



NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2006

OUR LOSS, AMERICA'S GAIN

After six years of spearheading the Marketing of Robertson Winery, Johann Meissenheimer is shifting gear and taking a new direction.

Fortunately for us, he is not leaving the company; instead he will be taking up the new position of CEO of Indigo, the US marketing and distribution company for Robertson Winery amongst others.

Johann has been managing this position by remote control from South Africa, making several trips to the US each year, but sales have climbed, and demand has increased so much that it has become necessary for a full-time person to be there.

"We realised that we had to employ a South African who had a sound knowledge of the local wine industry," explains RW Managing Director, Bowen Botha, "but no-one has the experience and knowledge of Robertson Winery that Johann has. I'm very sad to see him go, but he was the obvious choice for the job."

And Johann? "Well," he smiles diplomatically, "I'll be sad to leave family and friends behind, and I'll miss being part of the day-to-day running of the cellar, and the people here, but this is a huge opportunity and I'm determined to make the best of it."

And that just about sums up all round comments on this 'golden boy' as he's affectionately referred to by the office staff. RW Director, Tim Rands admits to employing him simply because he was so well qualified that "we didn't want anyone else to have him," he admits. "But we soon realised that he was the best thing that could have happened to Robertson Winery."

Tim continues: "He has a special combination of integrity and initiative. He thinks, he applies himself, and then he doesn't give up until the job is done. Just look at the remarkable success of the Robertson Winery brand to date."

Johann started off at Robertson Winery at the beginning of 2001 with a Masters degree in Agricultural Economics, but much more importantly, a 2-year stint working with Prof. Philip Spies from the University of Stellenbosch on the Vision 20/20 project, an initiative funded by the local wine industry to get themselves market orientated. This gave Johann a bird's eye view of the industry as a whole, but also a unique insight into where it needed to go, and what it needed to get there.



"We are really going to miss his passion and drive, it was contagious," chips in Bowen, "Johann really changed the face of the Robertson Winery brand. plus, he's a really nice guy."

"Well, I really enjoyed working with Johann this last year," says Ankia Coetzer, Marketing Assistant. "We worked very hard most of the time, but we laughed a lot as well. He is a real perfectionist (that can be painful sometimes!), but he is always fair and he never loses his cool."

Johann's wife Marike, is equally complimentary: "He has a passion for his work, he actually looks forward to Monday mornings when he can return to the coal face. I think he has done well because he believes in himself and in what he does, and has confidence in his abilities.

"His motto is: 'Your glass must always be full', meaning you must always see the positive side and make the best of it, and that is how he is approaching this move."

Brave words from Marike, who is expecting her first baby in early January, and will have to do without Johann for a few weeks while he goes and sets up home and office in Florida; and then do without family and friends as she joins him in March on their new adventure.

"We know he has a big job ahead," says Tim. "Johann, we are all watching with excitement to see how it unfolds and how you grow our brand in an exciting but difficult marketplace."

Cheers Johann!

ROBERTSON WINERY'S TAKES DOUBLE GOLD AT THE VERITAS AWARDS

The Robertson Winery King's River Chardonnay was the only Chardonnay to win a Double Gold Veritas Medal at the awards ceremony held on Friday, 6 October in the International Convention Centre in Cape Town.

Of the close to 1 700 wines that were entered for this year's competition only 36 (2%) were crowned with double gold awards.

It all started with the 2005 Young Wine Show when this Chardonnay was singled out. The Robertson Winery King's River Chardonnay 2005 went on to collect the Agri Expo Silver Tray; a silver medal and Best in Class at the International Wine & Spirit Competition; and a silver medal at the Old Mutual Trophy competition earlier this year.

The grapes for this wine come from a vineyard close to the King's River on a farm that has been owned by the Colyn family for generations. "The well-weathered Karoo soils have a generous lime content; perfect for coaxing out the citrus flavours we all search for in a good Chardonnay," explains Jacques Roux, winemaker of Robertson Winery's single vineyard range.

He continues: "Once in the cellar the wine was fermented in the barrel using 50% natural yeast, and 50% added yeast. It was matured in 100% new French oak and was prohibited from going through malolactic fermentation to retain its inherent fruity flavours. Batonage was carried out regularly for 3 months but the wine remained in the barrel for 8 months in total."

"I pick up layers of citrus, pineapple, green apple and well-integrated toasty oak," he says of this deliciously accessible but well-balanced wine. "It's so easy to overstep the mark with Chardonnay," says Roux, "but I am very satisfied with the gentle balance between fruit and wood in this wine. I look forward to enjoying a few glasses on my stoep this summer with my family and friends."





ROBERTSON WINERY CABERNET SAUVIGNON IS A GOOD BUY

WINE ENTHUSIAST

We are thrilled to announce that the **Robertson Winery Cabernet Sauvignon 2004** has made it into the **Wine Enthusiast Magazine's Top 100 Best Buys**. Scoring an impressive 88 points, this wine was recommended above thousands of other wines.

Winemaker Lolly Louwrens recalls that 2004 was a slightly unusual harvest with irregular weather patterns and unseasonal rains in early January. However, this didn't affect late-ripening varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon except to lengthen their ripening period and so improve the fruit concentration and flavour.

The grapes were harvested at full ripeness, pressed and then cold soaked to extract maximum flavour and colour extraction, after which the mash was fermented in stainless steel. Seven months in oak added weight and complexity resulting in a smooth, full-bodied wine with generous dollops of mulberries, plums and cassis. A good tannin structure indicates excellent ageing potential while the wine's accessibility makes it the ideal partner to a host of red meat dishes, pasta and pizza.

REPORT FROM THE VINEYARDS: VITICULTURIST BRIAN STIPP

The 2006 winter in Robertson will be remembered as one of the best in a very long time. As one grower has put it: "If we could order the weather, we could not have asked for better." The rainfall to date is more than 400mm for the year, which compares very favourably with the annual average of only 280mm. After a number of dry seasons the excellent rains helped to restore groundwater levels and the irrigation dams are filled to the brim in most cases.



The early part of spring was still cool and, coupled with the already wet soil, the vineyards started off their growing season quite slowly. As the weather got warmer at the beginning of October, the roots became active and the growth rate picked up considerably. Due to this strong growth, canopy management was very important and more often than not we had to follow up with suckering to reduce the amount of shoots. Shoot positioning and tipping was carried out earlier in the season.

As soon as flowering and berry set finished on the red varieties, we started our deficit irrigation strategy in order to control vine vigour and berry size. As I am writing this, most of the red wine vineyards are looking quite thirsty, but that is necessary to ensure the best red wine quality. In viticulture often what is best for the vine is not the best for the wine. Come Christmas we will again make life a little easier and ensure that neither our vineyards, nor ourselves, will go into the new year thirsty!

At this moment the 2006/07 season is looking very promising and we are looking forward to a quality 2007 winegrape harvest.

