

WINE  
TALK

# Grape Expectations

*There is more on offer in the winelands than just wine, says Jacquie Latimer*

Actor William H. Macy once said "Gimme anything, as long as it's grape. I'm sure it'll be good."

I'm sure when the Fargo actor was filming in the Cape recently, he indulged his passion for the grape with our local wines, but I wonder

whether he sampled Pinotage salami, Pinot Noir honey or apricot preserves in witblitz? When it comes to the grape, there's more on offer in the winelands than simply wine.

I am talking to Myra Du Toit at the launch of the family's Waverley Hills wine cellar in Wolseley and the silver-haired matriarch is telling me how it all started with a fairytale factory that transforms wine industry waste into innovative products for sale locally and abroad.

"My late husband, Chris, founded Brenn-O-Kem in 1968," says Myra. "He'd been exposed to the idea of re-using by-products of the winemaking industry during his travels in Europe as director of operations of Stellenbosch Farmer's Winery and wanted to bring the idea home. He was the type of man

who, once he had an idea, put it into action and made it work.

"At Brenn-O-Kem we use every part of the grape, from the skins to the seeds," she explains. "We produce **CREAM OF TARTAR** from the husk around the grape seed and from

the seed itself we produce **GRAPE SEED OIL** and **OKYPROVIN**, a grape seed extract. Once the seeds have been pressed to extract the oil, we use what's left over, along with the grape skins, to make **ANIMAL FEED** pellets. Nothing goes to waste."

The factory sources 85 per cent of the local wine industry's waste material to produce their range of products which include a range

of compounds for the farming and pharmaceutical industry as well as **GRAPE ALCOHOL**.

It was the opportunity to recycle a by-product of the factory that led to the Du Toits' latest enterprise, Waverley Hills and Dixon's Peak organic wines. "Chris had always dreamed of being an

organic wine farmer and our family is very nature and health conscious," says Myra. "Brenn-O-Kem owns a distillery for distilling grape skins and the opportunity came up to use the grape skins as **ORGANIC COMPOST** for the farm. The Wolseley area is ideally suited to wine farming, so we put our farm under vine, organically."

The initial results are promising with the 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon awarded 4 Platter stars and the rest of the farm's offering being robustly appealing.

While the Du Toits went about things a little differently, using their recycling factory as a launch pad for an organic wine farm, many wine farms have realised the potential benefit of recycling and diversifying their grape-themed operations.

In the Klein Karoo, Joubert-Tradauw is also using grape skins, seeds and vine off-cuts from pruning to create **VINEYARD COMPOST**. "Farmers in this region are very frugal and believe in farming full circle," says Ellen Marais, of the Klein Karoo Wine Route. Initially, the farmers tried to dig the pips and grape skins into the vineyards, but this made the soil too acidic. Now they get a little help from their dairy herd," she explains. "They spread a mixture of sawdust, pips and skins along the path that the cows walk from the fields to the dairy every day and rely on the cows to enrich the mixture,



naturally, along the way. After two months the compost is ready to be used in the vineyards.”

While grape seeds in the Klein Karoo end up nourishing the vineyards, elsewhere they are sun dried and pressed slowly to release their seven per cent oil content. “When we started making **GRAPE SEED OIL** about four years ago, hardly anyone had ever heard of it,” says Annelie Arnold of the grape seed’s buttery-flavoured oil that has a high smoking point. She and husband, Wilhelm, who was winemaker at Nederburg for 27 years, produce their O’Grape Grape Seed Oil on their farm in Dal Josafat outside Paarl, sourcing seeds from neighbouring Nederburg.

Other local grape seed oil producers include Fairview in Paarl, Waverley Hills and Stellar Winery on the West Coast. “Our grape seed oil press has only just arrived from Germany,” says Stellar’s Willem Rossouw. “We intend to press Merlot seeds to create a uniquely flavoured oil.”

“We’ve also been producing verjuice, a sour juice extracted from unripe grapes,” says Willem. “Our **VERJUICE** is unusual in that we use grapes picked when thinning out our table grape vines. You thin out table grapes before wine grapes,” he explains, “so these grapes are picked very early and have no sugar content. Of course, we don’t get much juice per bunch, but the result is incredibly tart.”

Verjuice was popular in medieval times and derives its name from the French for ‘green juice’. It can be used in sauces, for deglazing, and is the ideal acidic agent in salad dressings where,

unlike vinegar or lemon juice, it will not interfere with the taste of a glass of wine, but will balance the wine’s sourness.

Further up the West Coast at Lutzville Winery,

Louis Burger manages the production of 1.5 million litres of **GRAPE JUICE CONCENTRATE** a year, making Lutzville Winery the biggest vineyard producer of concentrate. “You’d be surprised at the number of products using grape juice concentrate as a natural sweetener,” says Louis.

“We export to Mitsubishi in Japan where it is used to sweeten baby yoghurts and other baby foods, and we sell it to Heinz to use in their spray-on salad dressings. Of course, we also sell it to Ceres for fruit juices and to Distell and other wineries to sweeten wines.”

At Cabrière Estate in Franschoek, Hildegard von Arnim still sells the **PINOT NOIR HONEY** her daughter started producing for pocket money as a B.Com student. “She lives in Italy now and due to popular demand we’re still making the honey from hives set up around the dam in our Pinot Noir vineyard,” she says. “Few people realise that vines bloom in spring—you can’t really see the flowers—but the fragrance is wonderful. It reminds me of my childhood in Europe where the smell of


the flowering vines marked the end of winter.”

Another estate producing varietal-inspired creations is Beyerskloof. Their

Pinotage is the magic ingredient in **PINOTAGE SALAMI** made by a local butchery in Somerset West, where wine replaces vinegar in the recipe. In collaboration with Marcel’s Frozen Yoghurt, they offer **PINOTAGE FROZEN YOGHURT** and their product line-up also includes **PINOTAGE JAM** and **PINOTAGE SOAP**. Talk about the Pinotage king! All the products are available from the estate’s gift shop and the frozen yoghurt is also available from selected retailers.

At the Grundheim tasting room just outside Oudtshoorn you can find yet another incarnation of the winelands in the potent grape brandy **WITHOND WITBLITZ**. Try winemaker

Dys Grundling’s peach and apricot **PRESERVES IN WITBLITZ LIQUEUR** for a dessert with attitude.

Cream of tartar, grape seed oil, Pinotage yoghurt, verjuice, ostrich feed and dairy herds enriching compost make me smile. Something seems right in the world when good grapes are realising their potential not only as great wine, but also nourishing vineyards and delighting gourmets in their various culinary guises. Time for a spoonful of Pinot Noir honey—I can just smell the flowering vines. 

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