



# VAL DU CHARRON

## *The story behind the wines*

Travel to the heart of the Bovlei Valley and you will find a breathtaking retreat at Val du Charron Wine and Olive Estate, Guesthouse and Spa. The original farm was proclaimed in 1699, and today, as only the sixth family to hold title, Catherine and Stuart Entwistle, who live on the farm with their four-year-old daughter, Ursula and their three Great Danes. Their consciousness to maintain the farm's historic integrity, and re-establish the tradition of wine making on the farm itself can be evidenced in the rehabilitation of the historic buildings and the character of the architecture of the Estate.

It was the desire to change their lifestyle, a mutual love of wine, and Stuart's background in property development, which encouraged the couple to take a leap of faith, and purchase a dilapidated fruit farm. With several derelict and disused buildings, the farm also boasted tremendous soil potential, deep cultural significance and magnificent views of the Bovlei Valley and the surrounding Groenberg and Hawequa mountains. Born and bred in Melville, the move just outside Wellington was as far removed from the big city lights and corporate world of Johannesburg as they could get. An actuary with a Masters of Commerce, a Higher Diploma in Company Law from WITS University, plus a Certificate in Corporate Governance from RAU, it was no surprise that at the age of 26, Catherine was the youngest business leader of Alexander Forbes,

having moved there from a senior manager position at Glenrand MIB. It is this business background however, that has enabled Catherine to turn this once run down property into a financially viable working farm, focusing her efforts on the bulk of the sales and marketing of the wines, the guesthouse as well as market analysis, product and development.

### *Successful Harvests*

The couple started planting the farm in 2007, initially focused on table olives and followed this with the planting of the farm's vines in 2008 and 2009. They planted 18 different varieties based on Catherine's love of blends and market dictates have now seen some of the more different and wonderful varieties grafted over to Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, and Cabernet Sauvignon.

In 2010 they were joined, on a consulting basis, by winemaker extraordinaire, Bertus Fourie, the father of the coffee pinotage. Catherine soon realised that in order to run a 400 ton cellar, one needs not only to drink the product, but understand what goes in to making it and she subsequently qualified as a winemaker at Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute.

With 4 unique ranges of wines (Gold Coast 3 L BIB, Girlfriends lifestyle wines, The Theatre of Wine Blends and VDC Reserve Single Varietals) catering from the





### *The Theatre of Wine*

*Combine a love of storytelling with a wine farm steeped in rich history with a magnificent backdrop, and you get captivating theatre for an interested audience. Val du Charron's unique wine tasting experience, The Theatre of Wine, has been translated into French, German and Dutch, and consists of three acts featuring; the Four white Legs, a new world, white wine blend, Pieter Erasmus - den Deen, a Cape blend and The Black Countess, a Rhone style blend.*

*For more information visit [www.vdcwines.com](http://www.vdcwines.com)*



sweeter palate all the way through to the connoisseur, Val du Charron has experienced tremendous growth in the USA – its primary target market. In fact the market success of the wines resulted in Val Du Charron Wines being nominated as a 'finalist for exporter of the year' both at the Inaugural Premier Business Awards, hosted by the Department of Trade and Industry, as well as at the Cape Chamber of Commerce's exporter of the year awards in 2013. With numerous awards accruing to Val du Charron from IWSC through to Veritas and Michaelangelo, this is testimony also to the quality of products flowing from this young winery.

The winery offers daily wine tasting, and it was in hosting these tastings that Catherine noticed more often than not, that it was the story behind the wine that sold it. This concept of story-telling has now evolved in to the Theatre of Wine. This innovative approach to wine tasting has seen the hospitality side of the business honoured with a Lilizela Tourism Award, as well as being a finalist in Cape Municipality Mayoral Tourism Awards for the best new tourism business of the year 2013. With wine tasting on offer 365 days a year, it is a popular stop for coaches of international visitors having their first taste of South African wines.

### *Luxurious Accommodation*

The guesthouse side of Val du Charron started as guestrooms for visiting friends, and has now evolved into a four-star, eight-room guesthouse, and an additional three luxury five-star suites and spa. Guests are encouraged to join in the lifestyle of wine farming and creating fine wines, not only by enjoying a tasting and fine dining experience, but by touring the state of the art cellar, where they are encouraged to get their hands dirty during harvesting, bottling or labelling. Val du Charron is about experiencing every element that goes into making hand crafted bottle wines.

The winery employs numerous members of the local community for its hospitality activities, the vineyards and olive groves and this ensures that visitors and the export market enjoy a socially conscious wine and olive product of exceptional quality and character. As chairman of Wellington Tourism from 2011 – 2013 Catherine takes a keen interest in the development of agri-tourism and the proceeding social upliftment that naturally follows. ■ Lindsay Grubb

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