

Story Teller Wine Company

I would like to introduce you to a man named Bob Lynde. Bob is a fellow Portlander and he is known to a lot of people in the wine business from his days as the owner of a highly successful wine import company called Cape Classics. Part of Bob's job was to visit South Africa several times a year in order to find new wineries to bring into the Cape Classics fold. It was during one of these many trips that Bob's heart was stolen by a medical crisis that rages to this day in Africa. Bob couldn't understand why more wasn't being done by international relief efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic that was threatening to wipe out large numbers of people and potentially destabilize governments. But what could one man do? Bob soon figured it out.



South Africa has 350 years of winemaking history and their wines continue to improve in leaps and bounds. And when you consider how stable their currency has been against the US dollar, the wines from South Africa also represent quite a bargain. These two factors combined caused British wine critic Jancis Robinson to remark in a recent column, "one of the great mysteries of the world of wine is why South African wine is not more celebrated." So Bob Lynde decided to kill two birds with one bottle by creating Bob's African brands. Bob took advantage of all the relationships he had cultivated with some of South Africa's most prominent wineries to gain their help in making wines that would be really good and also help promote his cause. For every bottle of Bob's African wine that is sold, Bob donates 10% of that sale to Africare and other non-profit international aid agencies that work to reduce the ravages of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa. Bob's company also funds a scholarship program for a U.S. volunteer aid worker to work in South Africa. Thanks to the sales of these wines, in 2007, Kendra Crump of Portland, Oregon began a year working at an orphanage and community center in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Sure, there are a lot of wines out there these days that donate portions of their proceeds to various charitable causes. I have certainly tasted through my fair share. But it always seemed kind of short-sighted to me if the wine wasn't very good. You might get one sale with a worthwhile cause and a catchy label but wouldn't it be better if you got repeat sales? That's why I was so pleased when I tasted through the African wines with Bob. These are solidly good wines, wines that sell for upwards of 12.00 a bottle in a lot of places. But once you try them you wouldn't bat an eye if you were told they were 15.00 to 16.00 a bottle. In fact, the Bob's African wines have been served to many heads of state, including the President of the US and the First Lady, at various high-end diplomatic dinners in the nation's capital. Typical of South African wines these days, the African wines deliver a lot of quality for a very modest price. I liked all of the Bob's African wines, but I thought these three really stood out.

2007 Bob's African Sauvignon Blanc 10.00

I just about fell off my chair when I first tried this wine. Ten bucks? I thought Bob was kidding. This wine was made, with Bob's assistance, by one of South Africa's most colorful winemakers, Adi Badenhorst at Rustenberg Winery. Rustenberg's wine history dates back to 1682 and they have been bottling wine at this location non-stop since 1892. We're talking 100% Coastal Region fruit here from Stellenbosch. This wine was made with fruit from the same 20-year old Sauvignon Blanc vineyards that Rustenberg uses to make their own wine. And while it was made in 100% stainless steel tanks, Bob asked Adi to let the juice stay on the lees for two full months to add body and complexity to the wine. Needless to say, this is pretty good juice for ten bucks. It has full, rich aromas and flavors of tropical fruit (think guava), classic gooseberries and just the slightest trace of freshly-cut grass. There's even just the slightest trace of chalky slate here. I can remember the days when you were able to get zippy Sauvignon Blancs from New Zealand that were this good. Now most of those wines cost 18.00 to 25.00. Bob told me that he considers Simon Barlow, Rustenberg's visionary owner, to be his Sauvignon Blanc mentor. Clearly, the apple (or gooseberry in this case) hasn't fallen far from the tree.

2006 Bob's African Pinotage 10.00

Yes, in the wrong hands Pinotage can be downright nasty. If you have ever had a Pinotage from a cooperative where they don't drop crop in the vineyards, you may have had the all-too typical old socks in a gym bag drinking experience. It's a special kind of funkiness you will never forget. Luckily, that is not the case with Bob's wine. Bob worked closely with Carl Allen, a legendary winemaker at Nelson's Creek, to gain an understanding of how to make a Pinotage that is more fruit-forward and accessible. Besides reducing the number of tons per acre harvested, Bob learned it was important to pick the fruit later, thus increasing the natural sugars of the grapes. This helps in making a wine that isn't overly dry and tannic. Bob uses fruit from 16-35 year old Pinotage vines in the Tulbagh valley region of the Western Cape to create a wine that will instantly remind you that one of the parents of Pinotage was Pinot Noir. This wine is soft and fleshy, with lots of baked cherries and black currants shimmying all over your palate. There's just the tiniest bit of earthiness here, but it will just make you want to whip up some BBQ ribs to go along with this wine.

2005 Bob's African Shiraz 10.00

This is the wine that really caught my attention. It's made with relatively young vines that are grown in the granite and shale-laden soils of the Swartland region. This is an area where a lot of very famous South African wineries have been ramping up their efforts to grow Syrah vines. After tasting this little gem I can see why. The nose is pure Rhone River Valley with its aromas of bacon fat and fresh-ground white pepper. All its lacking to qualify as a perfect ringer in a blind tasting is some violets. The palate is nice and slick, with lots of smoky blackberry fruit flavor. Pork or lamb, take your pick because either one will be delicious with this wine.

Folks, you can never have too many ten dollar "go to" wines hanging around the house. Here are three wines that can be opened and quaffed without guilt any night of the week. And not only are they great values, every bottle you buy will help in the fight against Africa's HIV/AIDS crisis. **I'm hoping all of you out there will be willing to try at least a few bottles of the Bob's African wines. But if you put together a case of twelve bottles (mix them up however you please) the price drops to 9.00 a bottle. That's 108.00 for a case of good wine that helps a great cause.** How can you beat that?

Friday Night Wine Tasting, 6:00-9:00PM, September 19: the Big Blowout

Don't miss this one folks. There will be a slew of newly released Oregon Pinot Noirs getting poured, along with some pretty serious wines from Washington, Italy and France. We will even have some Storyteller fans visiting from Alaska that night. And none of them, as far as I know, is running for political office!

On Friday, all rose wines will be 25% off as we say goodbye to summer the best way I know how.

We will be closed this Saturday so be sure to catch us Friday night!

Cheers,
Michael Alberty
Head Storyteller

Visit www.StorytellerWine.com >>
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