

## A VINE TIME

## Bordeaux without eye-watering price

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THE great red wines from Bordeaux, France, are sought-after the world over, many commanding eye-wateringly expensive prices, so it's no wonder that winemakers all over the world seek to emulate this classic blend – South Africans being no exception.

Blending some or all of the five varietals allowed in Bordeaux – cabernet sauvignon or merlot usually leading, with cabernet franc, petit verdot and/or malbec in smaller quantities – these are full-bodied wines with great ageing potential, each component adding its own particular character and supplementing the weak points of the other.

The real French deal costs from R200 to more than R3 000 for a 2009 Château Figeac at Caroline's Fine Wines in Cape Town, while a 2010 Château Lafite Rothschild from London wine merchants Berry Bros & Rudd will set you back a hefty R20 000 (that's per bottle!).

Even at R400 to R1 000 a bottle, top-tier South African examples like Kanonkop Paul Sauer, Mvemve Raats M R de Compostella, De Toren and Vilafonté Series C, are arguably great value, internationally competitive on quality, and under-priced in the global market.

Thankfully there are some great local Bordeaux blends a little closer to being pocket-friendly.

Wine critic Neil Pendock is a fan of The High Road in Stellenbosch, naming their Classique 2012 (R145 cellar door) a worthy "luxury replacement" for Kanonkop Paul Sauer after its 2012 vintage reached the "stratospheric" price of more than R1 600



**CHARACTER APLenty:** Jason Hill's winemaker Ivy du Toit uses all 'big five' varietals in her deep and rich Izak's Reserve 2013. Layers of flavour and wood deliver depth and richness, with some spice on the finish

at last year's Cape Winemakers' Guild auction.

Following the French négociant example, The High Road co-owners Mike Church and Les Sweidan don't own any vineyards but rather source the best quality grapes from the "golden triangle" of Stellenbosch, with Cabernet Sauvignon as the backbone of their two Bordeaux-style wines.

Classique 2012 is roughly equal parts cabernet and merlot, rounded out with 11% cabernet franc. The result is elegant and velvety smooth, intense but with a light touch, flavours and aromas of vanilla and roasted dark fruit, drinking beautifully now and definitely ageable.

The 2012 Director's Reserve (R295) is a big, beautiful, full-bodied show-stopper with more wood maturation (16 months in new French oak) and more cabernet, at 61%, giving the wine power and structure. Its rich, concentrated fruit with a hit of dark chocolate is seriously good now – one can only imagine it developing even more with age.

Stellenbosch may be "King of Cabernet" territory, but there are some interesting things happening with Bordeaux blends elsewhere in the winelands.

At the foot of the Slanghoek Mountain in the Boland, Jason's Hill winemaker Ivy du Toit uses all "big five" varietals in her deep and rich Izak's Reserve 2013 (R190 cellar price), named in honour of the many family characters called Izak since the first in 1834.

The wine has character aplenty – rich and intense aroma and flavour, concentrated berries and leatheriness.

Layers of flavour and well-integrated wood deliver depth and richness, with some spice on the finish. It opens up beautifully in the glass and evolves with each sip. Really a stunner.

Meanwhile in Franschhoek, Leopard's Leap take their signature of good value, food-friendly wines a step further with the Culinaria range, wines made especially to complement good food, and available only at the winery.

Petit verdot and malbec feature strongly in the 2013 Culinaria Grand Vin (a bargain at R95), lending depth of colour to the lusciously dark cab-led blend, Malbec bringing spice and texture and Petit Verdot its floral notes.

There's a fynbos woody, character and a peppery zing. So the food suggestion of roast lamb with herbs like rosemary or thyme makes sense – the tannins will cut through the fattiness of lamb, with the gentle fruit complementing the delicate flavour of the meat and the herb flavours in both food and wine all playing nicely together.



**LUXURY REPLACEMENT:** The High Road's Classique 2012 is a pocket-friendly replacement for Kanonkop Paul Sauer