



Chairman's Report

2019

South African Chenin's Growing Appeal at Home and Abroad

There has been a steady growth in the value of sales with the rise in South African Chenin's reputation. By 2018, more than half the wines sold domestically were priced in the premium, super-premium or ultra-premium categories, according to SAWIS. The Chenin Blanc Association (CBA) has also seen a rise in the average annual price of the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge wines every year, growing from R100 a bottle in 2014, to R250 in 2019.

In 2018, Chenin was, according to SAWIS data, the only white variety to show export growth, with year-on-year volumes up by 5%. And even though there was a contraction in exports of all South African wine categories in the 12 months to September 2019, the value of Chenin exports grew by 4.1% on the previous 12 months.

Tamlyn Currin, writing for *jancisrobinson.com*, has claimed: "Chenin Blanc grown on South African soils becomes a thing of great complexity and great beauty. But it's not by trying to emulate the Loire, or anywhere else, that South African Chenin has found its own voice."

Tim Atkin MW, in his *South Africa Special Report 2019*, described it as "South Africa's greatest white grape". He has also acknowledged the role of local winemakers in inspiring winemakers of the Loire, Chenin's ancestral home, to make more of the variety's potential in their own country. 22 Chenin varietal wines were rated 2019 Wines of the Year by Atkin, more than any other category, white or red. His title of 2019 Overall White Wine of the Year went to Sadie Family 'T Voetpad 2018, a blend that includes Chenin, while his 2019 White Wine Discovery of the Year award went to Wolf and the Woman Chenin Blanc 2018.

Highlighted below are but a few of many events and accolades this past year:

Global Sommelier Body Impressed with South African Wines

The world's best sommeliers, arguably some of the most influential voices in the world of wine, visited Cape Town in January under the flag of the International Association of Sommeliers (Association de la Sommellerie Internationale, or ASI). This visit formed part of this global industry body's strategic session ahead of the 2019 Best Sommelier of the World contest, which took place in Belgium in March.

The CBA had the opportunity to showcase a selection of Chenins to the sommeliers. Reflecting on the wines tasted during their visit Ricardo Grellet, ASI vice-president of the Americas, mentioned the quality of South Africa's Chenin Blancs: "I was really surprised, and found some of the best I've tasted, the quality across the bar in this group is incredible, and it showed lots of potential. South Africa certainly has a unique expression of Chenin Blanc."

WOSA Celebrated 25 Years of ProWein: 17–19 March in Düsseldorf, Germany

This year, the 'Discover South Africa' theme tasting area showcased a selection of 60 Chenin Blanc wines encompassing a range of profiles from fresh and fruity to sweet, as well as those produced from vines older than 35 years and older vintages, in this self-pour area each afternoon. This was a highly successful format with the pavilion very busy each afternoon. We are really very grateful to Wines of South Africa (WOSA) to have been able to showcase Chenin on an international platform as it achieves more and more recognition as the driving force for South Africa.

The Sixth Annual Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge

This year's winners of the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge provide ample evidence of South Africa's major advances with the variety. The majority of the top 10 were sourced from vines 30 years and older, including one made from vines planted 55 years ago. However, there were also wines made from vines just 10 and eight years' old, demonstrating what good winegrowing and winemaking can achieve.

The winners, in alphabetical order, were:

- Cederberg Cellars Five Generations Chenin Blanc 2017
- DeMorgenzon Reserve Chenin Blanc 2018
- Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cape Garden Chenin Blanc 2018 (new)
- Flagstone Tributary Bush Vine Chenin Blanc 2018 (new)
- Ken Forrester The FMC 2018 (new)
- Kleine Zalze Family Reserve Chenin Blanc 2018
- Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection Chenin Blanc 2018
- Rijk's Touch of Oak Chenin Blanc 2017
- Slanghoek Legends Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc 2017
- Stellenrust The Mothership Chenin Blanc 2018

Special mention has to be made that Stellenrust is the only producer to have featured in every one of the Top 10 Challenge lists since the competition's inception in 2014 and DeMorgenzon has appeared every year since 2015.

Standard Bank awarded a cash prize of R25 000 for each of the winning wines, to be spent by producers on projects that reinforce economic and social benefits in the workplace. To date, a total of R1.3m has been utilised for these projects.

Several collaborative events with Standard Bank also took place in 2019, including participation in the Cheese Festival, World Economic Forum and several other consumer events.

#DrinkChenin Day 15 June/CBA Social Media

The CBA is successfully continuing the exciting social media platform and it's safe to say that #DrinkChenin Day 2019 was once again an out-and-out success, and that South Africa truly took the world by storm, both online and in the glass!

