

South African Gems: My Aspen Food & Wine Classic Seminar

As some of you know, I spent last week at the Aspen Food & Wine Classic, where amongst a lot of drinking, socializing, and eating, I also gave two wine seminars. The first of those seminars was entitled South African Gems, and was an opportunity for me to showcase some of my very favorite South African wines for a crowd of about 160 people.

Here's what it looked like, courtesy of my little Flip camera placed on the edge of one of the tables.



The video offers the full seminar for those with the patience to watch. The wines I highlighted in the seminar are as follows:

2008 Vins d'Orrance "Cuvee Anais" Chardonnay, Western Cape

Light greenish gold in the glass, this wine has a nose of cold cream and buttered popcorn. In the mouth the wine has a bright, fantastic acidity that brings to life juicy flavors of lemon curd, white flowers, and lemon peel that linger with a really nice minerality in a clean finish. Fresh, vibrant, and full of fruit, this wine is a pleasure to drink. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$25. [Click to buy.](#)

2009 Kleinood "Tamberskloof" Viognier, Stellenbosch

Light greenish gold in the glass, this wine smells of unripe peaches, orange peel, and wet stones. In the mouth it is bright and zingy with great acidity and nice flavors of unripe peach, mandarin oranges, and lemon zest that linger through a long clean finish. The wine lacks the characteristic thick unctuousness of Viognier, which is one of the reasons I like it. Lithe and dancing on the palate, it is quite delicious and in my experience the best example of the variety grown in South Africa. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$n/a. *The wine is sadly not yet available in the U.S. If purchased in South Africa it would cost about \$10 US.*

2005 Sadie Family Vineyards "Sequillo" Red Wine, Swartland

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells fantastically of forest floor, juicy cherry, and cedar aromas. In the mouth the wine has an explosively aromatic and juicy quality that simply forces you to salivate. Flavors of cherry, black cherry, licorice, and cedar swirl amidst faint tannins and a faint rumbling of minerality underneath. An amazing complexity of flavor, balanced so well makes you wonder why anyone bothers to use new oak on wines at all if you can get something this tasty without any. A long finish of cedar and anise rounds out the package. Definitely one of the better wines being made in South Africa today. Score: between **9** and **9.5**. Cost: \$32. [Click to buy.](#)

2005 Kanonkop "Paul Sauer" Red Wine, Simonsberg Ward, Stellenbosch

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells headily of sweet oak and black cherry, with tobacco undertones. In the mouth the wine has a beautiful smoothness to it, a liquid velvet quality that is quite disarming. Flavors of sweet oak, cherry, and tobacco dominate the wine, which is wrapped in faint smooth tannins. To be honest, the oak is a bit strong at this point and needs some time to better integrate to the wine (as I have seen it do in older vintages). A coffee with milk flavor emerges on the long finish. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$35. [Click to buy.](#) *(Note that the 2005 vintage is just being released).*

2006 Stellekaya "Orion" Cabernet Sauvignon Blend, Stellenbosch

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine has a wonderful nose of green herbs, violets, and black cherry aromas. In the mouth it is smooth and supple, with a rippling glassy musculature of firm tannins. Flavors of cedar, cocoa powder, and cherry swirl through the center of the wine, and hints of violets emerge on the finish. Excellent acidity and wonderful balance, despite being a lush, powerful wine. Score: around **9**. Cost: \$35. *This wine is available in the U.S. but can be difficult to find.*

2006 Stark-Conde "Three Pines" Syrah, Jonkershoek Valley

Inky garnet in the glass, this wine smells beautifully of pine, cassis, and black cherry aromas, but with a purity and a resonance that is immediately striking before you even put it in your mouth. On the palate the wine has a remarkable presence that is hard to describe as anything other than clarity. It knows what it is, in the same way a dancer knows how to move with the music. A wonderful welded medley of black cherry, cassis, and wet stones mix with a shifting smoke of incense, spices, and green herbs. Juicy and earthy all at the same time, while sliding across the tongue in a satin slipperiness, this is one hell of a sexy wine. Score: around **9.5**. Cost: \$35. [Click to buy.](#)