



Winemaker Jaqueline Haasbroek on her balcony overlooking the valley.



Jaqueline Haasbroek discusses the wines served.

Wines Way Down Under

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY 2018, a small group of us started a long journey to South Africa. After changing planes in Amsterdam, we left for Cape Town. We arrived 25 hours after leaving Chicago and were taken to a beautiful small resort, The L'Ermitage in Franschhoek. Our streak of good luck started the next day when Greg Pearson booked a reservation for himself and me at Mullineux & Leeu Family Wines nearby. Essentially, neither of us knew much about the winery before our visit, but now we are both ardent apostles. Owned historically by South African Chris Millineux and his American winemaker wife Andrea Millineux, it has been among the best wineries in South Africa for some time. In the past few years, Analjit Singh, an Indian health care magnate and wine lover, made a major investment in the firm and the quality of wines has improved even more.

We tasted the entire lineup of wines and were



The Mullineux & Leeu Family Winery

very impressed. In fact, of the many hundreds of wineries I've visited over the past 50 years, I can truthfully say this is the only winery whose entire portfolio would be welcomed in my cellars. Almost all the grapes are sourced from the Swartland region which is widely heralded for its quality.

While all the wines were impressive, we were particularly impressed by the Chenin Blancs and Syrahs. My favorite Chenin Blanc was the "Quartz" designation although all were very good, followed closely by the "Granite" designation. Both wines were intense with a great mouthfeel from the minerality of the soil. They were proba-



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Here are the wines tasted on the trip.

bly my most impressive wines of the trip and this from a person who does not much appreciate Chenin Blanc except for those from Savennières (especially Baumard, Le Papillon) in the Loire Valley. The most impressive Syrah was the “Iron” designation and it was beautifully made. It has a rich mouthfeel with intense minerality. These wines were purchased by our group and enjoyed on the two-week subsequent Crystal Symphony cruise on the Indian Ocean. Mullineux wines have limited distribution in the United States and must be ordered direct from the winery.

One of our best experiences of the trip involved a braai, or barbecue, at the Franschoek home of one of South Africa’s smallest, but great wineries owned by Jaqueline Haasbroek. Jaqueline Haasbroek is the owner and winemaker for her winery My Wyn. The house is on top of a mountain with a fabulous view from the open windows. The food was excellent and several courses were served culminating with a large steak. The wines served with each course were very good, but one wine clearly stood out. It was the My Wyn Les Grandes Horizontales Blanc 2015 which is a blend of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Semillon with a small amount of Viognier. It is complex and quite fragrant. Only the Chardonnay sees new oak barrels but is not overpowering in the least adding just a little richness. It is a great food wine, but very enjoyable on its own. The other memorable wine was the My Wyn Shiraz Viognier 2015. With layers of wild berries, spice, and violets, it complemented the steak very well. As we bid farewell to Jaqueline and her husband and neighbor chef, it was hard to imagine a finer experience given her passion for her impressive wines, the outstanding views from the dining room and the friendliness of our hosts. A vôtre santé! U



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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