“Great wine is about nuance, surprise, subtlety, expression, qualities that keep you coming back for another taste. Rejecting a wine because it is not big enough is like rejecting a book because it is not long enough, or a piece of music because it is not loud enough.”

- Kermit Lynch
Cabernet Franc in South Africa

Lizette Tolken

31 January 2012

Dissertation submitted to the Cape Wine Academy in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the diploma of Cape Wine Master.
DECLARATION

I, Lizette Tolken, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the diploma of Cape Wine Master to the Cape Wine Academy. It has not been submitted before for qualification of examination in this or any other educational organization.

___________________
Lizette Tolken

Date: 31 January 2012
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the winemakers who devoted their time and energy to answer my questionnaires and to Andy Roediger for assisting me with the phenolic ripeness aspect, and providing me with samples.
SUMMARY

In Bordeaux, Cabernet Franc is a minor grape (at third place in the trio), but it is used in most blends. One of the world’s most expensive wines, Château Cheval Blanc, contains a high proportion (almost 70%) of Cabernet Franc. It is valuable for its violet and spice aromas, and finesse, which it can contribute to a blend. Together with Merlot, it dominates in St.-Émilion on Bordeaux’s Right Bank.

The Loire’s red wines, made predominantly from Cabernet Franc, are still largely underrated outside of France, perhaps because they are typically characterized by delicacy, rather than power.

Cabernet Franc can make wines of great subtlety and the varietal bottling is promising. However, general wine consumers do not know much about this variety—they expect it to be the same as Cabernet Sauvignon, or they confuse the two. The majority of wine drinkers have probably never enjoyed a Cabernet Franc, and only a minority probably really know it.

Cabernet Franc is in fact the original ‘Cabernet’ grape, being the parent of Cabernet Sauvignon (a cross of Sauvignon Blanc with Cabernet Franc). It ripens earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon, making it ideal for cool climates.

Fascinating single-varietal Cabernet Franc wines are now made in South Africa (where it is currently the 14th most planted grape variety and the number of producers is growing (although it appears that the number of hectares planted have slightly decreased over the last two years).

Cabernet Franc is, however, not an easy variety: it grows vigorously; clonal selection should be done very carefully; and green, grassy flavours should be avoided. Overcropping and underexposure tend to accentuate the vegetative characters. The marketing of the wines is difficult and the wines are often expensive. It is a wine for the connoisseur.

Cabernet Franc is a very good translator of terroir (the French term for the sum entity and effect of a vineyard’s soil, slope, orientation to the sun, and elevation, plus every nuance of climate: rainfall, wind velocity, frequency of fog, cumulative hours of sunshine, average high temperatures, average low temperatures—each vineyard having its own terroir). The terroir is of utmost importance: Cabernet Franc does particularly well on gravelly soil, and produces heavier, fuller bodied wines when grown in sandy, chalky soils. In the Loire, grapes grown on gravel terraces versus grapes grown on tuffeau slopes produce wines showing terroir based differences. In South Africa, Cabernet Franc is grown in a variety of terroirs, and with great success on well-drained, medium-to-low potential soils containing chalk and limestone.

Harvesting at peak ripeness is paramount. Phenolic ripeness testing is a valuable tool available to the Cabernet Franc grower for assessing optimum levels of ripeness and tannin maturity. It
confirms the importance of choice of soils. It shows that ripeness of Cabernet Franc is easily achievable in South Africa, and that South Africa can make excellent quality Cabernet Franc.

Cabernet Franc’s ‘liveliness’ (Karen MacNeil describes a wine with this attribute as “kinetically alive in the mouth”) makes it an excellent wine to enjoy with food. It is more food-friendly and earlier approachable than Cabernet Sauvignon, and can be paired with a wide variety of dishes.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Cabernet Franc is defined in *The Oxford Companion to Wine* as “fine French black grape variety, much blended with and overshadowed by the more widely planted Cabernet Sauvignon”. It is one of the world’s 20 most planted varieties for wine, but it is only in Anjou-Saumur and Touraine in the Loire valley of France, on the right bank of the Gironde estuary in the Bordeaux region of France, and in parts of northeast Italy where plantings are more significant than Cabernet Sauvignon.¹

According to Platter in *South African Wines (2000)* “Cabernet Franc now appears more and more on the Cape wine stage as a solo performer, often to rousing applause”.² It is common knowledge that Cabernet Franc is used throughout Bordeaux in blends with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot (and small quantities of Petit Verdot and Malbec). It is often said that this ‘supporting’ or seasoning role it plays in Bordeaux (and in many countries where it is used as part of the ‘Bordeaux blend’) is its main claim to fame.³ The big names in Loire reds, Chinon and Bourgueil, are however pure Cabernet Franc.

The purpose of this study is to look at various aspects of the unique Cabernet Franc grape variety, both in South Africa and globally, and then to consider Cabernet Franc as a single variety.

The main objective is to review the status of Cabernet Franc as a single variety both globally and in South Africa—to look at its past, and to determine whether any changes in winemaking style, growing practices and winemaking techniques have taken place with this variety.

When reading articles with titles like “Cabernet Franc: The Underrated Jewel of the Loire”,⁴ “The Sad Plight of Cabernet Franc, an Underrated Grape” (Mike Steinberger)⁵ and “Terroir Denied: Give Cabernet Franc a Chance”,⁶ one cannot help but to sympathize with this age-old variety. What is it about this grape variety that invokes this underdog image? It has even been
described as “the red vinifera dog that wouldn’t hunt”.

Clearly, many people love this variety and would like to see it in its full glory, delivering to its fullest capacity. There is, therefore, sadness and disappointment in Cabernet Franc not yet tapping its full potential. In her book Vines, Grapes and Wines, Jancis Robinson commences the chapter on Cabernet Franc as follows:

“So Pinot Meunier is regarded as a rather ignoble form of Pinot Noir, so Cabernet Franc languishes in the shadow of the much more revered Cabernet Sauvignon. This is considerably fairer to Pinot Meunier than it is to Cabernet Franc”.⁸

Then again, in his article Let’s be Franc: the Quiet Invasion of Cabernet Franc, Larry Walker states that the pendulum might be swinging in Cabernet Franc’s favour, although he admits that “it isn’t everybody’s red wine” and that he is still trying to find out why Cabernet Franc is not more popular.⁹

Tim Atkin, Master of Wine commented on Schiller’s blog on 11 January 2010 that Cabernet Franc is a grape variety to watch: “all too often seen as a minor, blending grape, used to add perfume and finesse”. He admits that Cabernet Franc does work as a solo performer in the Loire valley, stating that “(i)ts freshness could be an asset in the future, as could its ability to mature gracefully”.¹⁰

In Cathy Marston’s article (‘Is Franc the Future for Cape Wine?’)¹¹ she states that “fascinating single varietal Cabernet Franc wines are now made in South Africa, showing individuality, elegance and varietal typicity, and its important role in the South African blend cannot be underestimated”. She concludes that the future is, indeed, “Franc”.

According to Neil Pendock (referring to and describing the Mooiplaas Cabernet Franc 2005 as wonderfully clean with intense perfumed fruit flavours) Franc is the Robert Downey Junior of Cape Wine—“such exotic potential that once tasted makes you wonder why it is not universally acclaimed”¹².
In Michael Fridjhon’s words in the June 2011 *Wine* magazine:¹³ “There is now increasing evidence that the Cape has—in Cabernet Franc—another potentially world-class performer in its vineyards. It is not an easy variety, and the fact that the pure Old World expressions of it are produced in the Loire—and are something of an acquired taste even among masochists—has done little to enhance its international standing”.¹³ According to him, the image and reputation of Cabernet Franc has unfortunately been sorely compromised by much of what comes from the Loire. He concludes that “we may in time find a property whose flagship wine has the structure and finesse of Château Cheval Blanc”.¹³

Jim Budd, who revised the Loire section for *Hugh Johnson’s Pocket Wine Book*, and is also the Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chair for the Loire, admits, in the August 2011 edition of *Decanter* magazine, that “from time to time, Loire Cabernet Franc, like a pampered celebrity, regrettably fails to perform as expected”.¹⁴ It is interesting that, locally, Hermanuspietersfontein bottles its Cabernet Franc under the ‘Swartskaap’ (black sheep) label, because one cannot help but think that it is indeed not only the black sheep of the South African family, but also the black sheep of the world, despite Château Cheval Blanc acknowledging the value of this marvellous variety by choosing its grand blend to be dominated by it.¹

**OBJECTIVES**

The marketing of a lesser-known single red grape variety is often extremely difficult. Specific objectives of this study include the following:

- Determining the unique characteristics of Cabernet Franc that have enabled it to achieve prominence, including factors that may have attributed to its image, as either negative or positive;
- Contributing to knowledge of a red grape variety for which there is currently relatively little information and historical data available;
- Examining possible ways in which Cabernet Franc could be better promoted.
TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this assignment, the “Franc” in Cabernet Franc is spelt with a capital “F” (unless quoted otherwise), as is done in The Sotheby’s Wine Encyclopedia and The Oxford Companion to Wine. Some of the winemakers who answered the questionnaires were however adamant that it should be “franc”, as in many other textbooks and articles (for example, Wyndruifkultivars in Suid-Afrika). The labels of almost all the single variety wines in South Africa, reflect the capital “F” spelling.

‘The right bank’ refers to the right bank of the Gironde river, in the northern parts of the Bordeaux region, around the city of Libourne, while ‘the left bank’ refers to the area situated on the left bank of the Gironde river, in the west and south of the Bordeaux region, around the city of Bordeaux itself.

The following abbreviations are used in the text:

AOC Appellation d’origine contrôlée, France’s prototype controlled appellation system
AVA Officially designated American Viticultural Areas in the United States
DOC Denominazione di Origine Controllata in Italy
DVA Designated Viticultural Areas in Canada
MW Masters of Wine (those who have passed the examinations held every year by the Institute of Masters of Wine)
SAWIS S A Wine Industry Information & Systems, a company not for gain under control and direction of the South African Wine industry
WOSA Wines of South Africa, a not-for-profit industry organisation which promotes the exports of all South African wine in key international markets

The following people are named in the text, quoted or their opinions are given:

Benjamin Lewin MW, founding Editor of the life sciences journal Cell, publisher of three wine books, column writer and contributor to Decanter
Cathy Marston freelance journalist based in SA
James Suckling  American wine and cigar critic and former Senior Editor and European Bureau Chief of Wine Spectator magazine

Jancis Robinson  MW, British wine critic, journalist and editor of wine literature

Larry Walker  Author and wine writer for several wine magazines, based in San Francisco

Michael Fridjhon  SA wine writer and consultant with extensive international judging experience

Michael Schuster  expert wine taster, wine writer and wine teacher

Neil Pendock  SA wine journalist, regular contributor for the Sunday Times and Financial Mail

Oz Clarke  British wine writer, television presenter and broadcaster

Robert Parker  leading US wine critic with an international influence

Tim Atkin  MW, wine correspondent of several publications

Tom Stevenson  British author, one of today’s most prolific and serious wine authors, leading authority on Champagne, a fastidious researcher

Vincent Gasnier  Master Sommelier and wine consultant
CHAPTER 2: WHICH CABERNET?

According to The Oxford Companion to Wine, the term “Cabernet” is loosely used for either or both of the black grape varieties Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon.¹ Cabernet Franc (pronounced Cab-er-NAY frahnk) is, in fact, the original Cabernet grape.¹⁵ Although Cabernet Sauvignon is far more famous and widely regarded as the “king” of red grapes, it is the offspring of Cabernet Franc. In 1997, thanks to DNA typing, John Bowers and Carole Meredith at The University of California, Davis published evidence showing conclusively that Cabernet Franc is one of the parents of Cabernet Sauvignon (the other parent being Sauvignon Blanc).¹ Cabernet Sauvignon was thus the result of a spontaneous cross of Sauvignon Blanc with Cabernet Franc, which most likely occurred in the Bordeaux region of France. According to Bowers and Meredith, “it is more likely that the cross occurred spontaneously between vines in adjacent vineyards or perhaps in the same vineyard, as vineyards containing mixtures of red and white cultivars were once common”¹⁶.

