

RED BLENDS



South Africa is a country of red blends. From the very beginnings of winemaking in this country, winemakers have tweaked and added small amounts of different varieties to help add texture and fruit, to soften and excite so that many wines labelled as a single variety, in fact contain large dollops of other, often less-regarded, but now recognised as highly-important varieties. Traditionally, wines were filled out with 'inferior' grapes such as Cinsault and Grenache but recent revivals of both varieties have seen these old vines valued for their juiciness and ageability.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

How long is a piece of string?? When it comes to red blends, the world is very much your oyster. There are traditional blends which hark back to France such as a Bordeaux Blend containing any combination of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec or a Rhône Blend consisting of Syrah/Shiraz, Grenache, Viognier, Mourvèdre and more. A Cape Blend generally contains around 30% of Pinotage making it proudly South African, Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz is a popular blend in Australia and in SA too and the recent rise in Italian varieties has seen some interesting combinations and experimentations with grapes which are not normally blended in their home country. With styles and prices to suit all tastes and pockets, it seems the only limits are the winemaker's imagination.

WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

Once again – options are endless! Expect lavish black fruits with hints of tobacco and cedar from Bordeaux blends, lots of spice and pepper and plummy-fruit from Shiraz-based ones and great acidity and tannins from Italian grapes – but these are just starting points and the best way to work out if you like a blend is simply to try it. If you know you prefer particular grapes over others (perhaps you're a Cab-man or a Shiraz-sweetheart) then start with a wine which contains large dollops of your fave variety, but expect to have your horizons and tastebuds stretched and challenged in every direction, hopefully discovering something exciting and delicious along the way.



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WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

The important thing to remember about blends of any colour is that when it comes to the best of them, it's all down to the maths. In a great blend, 1 + 1 must make 3. If not 4. Blends shouldn't be seen as a way to 'hide' inferior wines or grapes but rather as something which is greater than the sum of its parts. The fact that most flagship wines from the Cape's top wineries are blends speaks volumes and without a doubt, some of the finest and longest-loved South African wine icons owe their longevity and complexity to combinations of grapes giving layers of fruit and flavour.

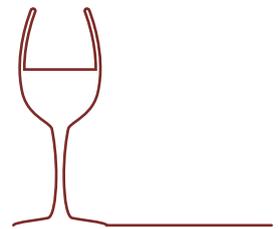
WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

Everything! Red blends are incredibly versatile and will go with any kind of meat or cheesy dishes, stand up well to pastas and pizzas and seem made for almost anything cooked on a braai. Whether it's chilling by the fire or watching the Boks on TV, there's bound to be the perfect red to go with any occasion.

OPTIMAL SERVING TEMPERATURE:

15-20°C

* according to wine.co.za



How does the flavour develop?



VINEYARD INFLUENCE:

Berries, Black cherry, Cinnamon, Cloves, Nutmeg, Liquorice, Herbaceous, Eucalyptus, Mulberry, Pepper, Plum

WINE MAKING INFLUENCE:

Chocolate, Coffee, Cedar, Soya, Prune, Earthy, Mushrooms, Leather, Cigar box, Tobacco leaf

BOTTLE AGING INFLUENCE:

Vanilla, Cloves, Nutmeg, Smokey, Bacon, Cedar, Almonds, Pencil shavings