



# The Wines of the Cape

**Tony Timmer is the owner of The Feathered Nest, a country pub, restaurant and inn set in the picturesque village of Nether Westcote and nestled in the heart of the Cotswolds. He regularly travels to South Africa to visit the wineries and vineyards to source and taste wines from boutique estates that are usually not represented by large distributors and importers. The aim is to bring in various bins of New World wine to add to the fantastic cellar selection (currently over 180 bins) at the restaurant.**

My passion for wine and food, instilled in me by my father from a very early age, takes me on my annual pilgrimage to the Western Cape. The end of January heralds the start of the grape harvest season in South Africa. This is celebrated in true style with grape picking, foot stomping and, of course, a serious amount of wine tasting. Numerous harvest festivals are staged by different vineyards in what must truly be one of the most scenic and breathtaking parts of the world.

To understand why wines of the same grape variety can differ so distinctly you need to consider not only the skills of the wine maker, but take into account the differing weather patterns. The Western Cape's winegrowing regions are influenced by two mighty oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian; which meet at this southernmost tip of Africa. Wines of great complexity and unique character are created by the regular coastal fog and cooling sea breezes, which slow the ripening process in the summer and intensify the flavours. All this makes for wines with a unique terroir, which is truly reflective of the Cape.

Although South Africa is regarded as a New World wine producer, it was actually back in 1659, when Jan van Riebeeck came to the Cape to establish a settlement, that the first grapes were pressed for wine. This marked the beginning of the Cape's success, in particular, for its Constantia dessert wines. So much so that by the 18th century they were being served in Europe to the nobility, and savoured by

Napoleon as his favourite tipple. By the late 19th century and early 20th century, German and Italian immigrants began settling in the Cape, introducing their winegrowing and winemaking traditions, which had a profound impact on the whole wine making philosophy.

Since political reform in 1994, there has been an influx of financial and intellectual capital into the wine industry – and as of today there are over 600 producers offering some of the finest "New World" wines. Unfortunately, it is my task (and it is indeed a hard one!) to taste all these lovely wines and enjoy a 'braai' or two, but I have to suffer in order to discover new exciting vineyards which we can represent here at "The Nest."

For your private cellar, I have chosen a few of my own favourites, which deserve consideration. First: Vin de Constance, the legendary dessert wine from the Klein Constantia vineyard with its aromas of mango, apricot and honey. Truly delicious and a great match for blue cheese. For Sauvignon Blanc, the very stylish and polished Iona with its intense flavours of gooseberries & grapefruit is a delight. I personally love a good Chardonnay and the Paul Cluver is one of the finest. Gentle, yet complex with a combination of ripe fruit, citrus and hints of oak. The Cape is also home to the Chenin Blanc grape variety and what can be better than a "Signature" Jean Daneel? Intense stone fruit flavours and a hint of honey.

Oh and for those reds! A "braai" cannot fail when serving the Merlot 2004 from the Laibach Estate; complex with a whole dimension of interesting flavours. For a true medley of flavours and a well structured Cabernet, the Thelema vineyard with it's "Mint Cabernet" 2007 is very hard to beat. A wine to suit even the most esteemed cellars. As for Pinot Noir, the celebrated Hamilton Russell 2006 springs to mind. A dish of "Bobotie" flushed away with copious amounts of this distinct Pinot Noir, with its combination of cranberry and red cherry, on a sunny afternoon will make my long journey worthwhile!

For blended wines of the highest calibre look no further than The Chocolate Block 2008. A combination of Syrah, Grenache Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cinsault and Viognier make this one of South Africa's most delicious drops.

Upon my return, with feet stained from stomping, I hope to introduce you to some of my new discoveries. Cheers!

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For more information on this tasting journey or stocking your private cellar please visit [www.thefeatherednestinn.co.uk](http://www.thefeatherednestinn.co.uk)

You can also follow Tony on his journey on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/FeatheredNestIn](http://www.twitter.com/FeatheredNestIn)

## Bobotie a Cape Malay Dish Serves 6 to 8

### Ingredients:

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| 800g (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ lb) minced lamb or beef | 10ml (2 tsp) ground coriander                 |
| 2 slices of stale white bread                 | 3 cloves                                      |
| 50ml (4tbsp) butter                           | 2ml ( $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) peppercorns          |
| 125ml ( $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) sultanas           | 5 allspice                                    |
| 60ml ( $\frac{1}{4}$ cup) flaked almonds      | 5ml (1tsp) dried mixed herbs                  |
| 15ml (1tbsp) vegetable oil                    | 25ml (2tbsp) chutney                          |
| 2 large onions, chopped                       | salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste |
| 3 cloves garlic, crushed                      | 6-8 lemon leaves                              |
| 15ml (1 tbsp) Masala                          | 250-300ml water                               |
| 5ml (1tsp) turmeric                           | 250ml (1 cup) milk                            |
| 10ml (2 tsp) ground cumin                     | 2 eggs, beaten                                |

Soak bread in water. Fry onions in oil and butter until just transparent. Place all other ingredients except bread, lemon leaves, milk and egg in a large bowl and mix. Add fried onions in oil to mixture. Squeeze water from bread, add bread to meat and mix well. Spread in a greased ovenproof dish. Roll lemon leaves into spikes and insert into the mixture. Bake at 180°C/350°F for 30 minutes. Lightly beat eggs and milk together and pour over meat. Bake until egg mixture has set. Serve with yellow rice and Blatjang (Apricot Chutney).

Recommended wine: Hamilton Russell 2006