Cabernet Franc is typically paler and lighter in body and tannins than Cabernet Sauvignon, although it shares many of the same phenolic and aroma compounds as Cabernet Sauvignon.¹⁷ It is said to be less structured than Cabernet Sauvignon.¹⁸ (‘Structure’ is a term used to describe the solid components of a wine—acidity, sugar, density of fruit flavours and phenolic compounds such as tannins in relation to the overall balance and body of the wine. It is often said that a wine’s overall structure is determined by how its structural elements come into play and relate to one another and the term generally does not include a wine’s aromas and flavours.¹⁹ ‘Structure’—‘struktuur’ in Afrikaans and ‘utwathiwa’ in Xhosa—is defined in the SAWIS dictionary²⁵ as “a wine tasting term describing the interaction of elements such as acid, tannin, glycerin, alcohol and body as it relates to a wine’s texture and mouth-feel”). The Cabernet Franc grape is more lightly pigmented, but produces wines with the same level of intensity and richness. It tends to produce a wine with a smoother mouth feel than Cabernet Sauvignon. As the Vin de France website puts it: “its viscosity is a delight to the mouth”.²⁰

In the Loire, both Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon are grown, and they are often blended to make red and rosé wines that are labelled simply as “Cabernet”.²¹ On the official Wines of South Africa (WOSA) website²⁴, Cabernet Franc is described as “related to Cabernet
Sauvignon, usually softer, has a lower sugar content and contains less alcohol. Used as a component in classic, Bordeaux-style blends but also for varietal wines. Small but increasing vineyard area. Unless specified, ‘Cabernet’ refers to the Sauvignon and not the Franc variety.”²⁴

Cabernet Franc is often described in comparison to Cabernet Sauvignon. According to The Complete Encyclopedia of Wine, Cabernet Franc usually makes “greener”, “grassier” wine with lighter colour and less obvious tannin than Cabernet Sauvignon. In order to recognize Cabernet Franc, one should imagine the smell of blackcurrant leaves, or the taste of barely ripe blackcurrant fruit.²¹ Bruwer Raats compares Cabernet Sauvignon to a broad-edged sword and Cabernet Franc to a scalpel when describing Cabernet Franc as being “very precise”.

The differences between Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon become apparent when they are grown and fermented in close proximity.²² Cabernet Franc vines bear earlier-ripening grapes with lower overall acidity, compared to Cabernet Sauvignon.²² Yields are similar, although Cabernet Franc normally buds and ripens somewhat earlier (more than a week earlier, according to Jancis Robinson).¹ Consequently, in vineyards in climates where rain is a harvest time threat, this grape is often planted in place of or in addition to Cabernet Sauvignon, because it is easier to ripen fully and is much less susceptible to poor weather during harvest.¹ Cabernet Franc vines survive cold winters better than Cabernet Sauvignon, but are more susceptible to being damaged by spring frosts.²²

The flavour profile of Cabernet Franc may be both fruitier and sometimes more herbal or vegetative than Cabernet Sauvignon, although Cabernet Franc is lighter in colour and lighter in tannins. Statistical analysis of the 2-methoxy-3-isobutylpyrazine concentration of 89 red Bordeaux wines showed that Cabernet wines were generally more commonly affected by this vegetative character (than Merlot, for example).²³

In cooler regions, Cabernet Franc’s earlier ripening is a significant advantage over Cabernet Sauvignon, which may not fully ripen. This makes Cabernet Franc the preferred Cabernet in the shorter season of cool-climate vineyards.
Chapter 3: The Importance of Cabernet Franc

Cabernet Franc is especially important in France, since 78% of the world’s plantings (38 800 hectares) is in France. Italy takes second place at 13% and South Africa has 1% of the world’s plantings (933,71 hectares).  

Cabernet Franc is one of the main varieties of Bordeaux. It brings perfume and spice to blends. It is valuable for the violet and spice aromas it can contribute and, although a minor grape, it is used in most Bordeaux blends. According to Benjamin Lewin, it contributes leafy notes of tobacco. Bordeaux wines are about elegance and intensity of flavour. They are almost always blends of two or more varieties—blending being used to achieve more complex flavours. Cabernet Franc is especially important in Pomerol and in St.-Émilion, where the superelegant Château Cheval Blanc is arguably the very best, with Château Ausone in a close second place. These are the only two wines classified as “A” among St.-Émilion’s Premier Grand Cru Classé. Cheval Blanc has the highest percentage of Cabernet Franc of any well-known Bordeaux estate (almost 70%), with Merlot comprising the remainder. Château Ausone has chosen the highest ever percentage of Cabernet Franc for its 2010 blend.

According to Oz Clarke, it is not fair that Cabernet Franc is nowadays the minor member of the family and is often dismissed as a barely necessary seasoning component in the red wines of Bordeaux. Whilst admitting that Cabernet Sauvignon is deeper, darker, richer, and more tannic, “Franc has a delightfully mouth-watering perfume and a smooth, soothing texture that can tame the aggression and power of Cabernet Sauvignon”.

Cabernet Franc is the Loire’s best red wine grape. These Loire red wines are still widely underrated outside France. According to Jancis Robinson, the reason for this is that the best wines are often distinguished by their delicacy rather than by their weight and longevity. She believes that “when the pendulum swings back from super-concentrated, high-alcohol reds, Cabernet Franc may be expected to benefit”.

Bone-dry to dry, medium-bodied, lively rosé wines, with very fruity aromas of raspberries and blackberries, and good depth of flavour, are made in Bourgueil from Cabernet Franc. Tom
Stevenson is of the opinion that these rosés, as well as the rosés from Chinon, deserve to be better known.²⁹

Cabernet Franc is regarded as a form of insurance against the weather’s predations on Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grapes.¹ It is particularly well suited to cool, inland climates such as the middle Loire and the Libournais.¹ In Bordeaux, Cabernet Franc ripens more easily and in difficult years Cabernet Franc produces much sweeter, more balanced fruit than Cabernet Sauvignon.³⁰ In the cooler northern and eastern wine regions of North America, the reliable ripening (much more than Cabernet Sauvignon) and the fact that it provides much more extract than most hybrids, has made Cabernet Franc the red *vinifera* variety of choice. Cabernet Franc is winter-hardy and more resistant to winter freeze than Merlot.¹
CHAPTER 4: HISTORY AND ORIGIN

Cabernet Franc traces its ancestry, as do most grapes in the Medoc region, to the ancient Biturica grape used to make Roman wine that Pliny the Elder (also the author of the Latin phrase *in vino veritas*) wrote of.³¹ Biturica got its name from the Bituriges Vivisci (Kings of the World), one of the tribes of Gaul, whose capital was at Burdigala (the modern day Bordeaux). The belief that Cabernet Sauvignon was the ancient grape Biturica was widely held (until recently), as the local name for Cabernet Sauvignon was *Petite Vidure or Bidure*, and this was thought to be a corruption of Biturica.³²

According to the *Vin de France* website, Cabernet Franc “probably” originates from southwest France, where it was regarded as a well-respected vine. It is believed to be the ancestor of the Cabernets, and there is little doubt that it originates from the Aquitaine region.²⁰

Cardinal de Richelieu transported cuttings of the vine from southwest France and planted it along the banks of the Loire River, where it also found the right conditions to thrive. Legend has it that the variety was selected by him and introduced to the vineyard at the *Abbaye de St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil* by an abbot named Breton, which perhaps explains why Breton remains a local synonym for the variety to this day.¹

It is believed to have been established in the Libournais region sometime in the 17th century. By the 18th century, Cabernet Franc was planted throughout Fronsac, Pomerol and St.-Émilion, where it was used to make quality wines.¹

There are references to Cabernet Franc in ancient documents, dating as far back as 1152, whereas references to Cabernet Sauvignon do not appear until several centuries later. This is only natural: genetic studies at UC Davis have shown conclusively that Cabernet Sauvignon is the result of a crossing between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc, so Franc could be considered the *original* Cabernet—father to the more famous Sauvignon.
According to Benjamin Lewin MW, the black Bordeaux varieties are relative newcomers to the viticultural scene.²⁷ They show a strong relationship, stemming from several common ancestors. Ironically, at the centre of the history, Cabernet Franc appears to be the common ancestral grape of Bordeaux, as is shown in Figure 4.1 below.²⁷

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**Figure 4.1: Relationship between Bordeaux varieties (Source: Lewin, B²⁷)**

Cabernet Sauvignon was a chance cross between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc, probably a few hundred years ago.²⁷¹⁶ Cabernet Franc was again crossed to create Merlot, this time with a lost cultivar, examples of which were found in an abandoned vineyard in the Charente region to the north of Bordeaux. The second parent of Merlot, named Magdelaine Noire des Charentes, after its discovery, was one of the parents of Malbec.²⁷ According to Lewin, Cabernet Franc is also one of the parents of the old Bordeaux variety, Carmenère. A summary of the important descendants of Cabernet Franc follows in Table 4.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crossed with</th>
<th>Descendant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet Franc</td>
<td>Sauvignon Blanc</td>
<td>Cabernet Sauvignon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet Franc</td>
<td>Magdelaine Noire</td>
<td>Merlot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet Franc</td>
<td>Gros Cabernet</td>
<td>Carmenère</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1: Summary of important descendants of Cabernet Franc.*

Cabernet Franc was first planted in South Africa in the early 1980s, and had much the same following as in France: it was favoured in blends in the Cape to complement Cabernet Sauvignon. Unfortunately, very little is known about its history and how plantings arrived at the Cape. Speculation has it that the first Cabernet Franc cuttings were brought to South Africa in the early 1970s by Distillers Corporation. Many Italian clones (from Conegliano, Piacenza and Rauscedo) were brought into the country and are still available in South Africa, but they are not necessarily suited to South African conditions.
CHAPTER 5: WHERE CABERNET FRANC IS GROWN GLOBALLY

According to Tom Stevenson, Cabernet Franc is grown throughout the world, but particularly in Bordeaux. In terms of his ‘10 widest planted grape varieties in France by colour’, Cabernet Franc comes in at sixth place after Merlot, Grenache, Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah. Almost half of Cabernet Franc’s 36 000 hectare total is planted in the southwest of France and half in the greater Loire valley. Cabernet Franc does best as Bouchet in St-Émilion and at Pomerol, across the Dordogne River, where Cabernet Sauvignon is less well represented.

In the late 1960s, plantings of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon were almost equal in Bordeaux, at about 10 000 hectares. Those wanting to replace unprofitable white wine vineyards often chose Cabernet Sauvignon above Cabernet Franc. This resulted in Cabernet Sauvignon covering almost twice the total area of Cabernet Franc in the late 1980s. This proportion remains today, even though Cabernet Franc’s total area in the Gironde has risen to 14 300 hectares.

Cabernet Franc is important on the right bank of Bordeaux, where it is often called Bouchet, and where it is the third most planted variety in Bordeaux.

France has by far the most Cabernet Franc plantings of any wine producing nation, with over 35 000 acres. There are significant plantings of Cabernet Franc in St. Émilion, the Loire Valley (where it is known as Breton) and southwest France (aka Bouchy).

