



NEWSLETTER - JULY 2006

ROBERTSON'S PINK LADY

If Elsie Auret was a wine, she would be pink champagne. But if she had a choice, Elsie would be a pink milkshake. Why? Well, it's creamy, sweet, frothy and ... well ... pink.



Elsie's is the tinkly voice you're greeted with when you call Robertson Winery. She's also the first pretty face you see when you visit the cellar. So although her job as receptionist doesn't hold much official power, Elsie is undoubtedly a mover and shaker in the passages of the winery. She's the one that smoothes ruffled feathers, soothes bruised egos and builds the bridges behind the scenes. She good at it, and she loves it.

Elsie, the youngest of 12 children, was born and bred in the mining town of Vanderbijl Park and it's there where she married her childhood sweetheart, jeweller cum panel beater, Itzen Auret. Sixteen years ago the couple moved to Robertson and they've never looked back. Itzen owns the local jewellery shop, which accounts for Elsie's Aladdin's cave jewellery collection, and also the local panel beaters, which accounts for Elsie's succession of colourful cars. "I love low, fast cars that have lights that rise out of the bonnet," she says, rattling off a long list of pet cars that have been hers over the years. When she first arrived in Robertson she had a pink Fiat X19 ("to match my nail polish"), which was later resprayed purple (by Itzen) and then lime green. Several more followed including a red Triumph Spitfire, but now she owns a classic white Porsche, which transports her quickly and smartly from the family home in Ashton to the front doorstep of Robertson Winery. No wonder her children cadge a lift to school with her most mornings: "The trip takes me 8 minutes, but it takes Itzen 15! But then I'm usually late because I'm always fiddling with my make-up, my hair or my clothes," she tinkles.

Besides jewellery, the colour pink and low, fast cars, Elsie's other love is talking which is just as well as that is what she has to do most of the day. Besides answering the telephone Elsie organises all the catering for the company and is responsible for various administrative tasks for both MD Bowen Botha and Financial and Personnel Manager Anton Cilliers. "They have a lot of work, and lots of responsibilities," she explains, "and so I see it as my duty to not only complete my work efficiently, but also brighten their day. So if Anton is having a bad day, I'll make him a cup of tea and put two jelly tots on the saucer. And if he asks what they're for, I just say they're pills to make him feel better," she giggles, inclining her perfectly coiffed head and batting her long eyelashes.

When her co-workers speak of her, they smile, for she is unique and adds a special dimension to the Winery. She is the icing on the cake, the cherry on the top, a twinkling jewel in the crown that is Robertson Winery. She is an individual with her own personal style, a gentle sense of humour and a commitment to care and to quality.

If only we were all blessed with guardian angels like Elsie.

IN THE VINEYARDS

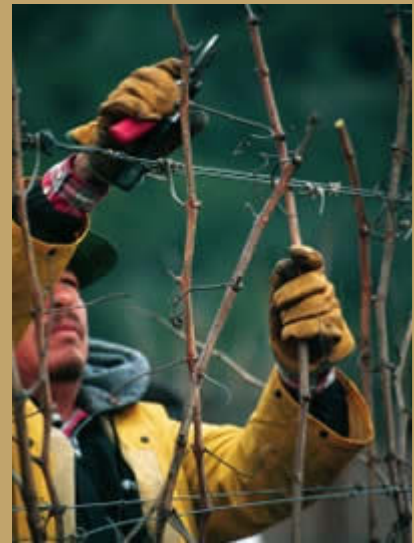
"This has been a really healthy season," says Briaan. "The vines kept their leaves for a long time which indicates that the plant itself was healthy. We've also had enough cold units to bring the plant out of dormancy, and enough rain so far to restore the water table."

"Taking this all into consideration, the outlook for the 2006/2007 harvest looks very positive," he says.

July is pruning time in the vineyards and so viticulturist Briaan Stipp is working hard overseeing each farmer's programme. The vines have to be pruned just right to ensure that each vine bears properly in spring, and this takes some skill. Large teams of workers go into the vineyards for the "voorsnoei" (first pruning) or "brush cut" where the long, unwieldy vines are cut down. After this a more specialised team goes in and trims down each vine.

Besides pruning Briaan has worked with each farmer to regrade their vineyards making sure each one is performing at their best.

This is also the time when old vineyards are taken out and replanted with new material. "We're taking out mostly old Colombard and Chenin Blanc vineyards this year, replacing them largely with Chardonnay and some Sauvignon Blanc," he explains, "we have to try and read what the market is going to want to drink when these vines come into bearing in a few years' time, but also what is the best for each vineyard's terroir. Sometimes it's like looking into a crystal ball."