- The hashtag #DrinkChenin reached **1.3 million unique users** and generated **5.8 million impressions** (an increase from 1.2 million reached and 4.7 million impressions in 2018)
- **@CheninBlancSA was the #1 contributor of impressions**, creating 1.8 million of the total 5.8 million
- **1 589 tweets** were posted using #DrinkChenin
- **@CheninBlancSA** reached **655.1K unique users** and tweets either by or mentioning/tagging **@CheninBlancSA** were seen a potential **4.1 million times**

First-ever Chenin Blanc International Congress, Angers, France 01–03 July 2019

This first conference was co-organised by the Chenin Academy and Destination Angers in partnership with Interloire, the Wine Federation of Anjou Saumur, the Federation of Viticulture Associations of Indre-et-Loire and Sarthe, Stellenbosch University (SU) and the South African CBA. The theme of the congress was **Chenin Blanc in a Changing Environment**. Each day was divided into sessions covering a specific challenge and attempting to find a solution.

The congress got off to a flying start with the announcement by the first keynote speaker, well-known ampelographer Jean-Michel Boursiquot, that Chenin Blanc's missing parent has recently been identified. One of Chenin's parents had already been known for some time: the Jura grape Savagnin. He confirmed that Sauvignonasse is the other parent. There were

many fascinating presentations during the congress and it was a powerful vote of confidence in Chenin.

45 South African Chenin producers and researchers attended the conference with **314** visitors over the three days. **13** nationalities from seven countries (Canada, China, Germany, Romania, South Africa, Thailand and the USA) and **349** wines were presented during the tastings.

Ken Forrester and Ina Smith and also had the privilege of being inducted into the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Sacavin/Confrérie des Fins Gousiers d'Anjou. After the congress, 30 producers accompanied Ina on a two-day tour of the Loire, with in-depth visits to the domaines of Moulin Touchais, Huet and Vincent Carême. The group was then inducted into the Confrérie des Chevaliers de la Chantepleure.

Some of the other events the CBA participated in were:

- Hermanus Fynarts Tasting: 15 June
- WSET Wine Education Week tasting on 9 September 2019
- OIV (International Organisation of Vine and Wine) MSc annual visit of Montpellier students
- Visit of ENTAV re pre-selection of Old Vine Chenin (ENTAV are French researchers who have a greenhouse of 600 clones of chenin blanc. They are working with VitiTech to select clones to preserve the diversity of chenin blanc).

The Accolades

Veritas Awards

Spier Wine Farm received nine Double Gold medals – the most ever awarded to a wine producer since the prestigious competition began in 1991. These awards included Double Gold for the 21 Gables Chenin Blanc 2018 and Spier Ideology Chenin Blanc 2019.

Platter's South African Wine Guide of 2019

The annual John Platter ratings are arguably the most anticipated South African wine ratings each year. Huge congratulations again to the 18 #CheninBlanc five-star winners, by far the biggest category in #Platters2019!

IWSC 2019

The Chenin Blanc Trophy was awarded to Stellenrust Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc 2018 – the fourth time in seven years!

2020 and Beyond

The Chenin & Pizza Party at The Grand Africa Café & Beach on 15 January 2020

The CBA will once again host a Chenin Blanc party, this time around a consumer event. The party will celebrate this heritage grape and the diversity of South African Chenin Blanc.

Karoo Stoep Tasting in Graaff-Reinet

Next year we will, for the first time, attend the Karoo Stoep Tasting in Graaff-Reinet (28–31 May 2020) where we will showcase the 2019 Top 10 Challenge winners.

Chenin Blanc International Congress 2021

The second Chenin Blanc International Congress will be held in South Africa in July 2021, with plans presently underway to include a far broader audience of speakers and delegates, attracting those from as far afield as Australia, New Zealand, South America and the USA, in addition to France and South Africa.

Finances/Membership

The sponsorship of Standard Bank makes it possible to have the available funds to assist with hosting some smaller events and showcasing the winning wines at several events, e.g. the Perdeberg Chenin Celebration on 02 November 2019.

We now have 138 members. We have made a decision to actively increase our membership for 2020.

Support Partner

A very special thanks again to WOSA – we value your support and partnership! WOSA, as always, has been a wonderful supporter of the CBA and thanks again for the opportunity to showcase 60 Chenins at Prowein earlier this year.

The importance of Chenin Blanc for the industry also continues with the ongoing support of Winetech and also the research projects. Since 2010, the Institute for Wine Biotechnology, SU, in collaboration with the CBA of South Africa, have joined forces to conduct ongoing research projects on this variety.

Thanks also to all the members of the working committee, manager Ina Smith and Christina Harvett, who manages our finances. Thanks also to Tessa de Kock (Tessa de Kock PR), who assisted with the news releases, and Jan Sleet (Sleet Consultancy), who assisted with the media at the awards event and Chenin party.

Kind #chenin regards,

Ken

Ken Forrester Vineyards: 23 October 2019