A full list of Cabernet Franc Synonyms is included below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>_synonym</th>
<th>synonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aceria</td>
<td>Hartling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acheria (Irouleguy, France)</td>
<td>Kamberne Fran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrouya</td>
<td>Messanges Rouge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bordo (Northeast Italy)</td>
<td>Morenoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouchet (Bordeaux, France)</td>
<td>Noir Dur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouchy (Gascony; Bordeaux, France)</td>
<td>Petit Fer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breton (Loire, France)</td>
<td>Petit Viodure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Burdeas Tinto        Petite Vidure
Cabernet            Petite Vignedure
Cabernet Aunis      Plant Breton
Cabernet Franco     Plant Des Sables
Capbreton Rouge     Trouchet Noir
Carmenet (Médoc)    Véron
Fer Servandou       Véron Bouchy
Gamput              Véronais
Grosse Vidure       Cabernet Gris
Gros Bouchet (Bordeaux, France)

According to the *Vin de France* website,²⁰ the total land surface planted with Cabernet Franc has been growing steadily for the past 40 years, “reaching 38 700 hectares in 2006”. Benjamin Lewin MW states, however, that the nature of Bordeaux red wines is changing, and that Merlot is moving upwards, especially over the past half-century. According to him, this steady upward movement of Merlot is at the cost of Cabernet Sauvignon on the left bank and at the cost of Cabernet Franc on the right bank. The other two varieties, Petit Verdot and Malbec, have all but disappeared. The right bank is heading towards monovarietal territory, with the proportion of Merlot an important factor, changing the style of Bordeaux, so that it is fruitier and can be consumed when younger.²⁷ Figure 5.1 below shows the percentages of plantings of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec over the years (1968 – 2005).
Figure 5.1: Percentage of black varieties in Bordeaux. (Source: Lewin²⁷)

The most important Cabernet Franc appellations in the Loire are Anjou Rouge, Bourgueil, Chinon, Saumur-Champigny and St. Nicholas-de-Bourgueil. The following list reflects the style categories and appellations that feature Cabernet Franc:³⁶

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFF-DRY ROSÉ</th>
<th>DRY ROSÉ</th>
<th>EARTHY RED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosé d’Anjou</td>
<td>Bourgueil</td>
<td>Saumur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet d’Anjou</td>
<td>St.-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil</td>
<td>Saumur-Champigny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosé de Loire</td>
<td>Chinon</td>
<td>Bourgueil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet de Saumur</td>
<td>Rosé de Loire</td>
<td>St.-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Touraine</td>
<td>Chinon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anjou</td>
<td>Anjou-Villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anjou-Villages Brissac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Touraine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Touraine Mesland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Style categories of Cabernet Franc and the relevant appellations³⁶
There are Cabernet Franc vineyards in Romania, Hungary, the Balkans, Kosovo and, it is thought, Kazakhstan. According to *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, Cabernet Franc is also relatively significant in China¹, where it makes up an estimated 10 per cent of the fastest growing vignoble in the world. Jancis Robinson regards China as “one final important grower of Cabernet Franc”.³⁷

It is grown in the Friuli region of northeast Italy where it is known as Cabernet Frank or Bordo. In Friuli, Cabernet Franc has often been confused with Carmenère, and is often overcropped, to the detriment of ripeness and weight.¹⁵ According to *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, there has been a certain lack of precision about the precise identity of the Cabernet grown and allowed into the many DOCs of northeast Italy, in particular, although Cabernet Franc has tended to predominate.¹ Elsewhere in Italy, and worldwide, it is increasingly planted as a partner for Cabernet Sauvignon, perhaps also with Merlot, by producers who prefer the subtlety and complexity of a blend.¹⁵

The Tuscans are beginning to view Cabernet Franc as a variety of real interest in Bolgheri and the rest of Maremma. In these regions of Italy, Cabernet Franc produces wines of great balance and elegance.¹ Andrea Franchetti’s flagship wine, Tenuta di Trinoro, contains approximately 80% Cabernet Franc. This wine has been praised by Robert Parker, and has been called “Cheval Blanc in the sun”.⁵

New plantings in the 1990s in Australia, New Zealand and Argentina show promise. The vine is being increasingly planted in South America.¹ In the United States, Cabernet Franc is planted in Long Island, New York and in Washington State. Cabernet Franc is appreciated in Washington for its ability to survive winters far better than Cabernet Sauvignon.⁹ California has about 2 000 acres, mostly planted since 1980, with over half in Napa and Sonoma.

Charles Sullivan, wine historian and author of the book *A Companion to Californian Wine*, writes that Cabernet Franc was first brought to California in 1872. In the 1880s, according to Sullivan, there were plantings in San Benito County and at To Kalon and Inglenook in Napa. Unfortunately, almost all those vines were wiped out by phylloxera and/or by prohibition.⁹
The modern history of Cabernet Franc in California began in the 1960s, when a few acres were planted in Napa. In 1976, the entire state had only 77 acres of Cabernet Franc. Mount Veeder and Spring Mountain had however produced single variety Cabernet Franc wines, according to Sullivan. According to *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, Californians have been rearing Cabernet Franc “with some zeal since the 1980s. This was a ploy to add complexity to Cabernet Sauvignons accused by some of simplicity”. By 2004, total acreage had reached almost 3 400 acres/1 375 hectares. Most of it was planted in Napa and Sonoma counties, and the majority of the state’s Cabernet Franc is still used in Bordeaux blends, although some increasingly respected varietal bottlings and Bordeaux blends dominated by Cabernet Franc are bottled in California today. There are about 3 500 acres of Cabernet Franc in California today. Dan Berger believes that there are many places in Napa Valley where Cabernet Franc would fare better and be more appropriate to the terroir than Cabernet Sauvignon.

In the June 2011 edition of *Decanter* magazine, Cabernet Franc is stated as the second most important red variety of the Finger Lakes wine region of New York (Pinot Noir being the most important).

American Appellations producing the most Cabernet Franc wines are the following:

- Napa Valley (AVA)
- Columbia Valley (AVA)
- Virginia (State Appellation)
- Niagara Peninsula (DVA)
- Finger Lakes (AVA)
- Paso Robles (AVA)
- Okanagan Valley (DVA)
- North Fork of Long Island (AVA)
- Pennsylvania (State Appellation)
- Yakima Valley (AVA)

In North America, Cabernet Franc has adapted well to cooler areas, especially the northeast and Great Lakes regions. Long Island, in particular, with its maritime-moderated climate, produces excellent Cabernet Franc.

The Niagara Peninsula is slowly developing an international reputation as one of the world’s premier locations to grow Cabernet Franc. Canada is known for its Icewines made from Cabernet Franc. Inniskillin’s Cabernet Franc Icewine 2007 was mentioned in the *Decanter* World Wine Awards of 2009.
By 2006, Chile had a substantial 925 hectares.¹ According to the Wines of Chile website, there are 1,226 hectares in Chile and “this French varietal is used primarily to lend acidity and finesse to fine Bordeaux-style blends”.³⁹ In Argentina, 27 of the total 495 hectares of Cabernet Franc is planted in Neuquén.²⁸

There are also extensive plantings in Romania and Bulgaria. The Mencia grape, which produces light and perfumy wines in northwest Spain, is believed to be closely related to Cabernet Franc. Mencia’s current popularity, especially in the emerging region of Bierzo, is also relevant for Cabernet Franc. Wine writers (especially the United Kingdom press) are mesmerized by this cousin of Cabernet Franc with its bright fruit, refreshing acidity and elegant tannins. Just like Cabernet Franc, it is also approachable young, but it also ages incredibly well.⁴⁰

Dennis Horton, at Horton Vineyards in Virginia, regards Cabernet Franc as an important variety in Virginia and he is of the opinion that it will become more important as time goes on. When interviewed by Larry Walker, Horton said that as vineyards are replanted, Cabernet Franc is replacing Cabernet Sauvignon across the state.⁹

Cabernet Franc has been grown in Pennsylvania for many years, and this state has almost 150 wineries and thousands of acres of grapes, with Cabernet Franc being considered as its signature red variety.⁴¹ It is considered more winter hardy and a more consistent ripener than either Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot, and has been the topic of numerous seminars and tastings over the past two decades. ⁴¹
The table below shows the countries where Cabernet Franc is grown worldwide, the hectares planted to Cabernet Franc, the percentage Cabernet Franc forms of that country’s production and each country’s percentage of all Cabernet Franc grown worldwide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cabernet Franc in hectares</th>
<th>Percentage of the country</th>
<th>Percentage of all Cabernet Franc, worldwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>38 800</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6 639</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1 650</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>49 416</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.2: Summary of plantings of Cabernet Franc in the world*³³
CHAPTER 6: IDENTIFYING THE VARIETY

If Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon are grown under neutral conditions it might not be easy to distinguish any significant varietal differences between the two because they share so many characteristics.¹

It was stated by Orffer in 1979, Cabernet Franc is related to Cabernet Sauvignon and its synonyms are Cabernet Gris and Bidure.⁴² There are many alternative French names, the most important being Bouchet, sometimes found in St-Émilion, Pomerol and Fronsac on Bordeaux’s right bank, and Breton in the Loire valley.¹⁵

Orffer identifies the following three important distinguishing characteristics of Cabernet Franc:⁴²
- Cabernet Franc’s leaves are a lighter green than those of Cabernet Sauvignon.
- Its lateral sinuses are not entirely closed and its leaf flaps are not folded over each other.
- Its berries are round and slightly bigger than those of Cabernet Sauvignon.

SHOOT TIPS
Cabernet Franc’s shoot tips are cottony white and felty, and crimson coloured around the edges. Its young leaves are downy on the upper side and felty underneath.⁴³

LEAVES
Cabernet Franc can be recognized by its young leaves, which are a reddish green colour with bronze patches. It has medium, mid-green, rather rough, pentagonal, convex 3- to 5-lobed leaves with tufted hairs on the lower surface. The leaves are cobwebby underneath and are less deeply lobed than those of Cabernet Sauvignon. The petiolar sinus is in the shape of a narrow lyre and has slightly overlapping lobes.⁴⁴ The lateral sinuses between the lobes quite often have a tooth at the base. These teeth often have rectilinear sides, and are smaller and less blunt and rounded than those of Cabernet Sauvignon. The apical sinuses are of medium depth and are not entirely closed.⁴³ A Cabernet Franc leaf is shown in Figure 6.1 below.
Figure 6.1: Cabernet Franc leaf  

Figure 6.2: Cabernet Franc bunch  

**BUNCHES**

The bunches are small to medium, somewhat larger than those of Cabernet Sauvignon, elongated, more or less cylindrical/cylindrical-conical in shape, slightly shouldered, and rather loose/loose to well filled, with small, round but irregular berries\(^{42,44}\) as shown in Figure 6.2 above.

**BERRIES**

The berries are small, although slightly bigger than those of Cabernet Sauvignon, with a light grassy taste. The berries are round, their skins are fairly thin (as confirmed by Bruwer Raats,\(^{45}\) although some sources refer to the skins as thick and tough), and their colour is dark (blue-black), with a prominent bloom in the fully mature stage, with a moderately firm texture.\(^{43}\) The berries are juicy.\(^{46}\)

**RIPENING**

Cabernet Franc is a medium to late ripener (at the end of March).\(^{42}\) Cabernet Franc ripens a few days before Cabernet Sauvignon.\(^{43}\)
YIELD

Cabernet Franc yields well: in South Africa, average yields of 8 – 16 tons per hectare are attained.\textsuperscript{35} As with Cabernet Sauvignon, there seem to be inferior vines which yield poorly, but a good clone held at Merbein, Australia has yielded at the rate of >15 tons per hectare.\textsuperscript{44} In a study carried out in Oklahoma, an average yield of 24,55 kg per plant (on various different rootstocks) was noted.\textsuperscript{47,48}
CHAPTER 7: UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WINES MADE FROM CABERNET FRANC

It is often said that the wines made from Cabernet Franc are not easily distinguished from those of Cabernet Sauvignon. Jancis Robinson holds the view that Cabernet Franc wines never taste like Cabernet Sauvignon, but Cabernet Sauvignon can taste very like Cabernet Franc when made in too cool a climate.

