

Circumstance Chenin Blanc 2008 Stellenbosch

16 Feb 2010 by Jancis Robinson

Waterkloof is the relatively new operation in South Africa created by Paul Boutinot (pictured here) and, I think, a name of which we will hear more. See this [video](#) about why Paul chose to grow vines and make wine in South Africa.

Purple pagers who read my full tasting notes in [Great new South Africans](#) may remember my overall enthusiasm for the Cape output of this enterprising northern Brit, reds as well as whites. See also Julia's notes from her visit there last year in [Jewels from South Africa](#) (illustrated by a photo of the glorious Waterkloof vineyards). I was inspired to bring to your attention this delightful full-bodied but refreshing white made from the Cape's signature grape by opening a bottle of it recently. It is a corker, delicious now but likely to continue to develop over the next two years at least, I feel.

My tasting note appears below, but you can read all the technical background [here](#).

Waterkloof, Circumstance Chenin Blanc 2008 Stellenbosch 17 Drink 2009-12

Deep straw colour. Honeyed nose and real energy. Tastes like very lightly sweetened gooseberry juice. Round, glossy, long and delightful. Just off dry: RS 4.9 g/l, 14%.

The back label is more eloquent, if hardly bashful:

"Who does the best that circumstances allow, does well, acts nobly, angels could not more." *Edward Young*
Ultimately, only a wine that respects its sense of place and the happy combination of fortuitous circumstances that mould individuality will truly give pleasure. Unique circumstances of soil and climate, traditional winemaking techniques and careful maturation in small French oak barrels were the keys to this truly fine wine.'

I have to agree it's good though. Even the dreg I have in my glass from a bottle opened a week ago positively glows with excitement and pure, Chenin tang. Unfortunately it is available only in the UK (and, presumably, South Africa via www.waterkloofwines.co.za). In the UK, it sells for a very fair £9.99 from Amps Fine Wines, Knightwick Wines and the York Beer and Wine Shop - so not exactly widely sold by UK importers Boutinot.

I'm told that so rich is the must of the 2009 vintage of this wine that it is still fermenting, almost 12 months after the harvest.

If you're looking for something similar but easier to find, albeit rather more expensive, you might like to consider **De Morgenzon Chenin Blanc 2008 Stellenbosch** (16.5, Drink 2010-2013), whose full price at Majestic Wine Warehouses in the UK is £16.99, even if this comes down to £12.74 if you buy any two bottles of South African wine. This is equally rich and pure, and was also aged on the lees in French oak barrels. In this case the alcohol level is 14.5%. It is particularly easy to find in Holland.

Another new South African wine of note is Boer & Brit, a sturdy red made by the respective descendants of the chief protagonists of the Seige and Relief of Kimberley in the Anglo-Boer war 110 years ago. They met while studying winemaking at Stellenbosch together and came up with this wine. You can read the full story [here](#). The wines should be available on export markets, at around £10 in the UK, within a month. I can't think of another wine with as intriguing a story. **Boer & Brit, Fieldmarshal's Blend Malbec/ Tempranillo 2008 Stellenbosch** has a particularly winning nose, even if at the moment it finishes rather dry.

