

LEARN A BIT MORE ABOUT

CABERNET FRANC



Argentina has its Malbec, Chile its Carmenere – is Cabernet Franc the future black grape of South Africa? Probably not but it's increasingly being recognised as yet another Bordeaux grape variety which does better in sunny Southern climes than it does in its homeland of France. Older than Cabernet Sauvignon but less known, South African winemakers are treating Cab Franc with ever-growing confidence and respect..

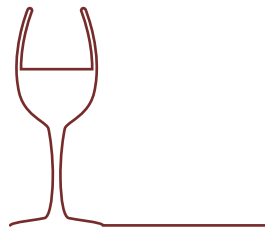
WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Cabernet Franc likes a warm climate but doesn't like to be cooked. The varying terroirs and micro-climates around Stellenbosch suit it to perfection, in particular the cooler side of the town, en route to Somerset West. Cabernet Franc likes well-drained soils so sites with a bit of a slope work very well indeed allowing maximum exposure to long, sunny afternoons – you'll find great examples in the foothills of the Simonsberg and along the Banghoek Valley heading towards Franschhoek as well.

OPTIMAL SERVING TEMPERATURE:

15-20°C

* according to wine.co.za



WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

Cabernet Franc is often described as being a 'green Cabernet Sauvignon' which can confuse winelovers who may easily believe that it simply tastes unripe. This is not the case at all. The greenness of Cabernet Franc is more of a ripe herbaceousness, a fresh green pepper hint mixed in with perfumed aromatics such as cedar, violets, liquorice and spice. And of course all these forthright and pungent aromas are rounded out and softened by healthy dollops of black berries, cherries and currants. For palates bored by Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet France can be a refreshing and exhilarating change and it's often used to spice up Bordeaux blends as well as working well on its own.



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WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

Cabernet Franc is actually one of the parents of Cabernet Sauvignon (along with Sauvignon Blanc believe it or not!) so it's a much older variety and hails from both the Bordeaux and Loire Valley regions. In Bordeaux, it tends to be used much more in the Right Bank wines of St Emilion and Pomerol, whilst further north in the Loire Valley, it makes lesser-known labels such as Chinon and Bourgueil. It often struggles to ripen in France and it is SA's exposure to lovely sunshine and the soft roundness with freshness which is attracting notice from commentators such as Jancis Robinson, Tim Atkin and more. Very successful blends in SA copy the Right Bank model and mix Cab Franc with Merlot to excellent effect.

But it's the straight Cab Francs which really reveal the potential of the grape in SA – deep, dark, intense but with a softness and savouriness seldom found in France.

WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

Cab Franc is a very food-friendly wine, matching all the usual things you'd think of with a black grape ie meats and cheeses. It has great acidity as well and its spicy edge means that it can handle quite rich food – think springbok stews or potjies and savoury meaty terrines. Occasionally, you'll also find dark chocolate hints which means lighter, less tannic versions can often handle the spice associated with a Mexican chilli/choc sauce.