Appellation America gives the following description of Cabernet Franc on its website:

“Although rarely the centre of attention, Cabernet Franc, your congenial nature makes you a pleasure to be with. You’re equally good company for your coarse and bitter cousin Sauvignon, as well as with the charming and curvaceous Merlot. Better yet is when you politely amuse the pair in a meritage made in heaven. Your genteel manner has been evident since your youth. In fact, some would say you’re mature beyond your years. You are graceful and elegant, with a rather lean physique and a fresh attitude. It has been said—very discreetly of course—that your nature is a little on the perfumy side.”

South African wine editor Cathy Marston holds the opinion that if Cabernet Franc was a person, it would be Johnny Depp: it is exciting, sexy, a little bit cheeky, and does not present the taster with the normal “run of the mill kinds of flavours (certainly not to palates raised on Cabernet Sauvignon)”. When further questioned about the analogy, she answered that, if you get into a relationship with Cabernet Franc, there is enough depth, generosity, class and character to last you a lifetime.

Karen MacNeil finds it fascinating “when a wine seems to go beyond mere texture and actually suggests a three-dimensional form”. She often asks beginners in her wine classes who cannot describe a given wine to draw a picture of it and, to her amazement, they often can. Jancis Robinson is not a huge enthusiast of the sexual stereotyping of wines. She however admits that “even I can see that Cabernet Franc might be described as the feminine side of Cabernet Sauvignon. It is subtly fragrant and gently flirtatious rather than massively muscular and tough in youth. Because Cabernet Sauvignon has so much more of everything—body, tannin, alcohol,
colour—it is often supposed to be necessarily superior, but I have a very soft spot indeed for its more charming and more aromatic relative, Cabernet Franc.”³⁷

Marius Lategan, winemaker of red Bordeaux varieties for more than 10 years at Morgenster Estate in Somerset West (until June 2009), regards Cabernet Franc as a masculine variety, with Merlot being widely regarded as the feminine variety, but he agrees with Jancis Robinson that Cabernet Franc is certainly ‘in touch with his feminine side’, “willing to give, but also wanting to take”.⁵⁰

The first test for identifying an unknown wine tends to be its aroma.⁵¹ According to Benjamin Lewin MW, red wines can primarily be grouped under either red fruits or black fruits. Red wines go from savoury or herbaceous to fruity, or even aromatic. He classifies Cabernet Franc under black fruits with herbaceous flavours (as opposed to fruity or aromatic), in the same group as Carmenère, Malbec and Tannat, admitting, however, that some grapes might move from one group to another, depending on their degree of ripeness.²⁷ The figure below illustrates the basic classification of black grapes into red fruits or black fruits and a further classification of red fruits into either savoury or fruity and the black fruits into either herbaceous, fruity or aromatic.

![Classification of grape varieties according to aroma](source: Lewin²⁷)
At its best, Cabernet Franc has an unmistakeable and “ridiculously appetizing flavour of raspberries” and, according to Oz Clarke, “pebbles washed clean by pure spring water and a refreshing tang of blackcurrant leaves”.

Cabernet Franc tends to have a pronounced perfume with notes of raspberries, black currants, violets and graphite. It is often characterized by a green, vegetal strike that can range from leaves to green bell pepper, or as Bruwer Raats puts it, “weed” (“onkruid”), which, according to him, is highly undesirable. Chris Keet calls these undesirable flavours “green bean and stalky characters”. In the New World, producers tend to emphasize the fruit more, and harvesting may be delayed to try to minimize these green, leafy notes. But even with ripe fruit, an unusually vegetal character can still persist in the wine: aromas and flavours of capsicum, celery or celeriac and herbs are often noted, especially in the Loire wines.

The presence of these green aromas are often attributed to Isobutylmethoxyprazine (IBMP), or 2-methoxy-3-(2-methylpropyl) pyrazine, a highly odorous compound, initially identified in green bell pepper (*Capsicum annuum*). It was first detected in Cabernet Sauvignon grapes by Bayonove et al, in 1975, and is considered to be responsible for the vegetative, green bell pepper aromas found in certain wines made from a number of *Vitis vinifera* grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc. This odour is generally considered by wine tasters as detrimental to the quality or red wine aroma. Humans are very sensitive to methoxypyrazines (one reason for this is that these methoxypyrazines are an indication of unripeness in fruit).

It has been established in several of the world’s wine-growing regions, however, that IBMP concentrations in grapes drop during ripening and that this phenomenon depends on climate, the vine’s vegetative growth and vineyard management techniques affecting the sun exposure of the grapes. Exposure to sunlight causes levels of IBMP to decline, and there is a rapid drop as grapes approach maturity, with losses of 10-fold or more in the last 6 weeks of ripening. The timing of harvest is a key determinant of the level in the grape. The level in the mature berry essentially determines the level in the wine.
A study undertaken by De Boubée, Van Leeuwen and Dubourdieu also showed a very good correlation between the breakdown of malic acid and IBMP content in grapes during ripening. According to them, it has been clearly established that a high malic acid content in grapes is a marker of poor ripening. It was concluded that the IBMP content may be considered to have the same significance.

Vincent Gasnier describes a typical Cabernet Franc wine as combining sweet raspberry or redcurrant flavours with bell pepper characters with crisp, refreshing acidity. His advice is to always seek out the best vintages (and vintages vary greatly in the Loire), as the wines can be very herbaceous and leafy in poor years.

Michael Schuster regards Cabernet Franc’s raspberry and redcurrant fragrance and its fineness of texture as its biggest virtues. According to him, Cabernet Franc is at its finest in the Loire, where it often has a faintly herbaceous aroma with a fine chalkiness.

According to Tim Atkin MW, “the thing that sets Cabernet Franc apart is its perfume and fresh, grassy flavours”.

Bruwer Raats, when asked as to why he specializes in only Cabernet Franc as red variety, gives the following explanation: “Cabernet Franc has spice, cinnamon, clove, nutmeg, coriander, red cherry fruit and silky, velvety tannins. I never want to make blockbuster styles. I want to make wines that reflect the soil types and varieties. Freshness is the key”.

AROMAS TYPICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH CABERNET FRANC

- Raspberry;
- Blackcurrant leaf;
- Gooseberry;
- Liquorice;
- Violet;
- Cherries;
- Strawberries;
• Pencil shavings, and
• Spices: cinnamon, aniseed

The *Winepros* website\(^{22}\) gives the following as typical Cabernet Franc smell and/or flavour descriptors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIETAL AROMAS/FLAVOURS</th>
<th>PROCESSING BOUQUETS/FLAVOURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruit</strong>: raspberry, cherry, plum, strawberry</td>
<td><strong>Oak (light)</strong>: vanilla, coconut, sweet wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Floral</strong>: violet</td>
<td><strong>Oak (heavy)</strong>: oak, smoke, toast, tar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Herbal</strong>: bell pepper, stems</td>
<td><strong>Bottle age</strong>: musk, mushroom, earth cedar, cigar box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the *Vin de France* website,\(^{20}\) Cabernet Franc is “a pleasant variety” and “its viscosity is a delight to the mouth”. It is less tannic and astringent than Cabernet Sauvignon, it is softer and gives an impression of fullness when harvested at peak ripeness. It is further described as rich and luscious and, depending on how it is matured, can be aged for several years.\(^{20}\)

When tasting (mostly) right bank wines in December 2010, James Suckling blogged that he “loves the perfumes and the mouth feels of the (2008) wines, particularly those with Cabernet Franc in their blends”, concluding that 2008 is “a Cabernet Franc year,” contributing to the tangy dark fruits and floral aromas and flavours in the top right bank 2008 wines.\(^{51}\)

It might not be easy to distinguish any significant varietal differences between the two Cabernets, but they are suited to different situations.\(^{29}\) According to Tom Stevenson, Cabernet Franc tends to produce a slightly earthy style of wine that is very aromatic, but has less fine characteristics on the palate when compared to Cabernet Sauvignon.\(^{29}\) He admits, however, that the unusual aspect of Château Cheval Blanc’s great wine is its high proportion of Cabernet Franc, and states that although switching to a majority of Merlot vines was advantageous for
most Libournais properties, keeping a proportion of 60% Cabernet Franc was even better for Château Cheval Blanc. He concludes that “these wines have all the sweet, spicy richness one expects from a classic St.-Émilion property situated on graves”.²⁹ Oz Clarke agrees, stating that 60% Cabernet Franc in the blend of Cheval Blanc is quite high for the St-Émilion appellation, but that “there is an unusual amount of extremely suitable gravelly soil in the vineyard.”¹⁵ Karen MacNeil describes Cheval Blanc as follows:

“In great years the wine can have an almost unnerving texture—it is, all at the same time deep, luxuriant, and kinetically alive in the mouth. When young, the wine fairly oozes with decadent blackberry fruit laced with vanilla, rather like eating a bowl of squashed ripe blackberries drizzled with crème anglaise.”²⁶

The Loire red wines are typically characterized by delicacy, rather than power. Most of the best Loire reds and rosés are made from Cabernet Franc, although Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Gamay, and native varieties such as Grolleau are grown.²⁶ Loire reds bear the stamp of their cool, northern climate. The reason they are appreciated is exactly because they are not fleshy and full-bodied. They are zesty and light, with a refreshing vigour the French often describe as nervosité—a certain dynamic tension.²⁶

Chinon, Vouvray and Bourgueil are all communes in France’s Indre-et-Loire department.⁴² Chinon is, in essence, a wine of refreshment; it is light to medium bodied, often extravagantly scented (lead pencils is one common tasting note), and with an appetizing combination of fruit and acidity. The wines have become markedly richer and more satisfying as growers grass over their vineyards and use high trellises, debudding and deleafing to ripen grapes more successfully.¹

The best Chinon wines can benefit from bottle ageing, but that is not the point of the wine. Its immediate drinkability keeps the Chinon market free of foreign speculation on the part of the collectors. Chinon is quintessentially a Frenchman’s wine, and it takes some local knowledge to seek out the best, often hand-crafted, bottlings from the likes of Philippe Alliet, Bernard Baudry, Couly-Dutheil, Charles Joguet and Domaine du Roncée. A high proportion of the wine is sold to merchants, whose blends vary considerably in quality.
In Bourgueil, Cabernet Franc takes on more muscle and a briary profile as opposed to the sleek iron and olive edge of typical Chinon wines. Jancis Robinson describes Bourgueil wines as being potentially captivating red wines, made on the north bank of the Loire in the west of the Touraine district. The wines are medium-bodied and are marked by a more powerful aroma (reminding some of raspberries, others of pencil shavings) and slightly more noticeable tannins than the wines of Chinon to the south. According to the esteemed wine writer Hugh Johnson, in the 19th century wines from Bourgueil were considered the equal of First Growth Château Margaux in Bordeaux.

St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil is produced on about 900 hectares of lighter soils in the west of the Bourgueil region, and is generally a lighter, earlier maturing wine. These fragrant wines are extremely popular in Paris and northern France, but have yet to be discovered by most non-French wine lovers.

Saumur, situated within the borders of the Anjou appellation, is regarded as the pearl of Anjou. Its wines are fine, bone-dry to dry, medium- to full-bodied, and are often similar to the red wines of Anjou, although they can vary from light and fruity to deep-coloured and tannic.

Many people believe that the vineyards southeast of Saumur, entitled to add the village name of Champigny to their appellation, produce the best red wines in the Loire: bone-dry to dry, full-bodied wines with a distinctive deep colour, and full and fragrant raspberry aromas, often tannic and long-lived.

