



## **Chenin Blanc Association** **Chairman's Report 2023**

### **Ensuring Chenin's rightful place on world stage: 1**

*Consumer events: 1*

*International: 3*

*Awards: 4*

*Statistics: 5*

### **Showcase Chenin at local and international events 6**

### **Research: 7**

### **Governance 8**

*Membership 2023: 8*

*Social media reach: 8*

*Focus for 2024: 8*

The CBA seeks to promote Chenin Blanc as a source of outstanding quality wines across the stylistic spectrum.

The focus area of the association:

CBA's Focus Areas

1. To ensure that South African Chenin Blanc takes its rightful place with the other great white wines of the world.
2. To showcase local expressions of the grape in single-variety and blended wines at South African and international events and bringing Chenin Blanc wines to the attention of international gatekeepers and tastemakers.
3. To support academic, technical and market research on the grape, its viticulture, viniculture, climate resilience and consumer appeal.

This has been achieved in 2023 in the following areas:

### **Ensuring Chenin's rightful place on world stage:**

#### **Consumer events:**

Local:

#### **Summer of Chenin**

The CBA has claimed 2 February, the birthday of the South African wine industry as #CheninSince1659 and paid tribute to the 364th South African grape wine harvest, with the Summer of Chenin tastings in Stellenbosch and Cape Town, as well as a presence at the Stellenbosch Street Soirees and photo competition with the #DrinkChenin Frame outside Stellenbosch Wine Route office.



#### Plan for 2024

- Coordinating the producer tasting at SWR, to only showcase CBA members, with at least one chenin in line-up.
- Chenin Takeover of the Wine Glass in Stellenbosch and Hermanus with winemaker dinners and specials in Feb.

#### **Chenin Safari 2023**

Once a year #DrinkChenin Day shines the spotlight on South African Chenin Blanc by engaging millions of wine consumers from around the world across industry events, at cellar doors and on social media. The #CheninSafari challenge was created with the wine-loving adventurer in mind, and is an opportunity for the fast-growing sport of mountain biking to intersect with a passion for Chenin Blanc. The #CheninSafari allows for two subcultures to come together in an engaging, self-paced event where participants are challenged to see how many of the 33 Chenin Safari stops, across several Western Cape wine regions, they are able to visit between 6 May and 10 June. This initiative was launched in 2022 with a mere 17 Chenin Safari stops and 80 participants and has grown to a staggering 33 Chenin Safari stops and 105 participants in 2023.

The 33 participating wineries supported the initiative by offering special Chenin tastings, discounts on tasting experiences, or wine purchases. The social media campaign focussed on each of the 33 participating producers as well as the various wine regions. According to the rules of the challenge, participants have to post about their experiences on social media using special-purpose hashtags – providing further exposure to the 33 producers as well as the spectacular mountain bike trails

The social media statistics showed:

Facebook: 437k page impressions and 4.8k page clicks

Instagram: 3.5k post likes and 3.7k post engagements, which includes the number of likes, comments and saves received.

For the Chenin Safari, the Chenin Blanc Association has partnered with numerous regional institutions/services related to wine. These include Wine Lands Trails, Women on Wheels MTB, Breedekloof Wine Tourism, Living Colour in Darling, the Bottelary Hills Renosterveld Conservancy, Stellenbosch Wine Route and the Franschhoek Wine Valley to host four ultra-fun rides across the Winelands and create Safari destinations from the West Coast (Fryer's Cove), to Rijks in Tulbagh, to producers in Wellington, Paarl, Breedekloof, Stellenbosch and Franschhoek.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/cheninsafari/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/cheninsafari/>

Chenin Blanc Association website: <https://www.chenin.co.za/cheninsafari>

Focus in 2024:



The outlying producers were not so well supported with visits from participants. It will be a focus in 2024, to partner with the various wine route offices more closely, to make sure there are accommodation specials, to make each region the weekend destination.

