

Sterhuis wins both top white wine and top red wine from the Bottelary Ward at this years Terroir Wine Awards.

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Sterhuis Chardonnay and Astra Red wins numerous awards at the annual Terroir Wine awards - the Sterhuis Chardonnay 2006 has been chosen as top Chardonnay in Stellenbosch, as well as top white wine from the Bottelary ward. The Astra 2004, a blend of 60% Merlot and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, has been chosen as the top red blend from Stellenbosch as well as the top red wine from the Bottelary ward.

" Because it is all about terroir, the international term for a specific wine terrain, the wines are judged according to the quality of the product combined with distinctive characteristics created by the soil and climate in the specific area. It was clear that the winemakers did a lot of work with these wines to portray their origin without sacrificing quality. Only the terrain and a dedicated viticulturist and winemaker can produce these results," says Charl Theron, coordinator of the judging and convenor of the panel.

This is the second year in a row that the Sterhuis Chardonnay has been awarded in this competition and shows the great promise and consistency of Sterhuis Chardonnay. Winemaker, Johan Kruger, uses minimal intervention in his approach to winemaking and the Sterhuis philosophy is to have the vineyard express itself in the wine, rather than unnatural cellar techniques to create a fruit bomb of a wine. The Chardonnay grapes are picked in the early hours of the morning and put in the press without crushing or destemming the grapes. A light pressing cycle where only the free run juice is pumped straight to barrel without settling out solids ensures enough turbidity in the juice to initiate natural fermentation. Normally, after day five or six, the wine starts its slow, long fermentation, because there is no yeast added to the juice, the population of native yeasts are very small and therefore the fermentation starts of late and can take up to a full year until completed. After 11 months in French oak, with regular battonage, to encourage the ongoing fermentation, the wine was racked in January to receive a light filtration prior to bottling.

"We are delighted with being awarded for two of our wines in this competition!" says father and son team, Andre and Johan Kruger. The Astra is a new blend consisting of the five top red wine barrels in the cellar. After tasting through the barrels in June 2005, there were three Merlot barrels and two Cabernet Sauvignon barrels that had great length and finesse with a very elegant structure. The barrels were blended after 16 months in French oak and spent another 6 months in the same barrels as a blend to integrate and marry the flavours. Then, after a total of 22 months in 100% new French oak barrels, the wine was racked and bottled, no fining or filtration was done on this wine, so a slight sediment might be expected in the bottom of the bottle, but this ensures that there was no loss of flavour by filtration of fining the wine.

"We did not plan to make a blend at this stage, but the blend just jumped at us, and here at Sterhuis we listen to the wine every step of the way!" says Johan Kruger, and he will know how to listen to his barrels after being Awarded Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year in 2005 and being runner up in the Diners Club Winemaker of the Year Award in 2005 for the Sterhuis 2003 Merlot and in 2006 for the Sterhuis 2005 Chardonnay.

Both wines, the Chardonnay and the Astra, is still very youthfull and shows great ageing potential of at least five years plus.

The Chardonnay retails from R 80.00 per bottle and the Astra from R 150.00 per bottle and are available from the cellar door by appointment or at exclusive wine outlets in Cappe Town and Gauteng. There are very limited quantities available so do not wait before it is all gone!

For more information contact Sterhuis Wines at 083 411 0757 or send me an email to: johan@sterhuis.co.za