James Suckling has tasted right bank Bordeaux wines extensively and (commenting on the 2008 harvest) he “loves the perfumes and the mouth feels of the wines, particularly those with Cabernet Franc in their blends”. He was told by winemakers that the late harvest in 2008 really helped Cabernet Franc ripen to an outstanding level, and the tangy dark fruits and floral aromas and flavours in the top right bank 2008’s highlight their comments.

The flavour profile depends on viticulture practices as well as cellar treatment, but it is typically spicy and floral on the nose. If overcropped, the wine may be herbal and vegetative. Overcropping and underexposure tend to accentuate the vegetative flavour elements. Cornell
University promoted Cabernet Franc to the Pennsylvanian winegrowers for its cold hardiness and early ripening, yet many Pennsylvanian wines turned out to be mediocre or objectionably green. Pennsylvanian growers were “ready to write Cabernet Franc off and opt to remain victims in abusive relationships with prima donnas like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.” They are now revisiting Cabernet Franc, which was originally planted in the worst parts of the vineyards, and often neglected, with out-of-control canopies and overcropping—problems made worse by California clones on vigorous rootstocks.
CHAPTER 8: THE IMPORTANCE OF TERROIR

In Bordeaux, the concept of terroir (no single word exists in English for this French term) plays a pivotal role in wine production. The top estates aim to make terroir-driven wines that reflect the place they are from, and wines are often made from grapes collected from a single vineyard. Each vineyard is said to have its own terroir, and terroir is the reason why so many Bordeaux are considered great.

The subject of terroir is often debatable and controversial. Jancis Robinson identifies major components of terroir as “soil (as the word suggests) and local topography, together with their interactions with each other and with microclimate to determine mesoclimate and vine microclimate. The holistic combination of all these is held to give each site its own unique terroir, which is reflected in its wines more or less consistently from year to year, to some degree regardless of variations in methods of viticulture and winemaking.”

For the Loire Valley in France, it has been found that basic terroir units (NTUs) may have a significant effect on the character of Cabernet Franc wines.

Likewise, in South Africa, a natural terroir unit (NTU) is basically characterised by a relatively homogeneous pattern with regard to topography, climate, geology and soil. The result of a terroir-driven wine should therefore be a wine with a distinctive, characteristic, identifiable origin. Much progress has been made in South Africa with regard to the identification of relatively homogeneous NTUs.

According to the Vin de France website, the best Cabernet Franc wines are generally obtained from limestone-clay soils, with a steady supply of water, especially in Mediterranean areas that are more prone to drought. It is further stated that it also provides excellent results on sandier soils in more temperate areas with no water stress. Cabernet Franc prefers more moderate, even, cool climates such as those along the banks of the Loire River, but it also likes hot, moderately long summers and needs watering on a regular basis. In warmer areas it should be watered regularly during the summer and pruned short to limit the load of each vine.
In the Loire, Cabernet Franc is regarded as highly soil sensitive. The wines from sandy chalk soils are weightier than those from chalk or gravel soils, and the differences between appellations may be less marked than the differences within appellations.¹⁵

According to Tom Stevenson, the best red wines in the Loire come from the appellations of Chinon and Bourgueil, although he mentions Saumur-Champigny as the possible exception.²⁹ Two distinct styles of Chinon are made. A fuller, long-term Bourgueil-like wine comes from the sites on the tuffeau limestone slopes and plateaux, most notably the south-facing slopes of Cravant-les-Coteaux and the plateau above Beaumont. Lighter wines are made from sand and gravel vineyards near the river (in effect the old flood plains of the Loire and Vienne), with the most elegant examples coming from the gravel beds around Panzoult.

**Bourgueil and St. Nicolas-de-Bourgueil**

These two appellations are entirely situated on the slightly uplifted, domed Chouzé-sur-Loire block. On either side it is bordered by two faults, one to the south in Avoine in the Chinon appellation and the other to the east in St.-Patrice. St.-Patrice is the premier commune of the Bourgueil appellation. Up to this point the Loire has dug a narrow valley of barely two miles wide, out of relatively hard Turonian limestone. It now flows through the more friable, argillaceous marls and sands uplifted along the edge of this fault. The closeness of the Massif Armorican also has an impact on the sediments deposited in the Turonian and Senonian. These sediments are quite distinct from those in the Touraine and have detrital formations. These detrital formations are characteristic of the shallow seas and shores on the edge of the Massif Armorican. Since these formations are much sandier, they have proved far less resistant to erosion and have had a dramatic impact on the landscape. Here wines from different places are made and marketed separately. One can thus see how Cabernet Franc responds to certain terroirs. On stony terraces, Cabernet Franc yields agreeable, elegant and aromatic wines with blackcurrant and liquorice aromas. These wines are intended for relatively early drinking. Wines made from tuffeau terroirs on Turonian slopes are fuller-bodied, more tannic and longer-lived.²⁹ They need four to five years to come into their own. The vines subsist frugally in Holocene alluvia, either on remnants of ancient alluvia or on delicate sand mounds known as Montilles.⁵⁸
St.-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil is a commune with its own appellation in the northwest corner of Bourgueil. The soil is sandier than that of surrounding Bourgueil and the wines are lighter with greater finesse than the wines of Bourgueil, although equal in terms of quality.²⁹

**The Saumur region**

The Saumur region covers almost the same formations as the Bourgueil AOC, except that it is divided into two by the Montreuil-Bellay fault. This fault is a big scar in the landscape, more than 90 miles long. The northern block of Saumur is raised up along this fault and tilted northwards and toward the Loire. To the south, the topsoil was gradually stripped away by erosion. The Jurassic limestone along the fault consequently became exposed. Eventually, flinty clays developed. These flinty clays now support the vineyards of Brossay, Vaudelnay and Montreuil-Bellay. In the somewhat sunken zone of Cenomanian sands and clays slightly further north, there are no vines at all. Closer to the Loire River however (from St.-Cyr-en-Bourg onward) there are extensive plantings on the hills around Champigny. These hills are formed from Turonian and Senonian deposits. The Saumur-Champigny AOC is supported by these formations. Saumur-Champigny is the home of fleshy Cabernet Franc wines with good, solid structure. It has dense but supple tannins and aromas of red fruits and spice. There are no ancient alluvia in the Saumur area (unlike Bourgueil and Chinon).⁵⁸

According to winemaker Bruwer Raats, there is a general misconception that Cabernet Franc can be treated in the same manner as the rest of the Bordeaux varieties.⁴⁵

> “The origin of Cabernet Franc is from the Loire and the grape does not necessarily respond well to *terroir* ideally suitable for Cabernet Sauvignon or the other Bordeaux varieties. That is why I have sourced my grapes from specific pockets in Polkadraai and Simonsberg in Stellenbosch, which have a strong presence of decomposed Dolomite granite. I’ve found that this is the soil composition most suited to the cultivation of premium Cabernet Franc. This is also the closest match in terms of *terroir* to areas such as the Napa Valley, Chinon and left bank Bordeaux where world-class Cabernet Francs are being produced.”⁵⁹
Chris Keet is of the opinion that of all the varieties he has ever worked with, Cabernet Franc is the most specific in its terroir requirements, but that it is difficult to quantify exactly what those requirements are. According to him, there are a few distinct pockets where Cabernet Franc really works well (for example Helderberg and northern Simonsberg), and where it delivers wine with structure and spice, pepper and red berry fruit. He believes that one can pick up very quickly when Cabernet Franc is grown outside of its ‘comfort zone’ or when Cabernet Franc is poorly managed in the vineyards, as it then shows unpleasant green bean and stalky characters.

The Cabernet Franc for the Meerlust Rubicon 2007 was grown on very well drained, stony Vilafontes soil with approximately 20% clay, which cellarmaster Chris Williams regards as ideal for this variety. The 2007 Rubicon is the first vintage of this iconic wine to receive the coveted 5 star rating in the 2012 edition of Platter’s.
CHAPTER 9: PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the mid-2000s, South Africa had less than 1 000 hectares of Cabernet Franc (in comparison with more than 13 000 hectares of Cabernet Sauvignon), although Jancis Robinson admits that South Africa had its Cabernet Franc champions.¹ According to SAWIS statistics, plantings of Cabernet Franc in South Africa were as follows:²⁵

1998: 326,74 hectares
1999: 352,78 hectares
2000: 487,96 hectares
2008: 978,94 hectares
2009: 957,86 hectares

At the end of 2009, it was the 13th most planted grape in South Africa, making up slightly less than 1% of the national vineyard.¹⁷ According to the latest statistics (as at 30 November 2010), Cabernet Franc ranked 14th in 2010 (after Chenin Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Colombar, Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot, Pinotage, Ruby Cabernet, Muscat D’Alexandrie, Cinsaut, Sémillon, Pinot Noir), with 933,71 hectares planted.²⁵

The first single bottling of South African Cabernet Franc came from Warwick Estate in the Simonsberg-Stellenbosch ward. According to Michael Fridjhon, the United Kingdom’s Mark Savage MW was so impressed with a cask sample of Norma Ratcliffe’s Cabernet Franc he tasted that he persuaded her to bottle it especially for his fine wine business.¹³ Cabernet Franc played a major role in the maiden vintage 1995 Cordoba Crescendo. Chris Keet’s Crescendo, the name of the cellar’s powerful Cabernet Franc-driven blend, “became something of a vinous legend”.¹³ In an appraisal in March 2002, Tim James’s question to Chris Keet was: “Why Franc, one of the least common of the Bordeaux varieties in the Cape?” Keet’s answer was that it was “the Franc that pleased him most” and his Crescendo “burst onto the local wine scene to immediate and rare acclaim”.⁶¹
In June 2011, the key findings of a Wine magazine tasting panel were that Cabernet Franc can make wines of great subtlety. The panel observed, however, that there were too many South African wines that appeared overripe and overworked.¹⁷

Steenberg winemaker and panel member at the tasting, JD Pretorius, commented that Cabernet Franc was particularly prone to the effects of leafroll virus, and that the wines made from affected vines typically show a tomato-cocktail character. This character, combined with Cabernet Franc’s natural tendency to show a herbaceous character, caused many producers to pick ultra-ripe in an effort to avoid green aromas and flavours.¹⁷ The panel concluded that the general feeling was that the category (single variety Cabernet Franc) remained promising and that a focus on more complexity could be the key to even better wines.¹⁷

Table 9.1 below shows the red varieties planted during the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010, while Table 9.2 illustrates the status of red varieties in South Africa as at 30 November 2010. From Table 9.1 it is clear that almost half of the Cabernet Franc plantings in South Africa (456,86 of the 933,71 hectares) occur in the Stellenbosch region. Table 9.2 illustrates Cabernet Franc’s ranking at 14th place (in hectares) with total vines at 2 761 836 (933,71 hectares). This represents 2,10% of South African red grapes and 0,92% of all grapes (both red and white, in hectares). Table 9.3 shows the statistics of red varieties uprooted during the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010. All statistics were obtained from SAWIS.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIETY</th>
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<th>ROBERTSON</th>
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Table 9.1: Red varieties planted during the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010
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<th>% OF TOTAL</th>
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<td>Ha</td>
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Table 9.1: Red varieties planted during the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010 (continued)
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**Table 9.2: Status of red varieties as at 30 November 2010**
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Table 9.3: Red varieties uprooted during the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010
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<tr>
<td>Pinot Noir</td>
<td>8 327</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>10 792</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>86 063</td>
<td>25.15</td>
<td>473 457</td>
<td>154.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinotage</td>
<td>64 488</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>60 511</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td>32 702</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>473 457</td>
<td>154.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pountac</td>
<td>7 206</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Roobernet</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Cabernet</td>
<td>14 375</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>23 853</td>
<td>7.27</td>
<td>58 569</td>
<td>18.84</td>
<td>255 982</td>
<td>85.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sangiovese</td>
<td>12 876</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>15 126</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<td>Shiraz (Syrah)</td>
<td>62 153</td>
<td>23.26</td>
<td>27 482</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>33 432</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>421 934</td>
<td>147.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souzao</td>
<td>8 523</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tannat</td>
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<td>Tempranillo</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2 311</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tinta Barocca</td>
<td>20 760</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>16 676</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>70 129</td>
<td>23.63</td>
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<td>2.14</td>
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<td>Touriga Franca</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touriga Nacional</td>
<td>5 256</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Red Varieties</td>
<td>595 342</td>
<td>194.56</td>
<td>254 483</td>
<td>79.48</td>
<td>545 967</td>
<td>164.87</td>
<td>3 351 958</td>
<td>1 105.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3 Red varieties uprooted during the period 1 December 2009 to 30 November 2010 (continued)
CHAPTER 10: PRODUCERS

LOIRE PRODUCERS

Clos Rougeard is regarded as one of the top producers of Cabernet Franc in the Loire, where brothers Charly and Nadi Foucault ‘work incessantly in the vineyards’. Old Cabernet Franc vines, low yields and ageing in oak barriques enable them to produce rich, concentrated Saumur-Champigny that is very different from the light, fruity red wines generally found in the district. The two top wines, Les Poyeux and Le Bourg, are as elegant, restrained and structured as many a fine Bordeaux.

