

Celebrating the diversity and global appeal of Sauvignon Blanc

Sauvignon Blanc defies its 'wild white' reputation, appealing to both beginner and expert wine enthusiasts with its diverse flavours. In celebration of International Sauvignon Blanc Day recently, on 3 May 2024, Sauvignon Blanc South Africa gathered South African producers to share insights and trends on this versatile grape.



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Peter Pentz Jr of Groote Post Vineyards, between Darling and Yzerfontein, is a passionate ambassador of Sauvignon Blanc as one of our country's strongest export brands. As the creators behind the cool Seasalter, Groote Post has considerable experience winning over new drinkers for Sauvignon Blanc. "South Africa is a world leader in growing and producing premium class Sauvignon Blanc," says Pentz. "Our wines are highly regarded, and we should be proud of our achievements."

Pentz sums up South African Sauvignon Blanc as a jack of all trades and a master too. "Sauvignon Blanc surely cannot just be squeezed into an asparagus tin," he says. "Firstly, it can be deep and serious, it can be seafood-beautiful, green, or fruity. Secondly, it gives you a taste of the microclimate in your glass, reflecting the character of its origin. Thirdly, it is not just an incredible single cultivar, but a complex wine that welcomes other cultivars such as Semillon."

The flavours of a thin skin

Winemaker **Dawid Nieuwoudt of Cederberg Wines** believes Sauvignon Blanc is the white cultivar that reflects 'site' by far the best. "This aromatic cultivar with its thin skin is extremely sensitive to climate," explains Nieuwoudt. "That's why it shows the beauty of its origin so well in its flavour profiles."

RJ Botha, Kleine Zalze cellar master, and chairman of Sauvignon Blanc SA agrees: "We have so many incredible regions where Sauvignon Blanc is made, and each vineyard contributes something unique to the final wine in the glass."

Paardenkloof Estate, located in Botrivier, is a biodiversity champion that makes cool-climate single vineyard wines. Their wines reflect the minerality of this environment, the cool sea breeze, tropical elements of the sun, and mountain water running through the fynbos. "Our grapes also take longer to ripen, which creates a complex Sauvignon Blanc that can stay in the bottle for a longer time," says **owner Daphne Neethling**.



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30 Oct 2023



Trizanne Barnard of Trizanne Signature Wines put the Cape South Coast on the world map with her Sauvignon Blanc. Diversity is the cornerstone of her winemaking philosophy, directing her sourcing of grapes. "The terroir of the Elim ward with its prevailing winds ensures a very cool ripening season, ideal for Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon," she says.

'Wood' you have the courage

In Elim, at **Strandveld Winery**, winemaker **Conrad Vlok** believes the last five years have brought a lot of change. "Vineyards of 20 years and older, also in newer areas such as Cape Agulhas, have started to produce grapes of exceptional quality," says Vlok. "This, together with winemakers' innovation to develop premium Sauvignon Blanc with deft use of wood, has started to produce Sauvignon Blanc wines that can compete with our top Chardonnay and Chenin."

According to Vlok, winemakers have new courage with the insight of some of the best French coopers to make excellent Sauvignon Blanc aged in wood. "The light roasting of the barrels, which brings out soft, sweet vanilla flavours in the wine together with the long yeast contact in the barrels, is producing a new generation of top Blanc Fume style wines from the cooler areas," he says.

Winemaking at **Cape Point Vineyards** opened her eyes to Sauvignon Blanc, says **winemaker Riandri Visser**. "Here we farm with the wind and Sauvignon Blanc, it's a fine balance between what we can control and what nature teaches us every year," Visser explains. "At Cape Point, it makes sense to make Sauvignon Blanc aged in wood. The wine is the work of art, and the wood forms the framework."

The vintage is not the expiry date

Nieuwoud says it is an absolute myth that one must drink Sauvignon Blanc in the same year that it was made. "If Sauvignon is planted in the right place," he says, "you can drink it ten to fifteen to twenty years after the vintage. The optimum drinking time often only begins 18 months after the vintage."

Warren Ellis, winemaker at Neil Ellis Wines, believes that more needs to be done for consumers to better understand older white wines. "I would like to commend all the sommeliers who are making a special effort to use older Sauvignon Blanc in their food and wine-tasting experiences," says Ellis.

As not all styles allow ageing, Ellis advises that a good Sauvignon Blanc that only shows its best after a year or two in the bottle should still be fresh, fruity, and lively.

The proof is in the accolades, with Delaire Graff Coastal Cuveé Sauvignon Blanc 2017 winning the South Africa Revelation Trophy and a Grand Gold medal in the 2024 Sauvignon Selection by Concours Mondial de Bruxelles (CMB). Also, out of 19 five-star Sauvignon Blancs, a total of 16 older vintages, from 2020 to 2022, star in the 2024 Platter Guide.

More daring in the vineyard and the cellar

Part of South Africa's Sauvignon Blanc success story is innovative winemakers who dare to experiment with the "wild white" cultivar.

At Cape Point, Sauvignon Gris was recently planted to be included in their flagship Isliedh. According to Visser, this is a first for South Africa, with 7% Sauvignon Gris blended with 66% Sauvignon Blanc and 27% Semillon in the Cape Point Vineyards' Isliedh 2022. With 96 points in Tim Atkin's 2023 Report, the sixth highest point for a white wine, it can be enjoyed until 2032.

"Sauvignon Gris ripens earlier than Sauvignon Blanc, it has a very nice fruity character and slightly lower acidity than our Sauvignon Blanc," says Visser. "This gives more complexity, almost like a little perfume that we put on to emphasise the Sauvignon Blanc."

[Sauvignon Blanc SA](#) invites everyone to celebrate International Sauvignon Blanc Day over the weekend of Friday 3 May to Sunday 5 May, together with producers and wine friends around the world.

Visit @SauvignonBlancSA on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#). In celebration of SauvBlancDay, five followers stand a chance to win two boxes of wine with six South African and six international Sauvignon Blancs from older vintages.

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