### **International #DrinkChenin Day**

The date of #DrinkChenin Day has been confirmed with WoSA, #fandeChenin and WSET as Saturday 8 **June 2024**. There was some confusion in 2023. The date is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in June. Previously the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in June, but that often coincided with Youth Day in South Africa, Father's Day and Juneteeth in the USA

### **Chenin Festival – 10 June**

The six weeks of the Chenin Safari, culmination with the Chenin Festival at Backsberg on International DrinkChenin Day. The day started with a fun ride on the MTB trails of Franschhoek with all the participating safari stops, invited to showcase their wines.

The festival sold out with 300 tickets sold.

The Chenin Blanc Association partnered with the South African Sommeliers Association to have their vin-Olympics at the event, to add to the entertainment on the day.

This event was also the kick-off of the 10-year anniversary celebration of the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc top10 challenge. Ina Smith hosted a tasting of past Top 10 winners with members of the media and the contributors to Chenin Blanc aroma translation project.

Plan for 2024:

The plan is to have a Chenin Party consumer event, early in 2024, similar to the ones held at The Grand in Cape Town and the Chenin Picnic at Spier in 2021.

### **Stellenbosch WineTown – Chenin Takeover, 4 Aug**

The CBA supporting the SWR WineTown initiative with a **Chenin takeover of The Wine Glass**. Walk-around tasting to explore Chenin Blanc according to all four corners of the Stellenbosch Wine Route's Terroir map. 24 Stellenbosch Chenin producers took part in this tasting.

[International:](#)

### **Full Pour Magazine collaboration**

<https://full-pour.com/summer-chenin-blanc/>

Lauren Buzzeo, the international judge at the 2017 Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top10 challenge, published a South African Chenin Blanc focused article for her Summer 2023 publication. In support of the 6 producers she featured, of which 5 are CBA members, the CBA partnered with Full\_Pour magazines social media campaign with posts of the participating members and providing #DrinkChenin shirts as part of the prize hampers.



## **#FandeChenin collaboration**

Amongst the international speakers at the recent International Chenin Congress held in Stellenbosch was Philippe Porché of [#FandeChenin](#). The Chenin Blanc Association and [#FandeChenin](#) are now working closely to promote bilateral projects of [#DrinkChenin](#) and [#FandeChenin](#), collaborating on digital campaigns, comparative French/South African Chenin tastings and build the grape's global visibility and stature.

The first comparative French/South African tastings were held in March at 96 Winery Road with Saumur meets Stellenbosch as the theme.

Saumur producers: Domaine de Rocheville; Domaine Arnaud Lambert and Manoir de la Tête Rouge

Stellenbosch producers: Ken Forrester Wines, L'Avenir Wine Estate & Country Lodge and Kaapzicht Wine Estate

## **First ever International Tasting of the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 winners in Europe**

A highlight was the tasting/lunch in collaboration with SAAM Restaurant in Amsterdam. Tertius Boshoff of Stellenrust also flew in for the event and together with Malu Lambert feedback was given about the CBA, Chenin in South Africa. The 10 wines were then presented, followed by a very special 4 course lunch prepared by chef Margot Janse. A number of media was also invited by WOSA. Here a link to one of the articles:

<https://vinovonk.com/link-in-bio/?fbclid=PAAabCXKGOJ2lhaaw9zrlv5RKnf9u5NQO-aPZTR4B7v5YfK77cZYI4kyw7CHI>

## **Wine Paris 2023**

Ina Smith was invited to attend two wine events in France in February this year, the Salon de Vins de Loire, which took place in Angers on 6 & 7 February and also Wine Paris/Vinexpo Paris, which took place on 13 -15 February in Paris. There was so much interest in South African Chenins, and the proposal is to increase the number of wines to 24 shown at Wine Paris 2024.

In the photo (left to right)

Mathilde Favre d'Anne, Président Destination Angers ; Philippe Porché of Fan De Chenin; Ina Smith, Évelyne de Pontbriand and Patrick Baudouin, co-founders of the Academie du Chenin. Evelyne was also the president of the 1st International Chenin Congress held in Angers from 1-3 July 2019.

Photo: Spencer Fondaumiere, Tawanda Marume with Ina Smith

## **Awards:**

### **Ken Forrester is the recipient of The 1659 Visionary Leadership Award**

Ken Forrester, aka 'Mr Chenin', receives top honour at Wine Harvest Commemorative Event.