IN THE CELLAR



The Robertson Winery Vineyard Selection Retreat Sauvignon Blanc 2006 promises to be as good as its predecessors, according to winemaker Jacques Roux. "We have been experimenting with the management of the vineyard over the last few years but now we think we have the recipe right," he says. "We followed the same irrigation programme and canopy management, but instead of staggering the harvest, as we did last year, we picked everything at full ripeness. The result is a wine with delicious tropical fruit flavours, particularly granadilla, and a gentle flintiness for added character. Jacques' comment: "This is a full-bodied food wine that will go with a variety of dishes and occasions, but will always impress."

Local wine lovers will be pleased to know that the Vineyard Selection Phanto Ridge Pinotage 2005 is to be released in South Africa. According to Jacques its flavour concentration stems from radically restricting the yield in the vineyard, fermenting in traditional open fermentors and cold soaking for 12 hours. The cap was punched down manually several times a day to ensure maximum skin contact and it was aged for 12 months in 50% new barrels, 80% French oak and 20% American oak.

Jacques describes the Phanto Ridge Pinotage 2005 as a fruit driven wine with dollops of plums and cherries on the nose and palate. It is a medium-bodied wine that would marry well with roasted meats or even chocolate.

Robertson Winery's SMALL TOWN, BIG TREAT Competition

Robertson Winery ran a competition earlier this year across their entire range of wines, the prize being a trip for two on the Blue Train from Pretoria to Cape Town. There were three such prizes totalling a value of R50 000. Neck tags were placed on all the bottles, or pasted on the boxes of wine, and consumers simply had to SMS their details to stand a chance of winning this once-in-a-lifetime prize.

Over 20 000 entries were received and our lucky winners are:

Richard Carstens from Waverly, Pretoria.

Joubert Malerbe from Irene, Pretoria.

Imtiaz Emmamally from Centurion, Cape Town.

Their prizes are valid until the end of 2008 so we will hopefully be able to publish details of their trips in this newsletter.

MILES OF SMILES AT THE WACKY WINE WEEKEND

Judging from the amount of visitors to the valley, and the miles of smiles we saw, the Wacky Wine Weekend was a great success.

About 10 000 visitors flocked to Robertson for the weekend of 2-4 June to take part in various activities including wine tasting, boat trips, and of course, the Miles of Smiles Fun Run, sponsored by Robertson. The race attracted several hundred entries, and each participant was handed a bottle of Robertson Winery wine and a T-shirt at the end. Winner in the senior male category with a time of 1:18:56 was Tobias Hiskia and in the female category, Sheryl de Lange came in first with a time of 1:40:19. Robertson Winery's own star athlete, Alfred Esau came 10th with a time of 1:33:59. Well done!



Every bed in the area was filled, every house holding had plenty of family and friends camped out in the guest rooms, living rooms and even back-yards where tents and caravans were put up and parked.

Diarise 1-3 June 2007 when the Robertson Wine Valley will go wacky again. For more information contact (023) 6263167, e-mail manager@robertsonwinevalley.com or visit www.wackywineweekend.com.

SILVER MEDAL FOR ROBERTSON FARMERS' MARKET

At the recently held Good Food & Wine Show in Cape Town, the Robertson Farmers' Market, sponsored by Robertson Winery, received a silver medal "for their commitment to the ethos of the Good Food & Wine Show for the stylish design, conceptual and interactive elements of the stand, enthusiasm of the staff, superlative services and the finest attention to detail". Quite a mouthful and very impressive for a first effort!

The Robertson Farmers' Market was established 18 months ago as a platform for local producers to sell their products and interact directly with the consumer. It takes place on the first Friday of every month (at the Robertson Tourism Office) and boasts 20 permanent and 10 seasonal stall holders. Products range from fresh and dried proteas, organic vegetables, home-made cheese & yoghurt, freshly baked breads and patisseries, fresh orange juice (seasonal) and many other home-grown or homemade goods from the Robertson Wine Valley.



It is run by a group of enthusiasts who have established a partnership together with the Robertson Winery, which enabled them to attend the Show. "Robertson Winery has always believed in plowing back into our community and it is a privilege to be associated with the Robertson Farmers' Market. We are very proud of their achievement at the Show and look forward to sharing some of Robertson's home-grown produce with the rest of South Africa" says Johann Meissenheimer, Marketing Director of the Robertson Winery.

Mavis v/d Walt heads the market and was still in 7th heaven when approached for comment "What a wonderful, exciting and rewarding experience for all who were involved. The products were very well received by show goers, who commented on the quality and value for money. The authentic and colorful stand generated many positive comments, resulting in a silver award of which we are very proud! A special word of thanks to our partner Robertson Winery who has made it possible for us to attend the show"

The Robertson Farmers' Market is currently held at the Robertson Tourist Office on the corner of Reitz and Voortrekker Road every Friday from 10:00 to 14:00 and once a month at the Main Ingredient in Sea Point. For more information contact Mavis v/d Walt at (023) 6264153.



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