## CHENIN BLANC

If there is going to be a 'Proudly South African' white grape, that grape variety will definitely be Chenin Blanc. SA has more Chenin than any other country and not only that, we have some of the oldest Chenin vines in the world producing grapes which are concentrated and complex, interesting and exciting. Previously-known as 'Steen' people expected it to be inexpensive and sweet in the old days and it's taken some time for the change in style to be fully-understood. But now Chenin is finally becoming appreciated with critics and pundits around the world lauding it for making and contributing to some of SA's finest

#### WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

In South Africa, most Chenin is grown in slightly-warmer areas with regions such as Worcester and the Orange River having great swathes of vineyards producing vast quantities of relatively unexciting grapes. But for quality Chenin, you need to go for old vines and these are mostly to be found in areas such as Stellenbosch (where the oldest Chenin vines in SA are grown), Paarl and the Swartland. Chenin also makes some of the world's finest dessert wines and the misty foothills of the Du Toitskloof Mountains around the back of Nederburg in Paarl are particularly suitable for this style of wine.

#### WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

Chenin can offer a wide range of flavours depending on the winemaker's whim. Some of them make it almost in a Sauvignon Blanc style – crisp, clean, appley-fresh – whereas others prefer a bit more richness and ripeness with stone fruit, quinces and orange citrus being common descriptions. And of course, Chenin likes oak as well which can lead to a bit of confusion over styles. Unlike Chardonnay, most Chenin Blancs don't indicate clearly on the label whether they are unwooded or unoaked and it can be very confusing for consumers. Check out the description at the back and if it uses words such as 'creamy' 'toasty' or 'spicy', expect there to be some judiciously-used oak.





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#### WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

Chenin Blanc is originally from the Loire Valley in Northern France where it is responsible for wines such as Vouvray, Savennieres and the sweet wines of Coteaux du Layon. Here in SA, Chenin is used for lots of different styles of wine including sparkling wines, dessert wines, simple off-dry and semi-sweet wines and elegant, complex versions of the very highest quality. It forms the basis of most brandy in this country and in recent years has found itself also forming the backbone of the newest and most exciting wine category to come out of SA — white Cape blends, generally based on old vine Chenin with any combination of Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Viognier, Semillon Roussanne and more.

# OPTIMAL SERVING TEMPERATURE: 7-12°C





#### WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

Chenin is like Chardonnay with a style for every dish! Use simple, unwooded, crisp and fresh versions as you would use a Sauvignon Blanc – seafood, shellfish and salads spring to mind. Riper versions are dreams with any part of a pig – the bouncy acidity cuts through the fatty meat and the ripe stone fruit flavours provide the perfect foil for juicy pork, whilst full-bodied and off-dry versions handle spicy foods (especially aromatic Cape Malay dishes) with ease.





### How does the flavour develop?

#### **VINEYARD INFLUENCE:**

Apple, Citrus, Floral, Straw, Melon, Guava, Grassy

#### **WINE MAKING INFLUENCE:**

Almond, Honey, Quince, Oak, Spices

#### **BOTTLE AGING INFLUENCE:**

Smokey, Pencil Shavings, Toast, Peach, Apricot, Honey,

