

SOUTH AFRICA'S CUTTING EDGE

Four new projects demonstrate the far-reaching ambitions of Cape winemakers

BY JAMES MOLESWORTH

"Porseleinberg is the newest project from Boekenhoutskloof co-owner Marc Kent. As Kent's popular Chocolate Block and Porcupine Ridge labels have grown in recent years, the Franschoek-based winery has been working primarily with leased vineyards and purchased fruit around the Western Cape, rather than its own estate vineyards. Feeling the rug could be pulled out from him at any time, Kent decided to set up his own vineyards to secure a fruit source that

Porseleinberg

couldn't just disappear. 'For example, our '97 Boekenhoutskloof Syrah was the last time we got fruit from that vineyard. So after that, the wine was different,' says Kent. 'And now, we're getting less fruit from the vineyard we use for our current Syrah. The writing is on the wall.'

Named for the low-running spine of hills that comes out of Riebeeck Kasteel, the Porseleinberg project is extreme viticulture. With large jagged pieces of schist sticking out of the ground and only 18 inches of annual rainfall, it hasn't been easy to get a vineyard established on this windblown spot, but the early signs of quality are there and Kent is happy to have put down roots.

'I was looking for some organic grapes for another label when I came across 10 acres of Syrah and Pinotage vines here,' says Kent. 'It was just a grower selling his fruit, and I said 'I'll take all you can give me and I'll pay cash on delivery.' He asked, 'Why don't you just buy the farm then?' So I did'

After buying the property in 2009, Kent pulled out the Pinotage, kept a bit of the original Syrah and then began his own Syrah plantings. (Some of the original Syrah, which was planted in 1999, went into the early vintages of Eben Sadie's Columella bottling.) Today the 173-acre property has 89 acres of vines, mostly Syrah with a drop of Grenache and Mourvèdre. In-house winemaker Callie Louw manages the estate day-to-day.

Most of the fruit from Porseleinberg will be used for the Boekenhoutskloof and Chocolate Block labels, but the cream of the production will go into the estate's own bottling. It's a Syrah fermented with the stems in concrete vats, then aged in concrete eggs and large wooden *foudres*, mimicking the traditional techniques used in the Rhône Valley, whose wines Kent loves.

The debut 2010 bottling is a blaze of singed mesquite and iron, with smoldering black tea, sanguine and steeped red currant and black cherry notes. Long, taut and fine-grained, this is a wine of distinction that seems to pull everything it can out of the soil. **It looks to be one of the Cape's most exciting new wines."**



Porseleinberg, Swartland

2010 - 93 points

Wine Spectator

July 31, 2013