

# Pinot noir and Cinsaut

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Fons Aaldering, well known Dutch businessman and entrepreneur in the luxury food industry, hankered to own a wine farm. Already owning a delightful home in Spain he thought it appropriate to look for suitable land both in Spain and neighbouring France. After a while he realised that as a foreigner he was not able to buy premium vineyard land as they were “reserved” for the local community.

Having heard so much about South Africa’s successful wine industry, he convinced his wife that they should visit the Cape with the possibility of purchasing a wine farm. In 2004 the Aalderings became the proud owners of a farm in the Devon Valley region on the fringe of Stellenbosch.

“I cannot explain it, but I have always had an affinity for South Africa, a feeling of belonging, of coming home.

“I am not caught up in the dream of creating the picture perfect wine farm. Our focus is firstly on producing great wines. The frills will come later. At this point every decision we make is with our long term goal in mind – to become one of the top ten premium brands in South Africa within the next decade,” said Fons.

Currently 20 hectares are planted with vines, of which 14 hectares are in full production, producing 80 tons of grapes annually. The planted grape varieties include 15-year-old Pinotage, 14-year-old Cabernet Sauvignon, 12-year-old Merlot, 12-year-old Shiraz, and relatively new plantings of Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc.

The vineyards are pruned during the winter season and just before the harvest careful grape selection is carried out on the vines. At this time they manipulate the quantity of grapes on the vine thus ensuring low yields of around 6 tons per hectare, guaranteeing high quality.

The 2007 maiden vintage wines were made from the estate's grapes under the supervision of winemaker, viticulturist and general manager, Helene van der Westhuizen.

“The desire to make great wine is a daily inspiration to me. I believe in balance – from the micro climate, phenolic ripeness, to controlled fermentation and lastly barrel maturation,” says Helene.

The three 2007 Aaldering wines, the Shiraz, Pinotage and the Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot blend were initially released in the Netherlands three months ago. The success in this short time has seen the wines listed in over a 100 top restaurants, including three and two star Michelin restaurants... a great achievement!

Locally, the Aldering wines were launched last week. Helene led us through a tasting of the three 2007 wines explaining her philosophy behind her winemaking. I felt that Helene had made a trio of magnificent wines with the Shiraz showing rich wild herb, cinnamon character with flavours of spicy pepper along with black cherry fruit. The 50/50 Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot blend was deliciously juicy with cherry and blackberry flavour with hints of mint chocolate on the finish.

However the highlight of the three was the Pinotage. The wine showed an intense dark velvet colour, and the aromas of spiced plum and liquorice were sublime. The full-bodied palate was packed with rich raspberry flavour which gently tailed off to a clean spicy vanilla finish.

After the tasting we were fortunate to be able to pair the wines with the excellent menu prepared by Luke Dale-Roberts of La Colombe. The Pinotage perfectly matched the Char Grilled fillet of Chalmar beef, served with a light chasseur sauce, wild mushrooms, tomato and tarragon.

This wine will benefit from at least another five years in your cellar, so visit your wine shop soon as there is limited quantity.