



Wines tasted at De Trafford Winery.

## More South African Elixirs

HAVING HAD such wonderful wines on our first day in South Africa, I was concerned about maintaining this level. We started with a tour of the beautiful gardens of Le Lude Winery. This was followed by a tasting of several of their sparkling wines especially the artisanal Agrafé bottle fermented, sparkling wine. The brut Agrafé and Rosè Agrafé were very good with the final wine Vintage Cuveè Agrafé, being the highlights of the tasting.

After this eye-opener, we went to Mulderbosch winery in search of its single vineyard Chenin Blancs. Greg Pearson and I went to a Mulderbosch tasting and lunch in Chicago a year earlier and were very impressed with these wines. The winemaker, Adam Mason, invited us to visit on our trip and although he was on vacation, he made sure we were well-received. We sampled several

of the large number of wines, but focused almost solely on the rare single vineyard Chenin Blancs. We started with the 2014 Block S2 Chenin Blanc from shale soils. It showed good freshness and acidity at this youthful time in its life. The nose detected citrus with great minerality on the palate.

The 2014 Block W was initially more reserved with a touch of bitterness which resolved. The golden hue indicated more oak, but the resulting wine was full-bodied, creamy, and dry. The winery suggests this wine with shellfish, spicy food, lean fish, and mild and soft cheese. We finished the 2014s with the Block A. This wine was the most off-dry of the three. It showed lots of evidence of fruit—namely pineapple, quince, and dried apricot. The wine would be fine by itself, or with a light fruit desert or as an aperitif. Anticipating we would love these wines, Adam allowed us to

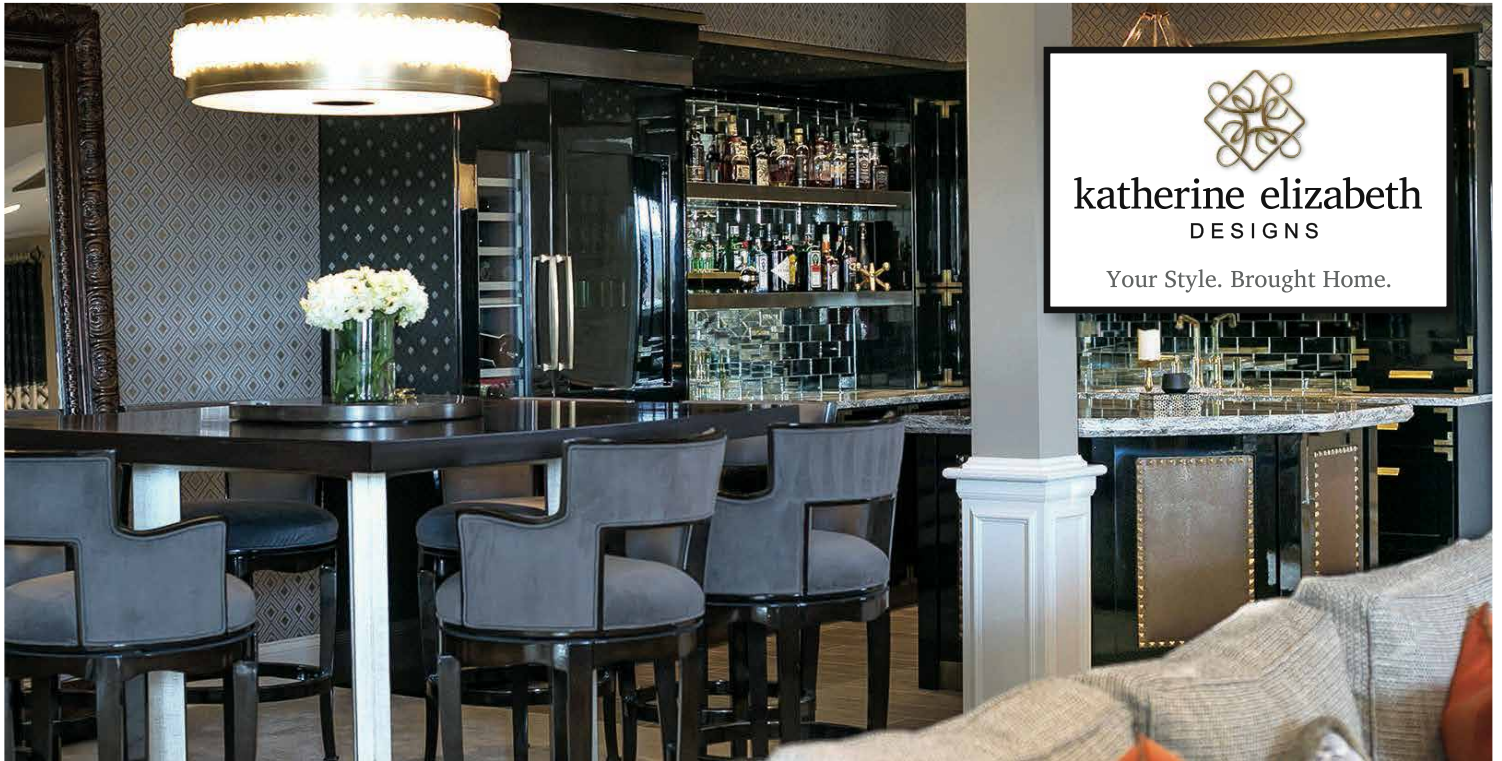
buy the last two cases of each wine before the few remaining bottles were consigned to the library.

We finished our visit with a tasting of the same single vineyard Chenin Blancs from 2016. This vintage was the first of the drought vintages (2016-18) and in general, the wines tasted similar to their 2014 counterparts, except they are more intense due to water scarcity and will probably have a longer life. We bought a similar amount of this vintage so that we can compare these rare wines over time.



Tasting wine at the De Trafford Winery with owner David Trafford.

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*Tasting sparkling wines at Le Lude*

### A VISIT TO DE TRAFFORD

The other winery highlight of the day was De Trafford. It is located at the end of Blaauwklippen Road in the mountains above Stellenbosch. Since it was established 25 years ago by architect David Trafford and his artist wife Rita, it has been considered one of South Africa's best wineries. Our guide was stunned that our tour and tasting was hosted by David, as she had never met him on any other visit.

We were treated to many wines and all of them were excellent to outstanding in quality. The most memorable were the Chenin Blanc, Syrah, and Elevation. The 2016 Chenin Blanc was most interesting. Distinctly different

from any other Chenin Blancs encountered on this trip, the wine was full and rich evidencing ripe, green citrus fruits along with notes of peaches, pears, and almonds. It finishes fresh with spice overtones.

The 2015 Syrah is located 353 meters above sea level. This location means cooler, wetter weather during the growing season and a much warmer and drier ripening period. The clay and rich, but steep well-drained granite soils produce a unique powerful wine with high alcohol, yet complex flavors that take time to unfold in the glass. The flavors include blueberry fruit, pepper, spice, and mineral complexity. The 2015 Syrah 353 pairs well with lamb and steak.

Their flagship wine is Elevation 393, which is a blend of principally Cabernet Sauvignon blended with Merlot and Syrah, and often a small amount of Cabernet Franc to accent spice and herbs. This wine will drink well for up to 20 years. There is limited distribution of this highly-regarded winery's wines in the United States. Enjoy! A vôtre santé! 🍷



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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