The wines of the impressive 18th century château of Villeneuve (built from the local tuffeau stone) are equally remarkable, made in an exacting manner by Jean-Pierre Chevallier. Rich, powerful, and deeply coloured, the red wines produced from Cabernet Franc are a wonderful example of the true potential of Saumur-Champigny. In exceptional years (2001, 1999, 1997) the long-ageing Le Grand Clos and Vieilles Vignes were also produced.

In Chinon, Bernard Baudry (Domaine Bernard Baudry) makes 5 separate cuvées of red: Les Granges (a softer, fruitier entry level wine from sand and gravel), La Domaine (which is a blend of Chinon’s two major terroirs: 75% fruit from gravel and 25% grown on limestone slopes), Les Grézeaux on gravel, Clos Guillot reflecting the chalky limestone with some clay and La Croix Boissée from Cabernet Franc grown on limestone soils with a fine clay topsoil. The latter two are structured and good for ageing.

For much of his career, Charles Joguet has been the leading winemaker in the Chinon appellation in the western Touraine. He makes wines of great richness of flavour – according to Oz Clarke “wines that in fact make one think of Bordeaux rather than of the Loire Valley”. He makes his Clos de la Dioterie from very old vines.
SOUTH AFRICAN PRODUCERS

In *Platter’s 2011,* the results of 35 single variety producers were noted as follows:

4½ stars: Nelson
Plaisir de Merle
Raats Family Wines
Warwick
Woolworths

4 stars
Alluvia
Anthonij Rupert
Buitenverwachting
Claime d’Or
Hermanuspietersfontein
Knorhoek
L’Avenir
Longridge
Lynx
Rainbow’s End (2)
Raka
Ridgeback
Woolworths
Zorgvliet

3½ stars
Avontuur
Eikendal
High Constantia
Mooiplaas
Ormonde
Philip Jordaan
Signal Hill
Spookfontein
3 stars
Idiom
Môreson
Oldenburg
Whalehaven

2½ stars
Bushmanpad
Ridgemor

The Warwick 2007 Cabernet Franc was specifically mentioned under the Wines of the Year, “Buy Now, Drink Later” category.

In *Platter’s 2012*, the results of 41 single variety producers were noted as follows:

5 stars
Warwick

4½ stars
Nelson
Plaisir de Merle
Raats Family Wines

4 stars
Alluvia
Anthonij Rupert
Buitenverwachting
Claime d’Or
Druk My Niet
Hermanuspietersfontein
Knorhoek
La Petite Ferme
Longridge
Lynx
Rainbow’s End (2)
Raka
Ridgeback
Woolworths
Zorgvliet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stars</th>
<th>Winery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3½</td>
<td>Avontuur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eikendal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Constantia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hillcrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leopard Frog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lovane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maison de Teijger (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mooiplaas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Môreson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oldenburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ormonde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philip Jordaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spookfontein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vergenoegd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Idiom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Signal Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whalehaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2½</td>
<td>Bushmanspad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ridgemor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 10.1 shows the number of Cabernet Franc producers in South Africa for the years 1997 – 2012. The number of South African producers who bottle Cabernet Franc as a single variety has only ever increased: from 1 producer in 1988, to 5 producers in 1997, 35 producers in 2011 and 41 producers in 2012.

Figure 10.1: Number of Cabernet Franc producers in South Africa, 1997 – 2012. (Source: Platter’s 1997 – 2012.)
CHAPTER 11: THE FRANC RANGERS OF SOUTH AFRICA

In the social media, Chris Keet has been called ‘the Cape’s maestro’¹² and Bruwer Raats ‘the Cabernet Franc God’,⁴⁹ but it was Norma Ratcliffe who was the pioneer who first bottled Cabernet Franc solo at Warwick in 1988.⁶⁴ Platter’s 1998 states that Cabernet Franc is Norma Ratcliffe’s favourite child and that her peers, who only blended with Cabernet Franc, took a she-cannot-be-serious stance when she started producing it as a single varietal wine.⁶⁴ Cabernet Franc was also said to be Charles Hopkins’, then winemaker at Bellingham (one of only five single-variety producers noted at the time), ‘soul-mate’ variety.⁶⁴ Both Hopkins’ Bellingham Premium 1995 and Ratcliffe’s Cabernet Franc 1995 received two bunch ratings (best of the bunch, superior Cape quality) and were voted ‘top tasting performers’ in Platter’s 1998.⁶⁴

It is said that Norma Ratcliffe hoisted this variety to separate ‘noble’ status in South Africa.⁶⁴ In 1997, Ratcliffe’s 1995 Warwick 100% varietal Cabernet Franc was judged best of all Cape red entries at London’s International Wines and Spirits Competition, scooping the Dave Hughes trophy.⁶⁴ Today Warwick visitors can undertake a ‘Big Five safari’ with a difference on the back of a game drive vehicle. The Big Five vineyards are viewed, with the Cabernet Franc vineyard being viewed as the elephant, because it is said to be a big wine which will never be forgotten once tasted.⁶⁵ The Warwick Cabernet Franc 2008 was rated a full 5 stars in Platter’s 2012.

Bruwer Raats’ name pops up every time Cabernet Franc is googled. Jancis Robinson calls him “the pioneer of fine varietal bottlings”.⁳⁷ The Wine magazine tasting panel (June 2011) described Bruwer Raats of Raats Family Wines as “one producer who clearly does have a handle on the variety”, with his 2009 rating 4½ stars in the tasting, while his 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2008 vintages have all rated 4 stars previously.¹⁷ Raats specialises in Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc, which have both been widely underestimated in the South African wine industry. His 2008 signature Raats Cabernet Franc scored 90 points in the December 2010 issue of Wine Spectator magazine. The reviewer James Molesworth described the wine as a “textbook, rock-solid version of Cabernet Franc” with “a fresh tobacco leaf edge guiding its core of black cherry, plum and blackberry fruit. Mineral and tobacco notes take over on the pure, racy finish”.⁶⁶
Raats’s 2007 vintage made it onto Olly Smith’s list of top summer scorers with 4 stars and a rating of 18/20 in the Decanter magazine of June 2010. Smith called Raats “the creator of the finest Cabernet Franc in the Cape”. This same vintage made its way to Jancis Robinson’s list of top twenty South African producers in the Financial Times of November 2009, where it is referred to it as “one of the more exciting wines”. The Raats Family Cabernet Franc 2009 is already the ninth vintage produced of the family range by Bruwer Raats.

There are a few young South African winemakers who are extremely passionate about the variety. Môreson winemaker Clayton Reabow makes two styles (a lean, leafy style, and a fruitier style), and his wine has been described as “gently structured”. As a farm, Môreson produces Cabernet Franc to use as a blending component in its flagship red, Magia, but, every few years, the Môreson Cabernet Franc possesses “such phenomenally unique characteristics” that they bottle it in limited quantities. Reabow is a huge fan of the cultivar and confirmed that Cabernet Franc as a single variety will be on Môreson’s portfolio “for good now”. The ‘young gun’ Craig Sheard is farming organically at Spookfontein Wines in Hermanus to improve the quality of the Spookfontein wines and is a Cabernet Franc winemaker to watch, describing himself as “fanatic about the cultivar”. Johann Fourie, senior winemaker at KWV, is very excited to include a single varietal bottling from the 2010 vintage in the prestigious KWV Mentors range. According to him, it is very pleasant to work with Cabernet Franc in the cellar: it sorts easily (typically 20% of the berries are removed), it has a nice firm berry and soft, mellow tannins are easily achieved. Johann only pumps over (no pigeage) and aims for a clean, elegant style. He believes in a good cold soak before fermentation, the addition of the press juice (vin de presse) to ensure one fermentation and a low percentage of new oak. He prefers Nevers oak for mouth feel and loves the cigar box and dusty aromas obtained from French oak. Balance is always key.
Cabernet Franc is one of the major red grape varieties worldwide and is principally grown for blending with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in the Bordeaux style. According to Orffer (1979) that Cabernet Franc plays an important role in the production of the big clarets. Penny Gold wrote her Cape Wine Master research report on the topic: “Why blend South African Cabernet Sauvignon?” Her conclusion is that Cabernets do need to be blended, but that there should also be Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc stand-alone varietal wines. It is not an aim of this assignment to answer the question “Why blend South African Cabernet Franc”, but the answer to such a question could certainly invoke interesting debate.

It is always said that Cabernet Franc tempers Cabernet Sauvignon. According to Michael Fridjhon, Cabernet Franc’s identity is largely swamped by its blending partners: “it’s seen to be adding to the harmony, rather than carrying the melody”.¹ It is interesting to note that when Chris Keet was asked about the name for his Crescendo, he replied that the name was chosen after careful deliberation: “we’ve built up to a peak … and it sounds like music on the ear”.⁶¹

Louis Nel, who is widely considered to be one of South Africa's most talented winemakers, made his first Cabernet Franc at Vredendal in 1993 and believes that there is a lot of good Cabernet Franc in South Africa. According to him, most of it is used in blends though, so it is not in the forefront. He also believes that a good blend can command a higher price than a single variety and that if the Cabernet Franc itself is not good often the blend will hide the Cabernet Franc. If the Cabernet Franc is good, however, it supports the blend.

John Skupny of Lang and Reed regards Cabernet Franc as the ‘chameleon’ of the Bordeaux red, because it is always willing to take on anything that is brought to it. If Merlot is brought to Cabernet Franc, it gets big, round and soft. If Cabernet Franc is blended with Cabernet Sauvignon, it will often add structure and tannin to the blend. He also holds the opinion that “Cabernet Franc makes Cabernet Sauvignon taste more like Cabernet Sauvignon”—a statement some South African wine producers agreed with.⁶⁸
On the Bordeaux website,\textsuperscript{69} Cabernet Franc is described as “a complementary variety”; it takes a back seat to Cabernet Sauvignon everywhere they are grown side-by-side.\textsuperscript{70} This secondary role does not diminish the importance of Cabernet Franc in a blend, however. This blending grape role has been understood for well over a century in the Cabernet Sauvignon dominated left bank wines.

