

Waterkloof Sauvignon Blanc 2010 Stellenbosch

10 Aug 2011 by Tamlyn Currin

From ZAR150, €19.95, £16.35

[Find this wine](#)

When [Wines of South Africa](#) chose the [message of biodiversity](#) to persuade the world to drink their wines, I was bemused. Without doubt, South Africa has some of the most staggering natural beauty in the world; and the Cape Floral Kingdom is one of the richest in the world, known most famously for its *fynbos*; but how this all translated into the quality of South African wine was rather less clear.

Recently, however, I have come across some South African winemakers who have begun to make the connection for me, including [Eben Sadie](#) with his almost evangelical reverence for, and knowledge of, his each and every Swartland vineyard, and Simon Back with his cool-headed long view of the intensely practical, economic value of sustainability and organics. Then, in Waterkloof's Sauvignon Blanc 2010, I could taste the *fynbos*.

It's a pale wine, with aromas that smell of wet rock and windswept beaches, wild flowers and pungent gorse, guava and sand, wild fennel and brine-soaked chalk. And then a honeyed note, soft, floating. The wine itself as brisk as the Atlantic, chiselled minerality, shimmering with tension and presence and persistence. Lemon crystals crackling in the mouth with skeins of tarragon, darts of aniseed. And somewhere in the tightly coiled core, the promise of nectarine-citrus sweetness. On the long finish, direct and unflinching, a purity.

Fynbos might be described as the equivalent of garrigue and it is indeed wild scrub flora. But it's different: more pungent, less dry, slightly sweeter (almost honeyed) at certain times of year. It's more beautiful - the flowers are extravagant in diversity, quantity, colour and shape - and more delicate. Yet it carries the salty tang of the sea and the *sjambok* whip of the wind, the smoke of bush fire, the ice-cold lash of winter rain, and an indefinably wild keening note of camphor.

I found out afterwards, having tasted this wine blind and doing my fact checking only later, that [Waterkloof](#) are in fact one of the 20 'Champion' members of the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (BWI). They have dedicated 67 ha of their 120-ha estate to protected flora. They are biodynamic (complete with Rhode Island chickens and Dorper sheep roaming the vineyard, Dexter cattle for compost and five horses for ploughing) and many aspects of winemaking are natural: the gravity-fed (although, it must be said, state-of-the-art, ultra-modern) winery, very slow natural-yeast fermentations (one to 11 months), no acidification, no enzymes, no stabilisation (cold or protein) and just a coarse filtration prior to bottling. My 2010 Sauvignon had tartrates in the bottle. This particular wine was fermented in five-year-old 600-litre barrels. (See [here](#) for a short video in which Paul Boutinot explains why he fell for the Waterkloof estate.)

This is Sauvignon like no other. It has staying power, and I would love to taste it in three or four years' time. It does not have Marlborough pungency but it has a fierce sabre-like directness that you would never find in the Loire.

Sadly, not stocked anywhere in the US (it should be: note to the Boutinots) but available in the UK, Germany and South Africa.

For a previous Waterkloof Wine of the week, see [here](#).

[Find this wine](#)