

Porcupine Ridge

In 1652 Jan van Riebeeck, a Dutch surgeon, eager to find a way to relieve the symptoms of scurvy, suggested to the Dutch East India Company that the Cape Province of South Africa would be suitable for growing grapes. Nine years later the first wine was pressed from grapes grown on cuttings brought from France.

The prime grape growing areas of South Africa spread out from Cape Town, and include the Paarl ('pearl' in Afrikaans), which to the east encompasses Franschhoek ('French corner') home of the first French Huguenot settlers. Boekenhoutskloof, its homestead dating from 1784, is located in the Franschhoek Valley.

The owners of Boekenhoutskloof have revamped an ancient cellar, and have installed state-of-the-art equipment as well as a quality maturation cellar. Marc Kent is the winemaker for the Boekenhoutskloof wines as well as the range of wines called Porcupine Ridge.

There are approximately 20 hectares of vines at Boekenhoutskloof - 25% of which are planted to white varieties: Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Viognier; and 75% of which consist of reds: Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. All vineyards employ extended double perold trellises. The soil types are not homogenous, ranging from deep, rich alluvial soils along the river's edge to iron ridge clay on hillsides with areas of decomposed granite.

"It's quite a leap from the Franschhoek hills to Michelin 3-star tables in London, but the speedy rise to celebrity of this comparatively new cellar and farm doesn't daunt Marc Kent. This young...winemaker is earning cult status for the wines he makes...His trademark frankness on wine matters is matched by a single-minded devotion to the syrah (shiraz) grape, plus just a few other specialties, including semillon. Determined not to let anything get in the way of achieving a seriously competitive (northern) Rhône style in the Cape, he's superimposed...a very personalized selection of traditional techniques garnered from idols like Jaboulet, Guigal, and Chapoutier. In the past three vintages he's also brought an almost massianic mission to tannin management in reds; here's one of the (still too rare) new-wave SA labels dedicated to ripe drinkability and sweet tannins. Then there's filtration; like most winemakers, Kent acknowledges that filtering gouges out the heart of a wine. Unlike most, he therefore shuns a filter altogether for his reds, preferring the gentler, longer process of natural fining."

John Platter, South African Wines 2000



A handcrafted range of wines, celebrated for its uncompromising commitment to quality, which carries a distinctive label featuring an original pen and ink of the crested porcupine drawn by leading South Africa wildlife artist, Zakkie Eloff. The crested porcupines inhabit the vineyards of the Boekenhoutskloof homestead.

Sauvignon Blanc: A luminous pale yellow, this wine is fresh and lively with aromas of gooseberries and melon and flavors of the same, with a hint of fig. Rich fruit is balanced by crisp acidity.

Cabernet Sauvignon: 40% is matured for nine months in old Seguin, Moreau and Demptos casks. Deep, dark and rich in color. A nose of blackcurrants with a delicate vanilla oak background. An open and inviting palate leading through layers of intriguing varietal fruit flavors to a firm backbone of tannin and oak. Additional complexity will come with aging.

Merlot: 85% of the wine aged nine months in Dargaud and Jaegle barriques. Deep ruby, with rich purple highlights, exhibiting and intense bouquet of ripe raspberry and vanilla. Filled with juicy raspberry and cherry flavors that are well balanced. A long, velvety finish displays hints of chocolate and delicious cherry.

Syrah: The grapes are sourced chiefly from Wellington, Stellenbosch and Boekenhoutskloof. Fermentation is 'natural' (uninoculated) and is completed in large open wooden fermenters. The majority of the wine was treated with French oak staves, and a fraction remains unwooded. A bold spicy aromatic nose with ripe cherry aromas. The palate hints at freshly ground pepper with a hint of plummy sweetness.