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RAISING the barbera

Somehow, while we weren't looking, the Italian varietal, barbera (pronounced bar-bear-ah), snuck into our vineyards. While the majority of the fruit has historically been blended away in other reds, savvy winemakers are increasingly making successful single variety barbera wines, generally from single vineyards too.

Hailing from Italy's north-west region of Piemonte, this grape is generally regarded as a workhorse varietal, but is fast gaining a reputation for making stellar wines. Here at home it's said that barbera was first bottled as a single varietal at Altydgedacht in 1992. However, the farm's history with the grape spans a little longer than that, having been planted in 1928 by Ralph Parker. The estate has since then blended this varietal with cinsault to form a base for port. Barbera can make rich, as well as more light-bodied wines with flavours of both black and red fruits, ranging from dark cherry and blackcurrant to strawberry and plum. There's often an appealing herbaceous edge, and when winemakers really get it right, an intriguing spice spectrum incorporating cinnamon and nutmeg.



FAIRVIEW BARBERA 2016, R111

The barbera vineyard for this wine was planted in 2001 and is on one of the highest sites on the Paarl farm. The wine opens with that signature scent of dried strawberries buffeted by redcurrant and cinnamon spice. The red berries become juicier on the palate and there's a touch of vanilla from the oak, accented with soft tannins.

THE DRIFT GIFT HORSE BARBERA 2015, R560

The grapes for this wine, 50% of which are whole-bunch, are wild fermented in open-top fermenters before being transferred to old, 225L barrels for up to 24 months. It's a beautifully rich example of the varietal: redolent with aromas of mulberry and dark cherry, laced with underlying notes of allspice and fynbos herbaceousness. On the palate the fruit is rich and dark, yet clean with a lively acidity. With the 2015 barbera currently available, we're looking forward to the release of the 2016 vintage later this year.



8 JUNE CAPE TOWN

Get to know the Helderberg farms and vineyards at their annual showcase, hosted at NH Cape Town The Lord Charles hotel in Somerset West. Be among the first to sample the latest wine releases, as well as some of the region's top wines. This year, visitors can look forward to a delicious new addition to the proceedings: a live chocolate installation. There will also be pop-up food stands from local eateries. Tickets are available at wineroute.co.za for R150 pp, which includes a glass, tastings and chocolate from the installation.

23 JUNE VANDERBIJLPARK

Hosted at Stonehaven on Vaal and the Riverside Sun Resort, The Vaal River Wine Expo is the precursor to the annual Vaal River Meander Wine Route, which kicks off on 24 June. At the expo one can expect to taste over 200 wines, all while enjoying live entertainment, wine cruises on the Vaal, food stalls and an art exhibition. Tickets are available at computicket.com for R200 pp, which includes a glass, wine tastings and a complimentary wine tasting cruise on the Vaal River.

DIARY DATES



TRIZANNE SIGNATURE WINES BARBERA 2017, R200

Made from 11-year-old dryland bush vines sourced from Darling, this barbera pops with aromatics: blueberries mingle with redcurrants and strawberries, which leads to more strawberries, cranberries and cherries on the palate. Winemaker, Trizanne Barnard, describes the acid as "crunchy", which she says is so typical of barbera. The wine was matured in 500L vintage French oak barrels for 11 months on the fine lees without fining. It's playful, yet it has depth – a truly interesting wine.



ALTYDGEDACHT WINES BARBERA 2015, R160

Hailing from the hills of Durbanville, this wine was matured in 40% new American oak barrels for 12 months. There's a charming rusticity to this barbera, offering a tangy edge backed by toasty oak. Black cherries and spiced dried fruit on the medium-bodied palate give way to a dry finish.



BESTER BARBERA 2016, R122

From well-known winemaker, Zakkie Bester, is his family winery, Bester Family Wines, in the Swartland. Coming out of the gate swinging, the Bester Barbera is the boutique winery's inaugural red. It's a delightful wine with punchy red and black fruit reminiscent of baking plums and blackberries spiced with nutmeg. The tannins are smooth and supple, leading to an elegantly dry finish.

win!

THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE

One lucky reader will win a 750ml bottle of Rémy Martin XO Cognac valued at R2 200. Dating back to 1874, Rémy Martin is one of France's most revered Cognac brands. Find out the reasons why in our interview with Rémy Martin's cellar master, Baptiste Loiseau, on page 37.

To enter, email your full name, postal address and ID number with COGNAC in the subject line to foodhome@caxton.co.za by 11 June 2018. Competition is open only to South African residents who are 18 years or older.



whole-bunch fermentation

Whole-bunch fermentation is exactly what it sounds like: whole bunches of grapes, stems and all, are picked from the vine and are fermented intact (instead of the grapes being sorted and the stems discarded). This method can add complexity and interest to a wine, though it's not suited for all cultivars.

win!

PORT2PORT HAS PERFECTED THE ART OF THE SHOPPABLE WINE STORY; PUBLISHING INTERESTING READS ON DIFFERENT WINE FARMS AND VARIETALS AS PART OF THEIR ONLINE STORE. VISIT PORT2PORT.WINE FOR MORE DETAILS.

One lucky reader will win a Port2Port hamper inspired by the wines of Piemonte. The hamper contains a Ca' Bianca Barolo 2013; Ca' Bianca Barbera 2014; Fontanafredda Barolo 2012 and a Fontanafredda Barbera 2015. Total prize value: R1 570.



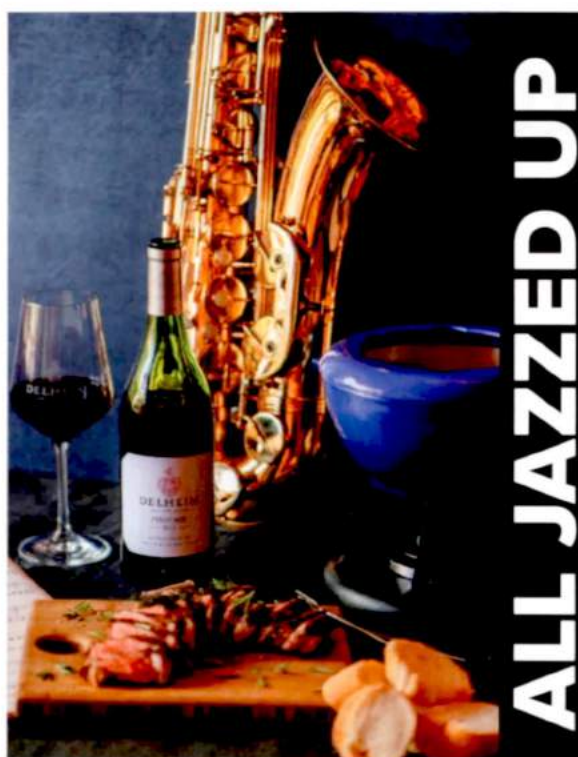
To enter, email your full name, postal address and ID number with **PIEMONTE WINES** in the subject line to foodhome@caxton.co.za by 11 June 2018. Competition is open only to South African residents who are 18 years or older.

THE CIDER DOESN'T FALL far from the tree

De Grendel Three Spades Cider pays homage to the Graaff family's history of apple farming.

"Apples have been part of our country's agricultural heritage for as long as growing grapes and winemaking," says Sir De Villiers Graaff, owner of De Grendel wine farm. "It holds special significance for the Graaff family to honour both traditions."

Their premium cider is made with freshly pressed apple juice from the Elgin terroir. The inspiration for its name and logo comes from the family crest, a spade for each son of Sir De Villiers Graaff, fourth Baronet of Cape Town. Three Spades Cider is available in limited quantities at R35 per 330ml bottle or R530 for a box of 16. Available at the De Grendel tasting room or online at degrendel.co.za or ngf.co.za.