According to Karen MacNeil, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec are the ‘seasonings’ in a Bordeaux blend. She admits however that, of the three, Cabernet Franc is the most well regarded “for the enticing violet aroma it can contribute”.\textsuperscript{26}

Cabernet Sauvignon is often overly austere and closed (particularly in youth) and it benefits from complementary varieties like Cabernet Franc, which can mitigate these hard, unpleasant qualities. Cabernet Franc is less deeply pigmented, more obviously aromatic and fruity in youth, with raspberry, violet, currant and herbal aromas. The less tannic Cabernet Franc allows some of Cabernet Sauvignon’s reclusive charms to present themselves.\textsuperscript{70} Cabernet Franc has fine and round tannins, resulting in a lively character that can be appreciated quickly and, according to the Bordeaux website, Cabernet Franc tannins can also age well (a lesser known fact about Cabernet Franc).\textsuperscript{69} It brings a marked roundness to Cabernet Sauvignon, “as well as stimulating fruity notes such as raspberry that perfectly balance the green pepper notes of young Cabernet Sauvignon”.\textsuperscript{69}

In young Bordeaux wines, Cabernet Franc’s refinement is more apparent than its strength: it is known for its mellowness, the refinement of its aromas and its vivacity, and this is the very reason why it plays an important role in the blending of Bordeaux varieties.\textsuperscript{69} In Europe, the wines are darker in colour, but softer, which makes Cabernet Franc the ideal blending partner for Cabernet Sauvignon.\textsuperscript{42} It contributes finesse and a peppery perfume to blends with more robust grapes.

Merlot is not the main variety at the 37 hectare, A-status premier grand cru classé Château Cheval Blanc. The wine’s originality is achieved by 60% Cabernet Franc, which gives aromatic complexity and balance (with 37% Merlot, 2% Malbec and 1% Cabernet Sauvignon).\textsuperscript{30}
It was reported in the En Primeur Special of *Decanter* magazine that 2010 was an exceptional year, and one where the right bank played its part.²⁸ Producers on the limestone plateau, in particular, have excelled, as have those with a good percentage of Cabernet Franc, which was outstanding in 2010. Château Cheval Blanc scored 5 stars, with 20 points out of 20, and was assigned the following tasting note: “More elegant and sensual than ’09. Sumptuous fruit. Refined texture and tannins. Lovely acidity for balance. Seamless. 2020 – 2050”.²⁸

Pierre Lurton from Château Cheval Blanc commented that “the Merlot was very fresh and elegant, but the Cabernet Franc was amazing, with great structure and definition”.²⁸

Château Ausone (premier grand cru classé A) scored 19,5 points and, for the first time ever, boasts 55% Cabernet Franc: “Floral, dense fruit and firm, finely knit tannins. Mineral freshness. 2022 – 2060”.²⁸

With 45% Cabernet Franc in 2010, Château Angelus boasts “complex spice and violet notes and lingering freshness”.²⁸

According to the Bordeaux website, this less well-known variety became famous with the 2000 vintage, especially in St-Émilion, where it excelled.⁶⁹

David Lake at Columbia Winery, Washington first began experimenting with Cabernet Franc in the 1970s. He planted it commercially in 1985 at Red Willow vineyards, where he blended it with Merlot. Lake believes Cabernet Franc to be less tannic than Merlot in Washington. He finds this curious because of the fact that, in Bordeaux, Merlot is regarded as softer than Cabernet Franc.⁹

**BLENDING WITH CABERNET FRANC IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Cabernet Franc is mostly used for blending in South Africa⁷¹ and it has become increasingly important in the more refined of the Cape’s Bordeaux blends. According to Chris Keet, Cabernet Franc grown in the right *terroir* can produce wines that can contribute very positively to a blend. He highlights its positive attributes as its spiciness, pepperiness, red and black berry
aromas and flavours, and its delightful fine-grained tannins. At Cordoba, he typically used 65 – 80% Cabernet Franc, and in his Keets wines typically about 25%. Chris Keet holds the opinion that Cabernet Franc is a wonderful blending partner with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and he would not consider producing a single-variety Cabernet Franc in South Africa.

The MR De Compostella 2008 scored the highest rating ever given to a South African Wine by The Wine Advocate from Robert Parker with 96 points (after establishing an impressive track record by earning consecutive 93 point Wine Spectator scores in each of its first three vintages). The composition of this ‘blockbuster Bordeaux blend’ changes every year, but the 2008 vintage boasts 37.5% Cabernet Franc, 37.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Malbec, 7.5% Petit Verdot and 7.5% Merlot. Each component is crafted to stand alone as a world class varietal wine. The MR De Compostella has been described as a rich, muscular red, with aromas and flavours of blackberry, black cherry and plum backed by notes of bittersweet chocolate, tobacco and earth.

The following two 5 star blends (out of 7 ‘Red Blends’ awarded 5 stars in Platter’s 2012) contain Cabernet Franc and the varietal percentages are stated below:

- **De Toren Fusion V 2009**: 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc, 12% Malbec, 7% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot

- **Meerlust Rubicon 2007**: 74% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot and 11% Cabernet Franc
CHAPTER 13: CABERNET FRANC IN THE VINEYARD

In Burger and Deist’s classic 552-page book on South African viticulture, *Wingerdhou in Suid-Afrika*, there are only two very short references to Cabernet Franc. In their table setting out the important characteristics of cultivars released to the South African wine industry, the following attributes are stated for Cabernet Franc.²

<table>
<thead>
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<th>moderately strong</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Crop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budding</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvest date</td>
<td>late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar in °Balling</td>
<td>22 – 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid in g/L</td>
<td>6 – 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rot resistance</td>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>premium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.1: Characteristics of Cabernet Franc

Exactly the same attributes are stated for Cabernet Sauvignon, except that the acid range for Cabernet Sauvignon is stated as 6 – 8 g/L.² Goussard states the average acid concentration as 4 – 6 g/L.³

Burger and Deist further state that, in 1981 (at the time of publication of their book), there were 63 000 Cabernet Franc vines planted (0,02% of total plantings), mainly in Stellenbosch, Paarl and Malmesbury.² As at 30 November 2010, total vines amount to 2 761 836.

Orffer describes Cabernet Franc as a noble cultivar, like Cabernet Sauvignon.² It grows vigorously, with a somewhat better yield than Cabernet Sauvignon, under similar conditions. It requires medium to high potential soils. Cool climates and fertile growth conditions may cause delayed ripening and low bud fertility.² Cane pruning, with adequate spurs and medium trellising to promote growth, gives good results. Cabernet Franc is fairly wind resistant. Oïdium may attack the berries and can be a serious problem on the leaves late in the season. Cabernet Franc has a good affinity for commercial rootstock cultivars.²
It crops well, with short pruning (“kortsnit”), but in vigorous vineyards better crops of 9 – 12 tons per hectare are obtained with supplementary longer bearers. The grapes ripen late (after middle March) and rapidly reach sugar of 22 – 24 °Balling, with a total acid of 6 – 7 g/L.

CLONES
The 26 Cabernet Franc clones (specifically called Cabernet Franc N) are the following numbers: 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 312, 326, 327, 330, 331, 332, 393, 394, 395, 396, 407, 408, 409, 542, 543, 544, 545, 622, 623 and 678.²⁰

The following clones available in South Africa were used in a study by Wessel: CF 212 C, CF 213 B, CF 214 B, CF 623 B.⁷³

According to Goussard, only three clones of Cabernet Franc are available in South Africa, namely CF 1 (a South African clone), CF 214 and CF 312 (both French clones). They have the following attributes:⁴³

CF 1 Average vigour with above average yield, strong berry/grass, originating from Nietvoorbij (Stellenbosch)

CF 214 Average to lower production, smaller berries, high quality, full, good tannin, suitable for maturation, from France

CF 312 Average production, strong grass/berry, produces very typical wine, from France.

Rainbow’s End uses all of the above clones for their single-varietal bottlings.⁷⁴ Although CF 1 used to be very popular in South Africa, Bruwer Raats regards this as the worst Cabernet Franc clone for the following reasons:⁴⁵

- it is responsible for high yields and overcropping
- it often causes green flavours and is mostly selected for its bearing capacity
- it is highly susceptible to millerandage.
He recommends 214 as the best clone to plant under South African conditions, and gives the following reasons for this:

- 214 gives more red berry than blackberry flavours which flavours are more typically associated with Cabernet Franc
- it has lower growth potential
- it grows less vigorously
- it gives the least millerandage (which usually occurs during flowering).

According to Charles Visser, Vititec has a very wide variety of Cabernet Franc clones. Table 13.2 provides a summary of Cabernet Franc clones readily available in South Africa. It is however not an exhaustive list of all clones available in South Africa.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLONE</th>
<th>ORIGIN</th>
<th>YEAR IMPORTED</th>
<th>MATERIAL AVAILABLE</th>
<th>MATERIAL AVAILABLE</th>
<th>VIRUS STATUS</th>
<th>ISEM</th>
<th>VITICULTURE DATA</th>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
<th>LOCAL OR FOREIGN</th>
<th>GENERAL INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>CF 1 A</td>
<td>NIWW</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2 bud scions x 1000</td>
<td>2 bud scions x 1000</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td></td>
<td>Above average production and average vigour</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Grass/berry; Good wine (Backsberg, Vriesenhof and Allesverloren)</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Good, balanced, consistent clone produces excellent wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 1 B</td>
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<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>clean</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 1 K</td>
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<td></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>P3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 213 B</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Average production</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Berry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Average production, wine typical of cultivar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 214 B</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Average to lower production, smaller berries</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Very good wine berry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>High quality, full, vegetative, Good tannins, suitable for long maturation, “improver” clone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 312 J</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Average production</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Grass/berry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average production, wine typical of cultivar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 312 T</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Grass/berry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 621 C</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Average production and</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Grass/berry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF 623 B</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td></td>
<td>Average production and strong vigour</td>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Outstanding wine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Classic clone with average production, supple wines with good colour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.2: Summary of commercial clones readily available in South Africa in 2011
In Pennsylvania, in August 2009, grape growers and winemakers spent two days focusing on Cabernet Franc (and Grüner Veltliner) as possible signature varieties for this eastern state of North America. Early plantings in Pennsylvania were vines from California, and the widely planted clone CA2 proved to be overly vigorous and susceptible to leafroll virus. Lucie Morton, a Virginia ampelographer and viticulturist, advocated the planting of several clones of Cabernet Franc on different rootstocks based on 1-meter spacing between vines, establishing two trunks per vine, and using cane pruning to help with disease management. She recommended three European clones as being superior for eastern vineyards:

- 214, known for its fruity flavours (currently the most popular clone)
- 327, slightly less vigorous and less fruity in flavour
- 623, which has dark fruit and some spicy flavours.

Winemakers in Virginia have described 214 as producing wines with dark fruit and anise and 327 as spicy with white pepper notes.

According to Morton, the best way to limit vigour is before planting, by selecting the proper clone and rootstock to match the soil. She has convinced many to remove their still-young CA2 clones on vigorous rootstocks and to rather embrace Cabernet Franc clones such as 214, 623 and 327.

ROOTSTOCK

A study was undertaken in 2003 – 2005 by Stafne, McCraw, McGlynn and Striegler from the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, Oklahoma State University, and the MVEC, Missouri State University to determine whether Cabernet Franc grafted onto various rootstocks differed in a number of measurable variables. The plots consisted of clone 1 Cabernet Franc with four different rootstocks: 1103 Paulsen, 140 Ruggeri, 3309 Couderc and St. George. They concluded that rootstock did not have much effect on the yield or quality of fruit produced by Cabernet Franc. This was also previously reported in an earlier analysis by McCraw et al. An additional year of data did not change the overall results. Though not significantly different, the overall yield of 3309 Couderc appeared to be lower than the other rootstocks. It was concluded that one particular problem with Cabernet Franc in Oklahoma is its tendency to overbear, thus resulting in uneven ripening.
Moderate- to low-vigour rootstocks are recommended to discourage additional vegetative growth.\textsuperscript{75} Several different rootstocks are in use in South Africa. Goussard recommends Richter 110 as the most suitable rootstock for South African Cabernet Franc.\textsuperscript{43} The choice of rootstock will however depend to a great extent on the choice of clone and the soil type. Bruwer Raats regards 101-14 Mgt as the best rootstock for Cabernet Franc, but admits that Richter 110 would be the rootstock of choice for lower potential, very well-drained soils where more vigour is needed, like certain pockets of Bottelary Hills.