It's an indisputable fact the profound impact on the South African wine industry Ken Forrester has made as a flag-bearer for Chenin Blanc. Producing more than seven Chenins in all their different guises, ensuring there's a Chenin Blanc to suit every



palate, is but one example of Ken's loyalty and dedication in the promotion of this noble variety!

'It's the most delicious wine and it is totally at home barefoot or in high heels and a dinner suit. Its ability to wear so many mantles is quite fascinating and something of an ongoing exploration for me'. – Ken Forrester, [Ken Forrester Wines](#)

<https://kenforresterwines.com/kf-1659-visionary-leadership-award/>

### **Platter 2024 – News just in!**

#### **Chenin Blanc of the year – Stellenrust Bush Vine 2022**

It's a privilege working with these old vines. As winemakers we are custodians of these vines and take them from vineyard to bottle.

#### **Editor's Award Winery of the Year – Bosman**

"It is a privilege to be representative of over 500 employees from the nursery through to the winemaking at Bosman who are all working towards one thing – dedicated to better." Corlea Fourie, Bosman Wines

Overall 32 Chenin Blancs were given 5 stars – 16 from CBA members

#### **Statistics:**

The CBA infographic has been updated with the 2022 SAWIS stats. It can be downloaded here: <https://www.chenin.co.za/research>

#### **Points to note:**

- The Chenin local sales of 2022 had an increase of 11%. In general, for all cultivars, almost certainly the downward trend in volume seems to be as a result of bulk buyers bringing purchases forward due to shortages in other global bulk markets. The trend was largely positive or stable until February 2023 and since then it has declined. The smaller 2023 harvest has also impacted the bulk sector significantly.
- South African Chenin Blanc brand owners have over the last number of years focussed on attaining better prices for their packaged products by backing the work that the CBA has done in raising the profile of Chenin Blanc amongst consumers and trade alike. Work done locally by these category leaders to cement their brand status appears to be paying off internationally with focus being on the versatility and commercial attraction of Chenin Blanc from South Africa. The multitude of international wine awards that the category has enjoyed has not harmed our cause either. We should also expect brands that are now in the Advini and Grand Chais de France stables (many of them having significant Chenin Blanc portfolios and are now included in global business networks) to continue to make positive contributions to the Chenin Blanc category internationally.



- The increase in value of South African Chenin on the international market can be attributed to a general improvement in quality and the marketing linked to this improvement.
  - The CBA top 10 Challenge plays a significant role in achieving this, because it highlights 10 great Chenins every year, which are quite widely tasted and generally their prices are relatively high. This suggests that Chenin is worth more than in the past and it allows trading up.
  - Our participation in WOSA's international activities also creates awareness and contributes to improved value.

### Showcase Chenin at local and international events

#### **Standard Bank Top 10 Challenge**

This year we are celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top Ten Challenge. In 2014, with the generous support of Standard Bank, the association started the annual competition with the purpose of identifying and rewarding top Chenin winemaking in the country. The organisers and sponsors recognise how important farm workers are to producing these winning wines. To date, R2,25 million in prize money has been spent on projects to uplift or upskill farm workers, their families and their communities.

View the video of the judges here: <https://youtu.be/r1ED-EprPcl>

Add list of winners:

<https://www.chenin.co.za/chenin-challenge>

#### **Stoepfees 2023**

The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top10 Winner wines were showcased again at the annual Stoepfees in Graaff-Reinet. A few weeks prior the CBA was also invited to showcase the winner wines at a Standard Bank event in Port Elizabeth.

#### **Sommelier Symposium Chenin Masterclass**

Wines of South Africa (WoSA) hosted a group of 32 sommeliers and 6 WOSA managers from their key focus markets for the Sommelier Symposium from 10-17 September 2023.

The Chenin Blanc Association was given the opportunity to create an unforgettable experience for the Sommeliers on Monday, 11 September. As Chenin Blanc is our heritage white grape, we believe the story of wine in South Africa is also the story of Chenin Blanc in South Africa. We wanted to demonstrate the common thread within our diverse wine regions, and our styles of Chenin along with how we express these characteristics in our different languages. The theme of the evening is: "Talking about Chenin; the importance of language in connecting people and crossing barriers" with reference to the newly translated aroma wheels <https://www.chenin.co.za/aroma-wheel> and the style indicator <https://www.chenin.co.za/styleindicator> .