Delheim Wine Estate's popular Jazz & Cheese Fondues are back and will take place every Sunday from 24 June until 26 August 2018. This year the wine estate will be collaborating with the Cape Town Music Academy (CTMA) and Jazz in the Native Yards, offering a fresh line-up of performances showcasing young talent. These cosy events will take place in Delheim's wine tasting cellar, complete with piping hot pots of cheese and a variety of Delheim wines. Tickets are R450, which includes live jazz performances, gluhwein and soup on arrival, as well as a hearty fondue meal and complimentary Delheim wines served between the first and second acts. Visit delheim.com for more details.

some LIKE IT HOT

In the mood for something warm and comforting to sip on a cold winter's night? Try Clover's Super M Chocolate Medium Fat Milk. Sure, it's good enough to serve as is, but why not heat it up, topped with a few marshmallows? Available in three other flavours (Cream Soda, Strawberry and Banana), it comes in a 1L bottle for a recommended retail price of R28,99 at leading supermarkets nationwide. Visit clover.co.za for more product information.



AN OLD FAVOURITE

Looking for something unusual to give Dad this Father's Day? Look no further than Don Papa Rum. This small-batch rum, from the island of Negros Occidental in the Philippines, is made from sugarcane that grows on the foothills of an active volcano. The cane is milled to produce a molasses that acts as a base for the rum, creating a smooth texture and complementing a mix of tantalising flavours on the palate.

DON FASHIONED

Makes 1 EASY 5 mins

WHAT YOU NEED

30ml (2 tbsp) Don Papa Rum
muddled sugar, to taste
handful ice cubes
3 dashes bitters
orange wedge, to garnish (optional)
fresh rosemary sprig, to garnish (optional)

HOW TO DO IT

1 Place the Don Papa rum and muddled sugar in a cocktail shaker. Fill with ice cubes and add 3 dashes of bitters. Shake vigorously until combined, about 10 seconds.
2 Pour the cocktail mixture into a tumbler and garnish with an orange wedge and a fresh rosemary sprig, if desired.
Don Papa Rum is available at Pick n Pay, Norman Goodfellows, Ultra Liquors and Makro for a recommended retail price of R450 per 750ml bottle.



DRINK UP



When Baptiste Loiseau was appointed the youngest-ever cellar master of the Fine Champagne Cognac house, Rémy Martin, the industry watched with bated breath. Three years on, this 37-year-old maestro is proving his mettle and then some. We sat down with Baptiste on his recent trip to Joburg and discovered that, apart from being immensely likeable, he has a great fascination with SA

TELL US WHERE IT ALL BEGAN AND HOW YOU CAME TO LOVE SOUTH AFRICA.

I always knew I wanted to work in an industry connected to the fruits of the earth. I initially specialised in winemaking, because wine is my first love. As a teenager, I read books by J.M. Coetzee and André P. Brink – I was intrigued by the country's culture and how South Africans could be unified while working on their future after such struggles. It was deeply rooted in my heart to understand this... I wanted to meet the people and use my winemaking skills at the same time. So, in 2004, I decided to work at the Rupert and Rothschild winery in Simondium.

EXPLAIN THE TERM "FINE CHAMPAGNE COGNAC".

The Cognac region in France is divided into six different terroirs, which we call crus (pronounced crew) in French. The first two crus of the appellation of Cognac are Grande Champagne and Petite Champagne. At Rémy Martin, we source grapes only from these two crus – this is what makes us unique. Grande Champagne and Petite Champagne are aptly named because the soil found in these two crus is the same soil they have in the Champagne province of France – it's clay with chalk on the surface and it's only in Grande and Petite Champagne that you get this soil.

DESCRIBE COGNAC-MAKING IN A NUTSHELL.

We do a double distillation in small copper pot stills from these two crus to obtain what we call eaux-de-vie or water of life... the unaged spirit. My role is to blend these eaux-de-vie with a higher percentage of Grande Champagne to create the new appellation, or Fine Champagne, which gives greater potential of eaux-de-vie ageing potential. That's why Rémy Martin is the specialist of Fine Champagne Cognac – Rémy Martin XO, the extra-old category, has to be aged for at least 10 years.

FATHER'S DAY IS AROUND THE CORNER... WHY DO YOU THINK RÉMY MARTIN IS THE PERFECT GIFT?

The best way to understand true Cognac made by winegrowers, master distillers and the cellar master is through Rémy Martin; you have to take the time to appreciate it and be surrounded by people who will savour it with you. 🍷