great depth to the wine; fresh flinty and leesy, and an old world charm. With mouth-watering fruitiness, this Chenin will delight on several levels.

It has immense personality, strength of character and the potential to mature well for a further three to five years.

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## **T** WELVE BARRELS AGING 2009 Tête de Cuvée Galpin Peak Pinot Noir (Cellar price: R650)

Each festive season deserves a special red wine – one that makes you feel all the more indulged when opening the bottle – and this wine is going to do just that. It will also do your once-a-year roast ham some justice.

Pinot noir is special because it displays delicacy and richness, and is often depicted as particularly able to capture the essence of the earth upon which it is grown, therefore being one of the most terroir-expressive of all varieties.

Limited release bottlings from Bouchard Finlayson are called Tête de Cuvée, reflecting the winemaker's opportunity to create a blend from a handful of the best barrels in the cellar, from a particular vintage: this one in only 12 barrels.

Vintage 2009 offered a rain-free summer with relatively dry conditions, favourably producing small-berried fruit with intense colour and concentration. It has voluptuous black fruits, some cherry, mulberry, plum and the signature hint of violets. It lingers with a refined fullness from the dry tannins. Bottle-ageing is also recommended as the wine promises to be a classic for those who are prepared to wait.

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## THE ORIGINAL CAROL

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me...

**12** Drummers Drumming

**11** Pipers Piping

**10** Lords-a-Leaping

**9** Ladies Dancing

**8** Maids-a-Milking

**7** Swans-a-Swimming

**6** Geese-a-Laying

**5** Gold Rings

**4** Colly Birds

**3** French Hens

**2** Turtle Doves

**A**nd a Partridge in a Pear Tree