The evening included panel discussion with the sommeliers, trade and winemakers who were part of the reimagining of the aroma wheels, how this has opened the conversation about wine and what it means to the industry.

Fiona McDonald was asked to write an article on the event, which will be translated into isiXhosa and isiZulu for distribution across multiple media outlets.

### **Master of Wine visit**

It has been almost two decades since the last MW visit to South Africa. Cathy van Zyl is hosting the group of 42 and the CBA hosts them on 15 November. There will be a Chenin Masterclass and also presentations by Dr. Johan Burger on the SA/France Clone Project and Dr Jeanne Brand on the aroma wheel and style indicator research.

#### **Research:**

##### **Gabriel Lepousez – Umani in wine**

French neuroscientist, Gabriel Lepousez presented the recent advances in neuroscience to explain how the brain makes sense of wine compounds during wine tasting. He shared some tasting tips to improve our sense of taste, understand the logic of food pairing, and identify the presence of umami in wine and food. The event was hosted by the Stellenbosch Wine Route and the Chenin Blanc Association.

##### **Style indicator**

The CBA is partnering with Stellenbosch University's Department of Viticulture and Oenology (DVO); the South African Grape and Wine Research Institute (SAGWRI) and the Department of Business Science | Neurolab on a new consumer research project.

The goal is to measure eye movement when looking at the back label and measure voluntary and involuntary facial reactions to measure stress levels when consumers are asked about describing wine with and without the style indicator.

##### **Clone Project**

This project started out with the dual aim to study the accumulated somatic mutations associated with altered phenotypic traits in South African and French Chenin Blanc clones, and to develop a genetic test to reliably discriminate these clones.

The project was slightly delayed since an appropriate post-graduate student to perform the bioinformatic analyses had to be identified. A BSc(Hons) student, Sibabalwe Kula, from the Centre for Bioinformatics and Computational Biology (CBCB) has since been recruited. He uploaded all sequencing data on the SU High-Performance Cluster and is currently busy with the various bioinformatic analyses. He is supervised by Prof Johan Burger at SU and Prof H. Patterton from the CBCB.





## Governance

### Membership 2023:

Number of members at the end of 2023: 141

We would like to grow the member base, and in one way to add value to the membership is for members to actively share their news with the CBA. All news received, are channelled either to our social media company or featured on our website (<https://www.chenin.co.za/news>)

We will again in January 2024, ask for members to upload a beautiful photo and an interesting fact here, which we will share on our channels.

<https://forms.gle/PyTKGqsYcptCtVcw6>

### Social media reach:

Facebook: 4.9K likes and 6 000 followers

Instagram: 4.8 followers and 4 636 followers

### Focus for 2024:

The CBA's focus for 2023 was to expand the conversation around Chenin Blanc; be that how we talk about Chenin Blanc, showcase the tasting room experience during the annual Chenin Safari, or appreciate the bond we share with the Loire producers during the wine dinners co-hosted with our counterpart organisation, #FandeChenin.

The Chenin Blanc category in South Africa literally has deep roots as it equates to 51% of all old vine wines and not only has the potential but should truly be our calling card in the contemporary international wine market. These are serious issues and the lives and bank balances of many thousands of people in our industry, depend on us executing our tasks on behalf of the CBA, well. This will be the preamble to the updated CBA Constitution, to help grow the association in wider international markets, as well as build a community of practice across all regions to showcase regional terroir characteristics and typicity and have conversations to broaden the knowledge pool.

The focus in 2024 will be the updated constitution, and a focus on regional technical tastings to further expand the Chenin category.

2024 will also see a changing of the guard with Abi Mitton taking over as Manager of the CBA from Christina Harvett. Ina Smith will assist for a few months with special projects, her focus however will be on #FandeChenin events and the next International Chenin Congress which will take place in July 2025. Christina Harvett has been invaluable in her support to the CBA since 2010 and we wish her well in her future endeavours.