Richter 99, Richter 110 and 101-14 Mgt are widely used for Cabernet Franc in South Africa. Richter 99 (\textit{V. Berlandieri} var Las Sorres \times \textit{V. Rupestris} var du Lot) is especially recommended for relatively deep soils (60 – 90 cm) that are well drained and have good moisture-holding properties. Red and yellow structureless soils (Hutton, Clovelly) and dark-coloured soils (Oakleaf) as well as shale and granite soils (Glenrosa, Swartland, Sterkspruit) where drainage is not a problem, appear to be the most suitable for Richter 99. Although wine countries such as France prefer Paulsen, Ruggeri and Richter 99, the latter performs very well under South African conditions and is therefore very popular. Richter 110 is recommended on the same wide-spectrum soils as Richter 99, while it is preferred on drier, medium-depth (40 – 60 cm) soils. Richter 110 is increasing in popularity at the cost of Richter 99 in wine countries around the Mediterranean. This is attributed to its better drought resistance. 101-14 Mgt performs well on a wider soil spectrum than Richter 99 and Richter 110, and the soils on which it is used may be relatively shallower. 101-14 Mgt can be used on shale and granite-like structured soil and shallow, wet soils. Resistance to wet conditions is however very poor and 101-14 Mgt has a poor resistance to lime.\textsuperscript{105}

\textbf{TRELLISING, PRUNING AND CANOPY MANAGEMENT}

The influence of training/the trellising system and rootstock selection on the productivity and fruit composition of Chardonnay and Cabernet Franc grapevines in Ontario, Canada was studied by Vanden Heuvel, Proctor, Sullivan and Fisher in 2004.\textsuperscript{52} Cabernet Franc had higher yields (13\%) in the cane- versus the spur-pruned systems. The lowest yielding systems, low cordon and vertiko, produced fruit with the highest mean Brix over the four-year period, although the low-cordon canopy had a high leaf layer number, while vertiko had a low leaf layer number during the first two years of study. Must pH and titratable acidity were generally
not affected by training system. Vines growing on 5BB rootstock produced greater yields, pruning weights, and had lower crop-load ratios compared to vines growing on Riparia. Vines with Riparia rootstock produced fruit higher in Brix in two of the four years.⁵²

As mentioned in Chapter 7, the presence of green aromas and herbaceous flavours, derived mostly from methoxypyrazines, was studied by Scheiner, Sacks and VandenHeuvel at Cornell’s New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, New York. They are of the opinion that although there are various techniques to reduce IBMP content that can be used in the winery (such as careful destemming, thermo-vinification, the use of activated charcoal, oak ageing and micro-oxygenation) the most successful way to solve the problem of overly herbaceous flavours and the presence of green aromas and flavours derived from the presence of methoxypyrazines in a wine, is in the vineyard. They found that yield per vine is not the important factor, but canopy control is de rigueur—the balance of the vine and the cluster light exposure are most important.⁴¹

Scheiner’s evidence⁴¹ confirms that leaf removal (at berry set, and 30 and 50 days thereafter) exposes clusters to light and helps reduce IBMP content. Crop thinning, done as early as possible, is essential; if waiting too long, thinning will neither reduce the IBMP nor hasten ripening. Furthermore, the further a cluster is from the cordon, the greater the IBMP content. Scheiner’s findings, that crop load and vigour have no direct relationship to IBMP, goes against conventional thinking. Vine balance (the old ‘saw-horse’ of 1 pound of pruning weight for 1 pound of yield) correlates directly with a reduction in IBMP. He advocates that limiting an extremely vigorous vine to a very small crop is not going to spare your wine from IBMP.

Commonly cordon-trained and spur-pruned Cabernet Franc may also be head trained and cane pruned. It is easily hedged, and a good candidate for mechanical pruning if not cane pruned.

It is often said that Cabernet Franc is weedy and thin when overcropped.⁷⁶ Cabernet Franc is known to be quite vigorous (according to Bruwer Raats it grows like a weed) and should therefore be pruned moderately long, or shorter in areas with hotter climates.⁵⁰ The Interloire website recommends pruning to reduce yields and to restore balance to the vineyards. They regard canopy management as critical, and shoot removal should be carried out in over-
vigorous vineyards. Leaf plucking is critical at the start of veraison to reduce herbaceous flavours. Many South African producers regard canopy management as crucial, and of the utmost importance. According to Marius Lategan, wines made from Cabernet Franc are certainly ‘made in the vineyard’ (“Cabernet Franc certainly takes you out of the cellar!”) but Cabernet Franc reacts extremely positively to various different viticultural practices.  ⁵⁰

BUDDING AND RIPENING

According to the *Vin de France* website,²⁰ Cabernet Franc is neither an early nor a late variety; it buds on average 5 days after Chasselas (which is given as “the benchmark variety”). It ripens later, reaching full ripeness 2.5 - 3 weeks after Chasselas, making it a Period 11 variety.²⁰

PESTS AND DISEASES

Cabernet Franc is moderately resistant to grey mould, and moderately susceptible to eutypiosis and esca. It is also susceptible to leafhoppers.²⁰ On average, it is more susceptible to Pierce’s disease than Cabernet Sauvignon, yet less susceptible to Eutypa dieback.⁷⁵ Bunch rot is not a significant disease problem and it seldom occurs: Cabernet Franc shows good resistance against grey rot and compares well with Cabernet Sauvignon.⁷²

On the farm Spookfontein in the Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, close to the coastal town of Hermanus, baboons are a huge viticultural hazard, and winemaker Craig Sheard has to spend much time monitoring their movements and chasing them away from the vines. At Marklew Family Wines, Billy Marklew used chilli spray on the young shoots in 2011 to deter small buck (especially Duiker) from eating the 10 – 15 cm long shoots.⁷⁷

According to precision viticulturist, Dr Phillip Freese, Cabernet Franc is extremely sensitive to virus. Charles Visser agrees that Cabernet Franc is the best indicator for leafroll virus, which is common in older plantings. This affects the quality of the fruit in terms of ripening and the wine’s colour.³⁵ Grapevine leafroll disease (Leafroll) is the most important disease of grapevines in South Africa where spread of the disease is common. It is seen as a difficult, but not an insurmountable problem and various control strategies, some targeted at one or more components of the disease triangle consisting of the plant, the very efficient vector (the vine mealybug) and the virus, are usually applied.¹⁰⁶
OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

Cabernet Franc is a higher yielding variety than Cabernet Sauvignon due to greater set. Late and uneven veraison is common. Cluster thinning at veraison is therefore usually warranted to enhance ripening uniformity. Occasionally, set may be reduced by shelling, but this occurs much less severely than in Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon.⁷⁵

Millerandage occurs when some fertilized flowers do not form seeds, only small berry clusters. Grape berry size depends on the number of seeds so berries with no seeds will be significantly smaller than berries containing seeds. According to Marius Lategan, wind during flowering plays a big role in uneven ripening, because Cabernet Franc is extremely sensitive to wind during this stage.

GROWTH AND SOIL ADAPTABILITY

Cabernet Franc has the tendency to crop big, growing vigorously in many soil types in both cool and warm regions. Vines should thus be planted in well-drained, good-capacity sites, so vigour can be reduced. “Also be aware that Cabernet Franc gets water-stressed easily, then you’ll lose a lot of the aromatics”, warned Dr Freese at a quality group discussion and tasting in April 2004. (A South African Cabernet Franc discussion and tasting work group was started in South Africa in 2002, with financial assistance from Veritas. A few producers and industry commentators gathered at Warwick to assess the local progress). He also commented that some South African examples had a tendency to go “very ripe”. This was identified as brick-red hues, despite the wines being young.⁷¹ The main lesson learnt at the blind tasting of 20 Cabernet Franc wines (single variety wines and blends dominated by Cabernet Franc, against international contenders) was that a warm-climate terroir is critical for producing good Cabernet Franc.⁷¹

Many winemakers are of the opinion that Cabernet Franc differs more in the vineyards than in winemaking, and that Cabernet Franc is definitely made in the vineyard. Winemaker Chris Upchurch of DeLille Cellars (founded in 1992, in Washington) agrees that Cabernet Franc loves to grow and warns that “you really have to watch the canopy and irrigation. In that way, it’s like Syrah. It loves to hang a lot of fruit”.⁹
PLANTING DENSITY AND PRODUCTION

Cabernet Franc is a moderate yielding variety, averaging 5 – 7 tons per acre. The Hermanuspietersfontein Swartskaap Cabernet Franc is planted on a 3, 96 hectare area at an altitude of 247 – 277 meters. It has a northeast/southwest elevation and the density is 3 086 vines per hectare, yielding 47,6 hl (5 tons) per hectare. The vineyard was planted in 2000.78

Bruwer Raats’s best block yields 4 – 6 tons per hectare. It is trellised 850 mm above the ground, with 2,7 metres between rows. He is currently experimenting with a higher than usual density vineyard planting. This Eden Vineyard in Polkadraai was narrow planted (1 × 1,2 metres) in 2009 and it is his intention to make a single vineyard Cabernet Franc from it. It was planted “paaltjie by stok” (each vine planted alongside its own pole). Marklew’s cordon is 700 mm above the ground and the vines are planted 1,22 × 2,44 metres. The vineyard was planted in 2005. The block is 1,2 hectares and is farmed dry.
CHAPTER 14: PHENOLIC RIPENESS

Jancis Robinson explains phenolic ripeness as follows:

“Phenolic ripeness is a fashionable concept among winemakers who seek a stage of ripeness in grapes beyond a simple and measurable level of sugar in the grapes. They want the phenolics, especially the tannins, to taste fully mature. In the US in particular there is a widespread horror of any hint of ‘greenness’ or ‘herbaceousness’”. ⁷⁹

She admits that “there is no absolute measurement of this grape nirvana.”

Phenolics, sometimes called polyphenolics or polyphenols, is a very large group of highly reactive chemical compounds of which phenol (C₆H₅OH) is the basic building block. These include many natural colour pigments such as the anthocyanins of fruit and dark-skinned grapes, most natural vegetable tannins such as occur in grapes, and many flavour compounds.

These compounds occur in great profusion in grapes. They are particularly rich in the stems, seeds and skins, but also occur in the juice and pulp. Phenolics are more abundant in dark-skinned grapes than in white wine grapes. The anthocyanin pigments are created through a series of metabolic steps from simpler phenolic molecules during ripening and the stages known as veraison and engustment. The concentration of phenolics in grape skins increases if the berries are exposed to sunlight.

Hundreds of compounds belong to the phenolics category, and they can initially be classified as either non-flavonoid or flavonoid. Non-flavonoids are simpler. They are derived from cinnamic and benzoic acids; one of the most abundant in grape juice is caftaric acid, the tartrate ester of caffeic acid (esters between tartaric acid and phenolic acids are common). Flavonoids encompass catechins, flavones, flavonols such as quercetin, and anthocyanins. Many of these compounds belong to the general group known as secondary metabolites, meaning that they are not involved in the primary metabolism of the plant. They are highly water soluble and are secreted into the berry vacuole, many as glycosides. Some are flavour precursors. Catechins also make up the structures called tannins, which are an essential part of the taste and flavour of grapes and other fruits.⁸⁰
During winemaking, when the ripe grape berry is crushed, the skin cells containing pigments begin to lose these pigments to the acidic grape juice. Alcohol, produced by fermentation, greatly speeds up this extraction process. Then, during the maceration phase, the anthocyanin pigments begin a transformation into pigmented tannins by reaction with the catechins to give, ultimately, the stable colour of a mature red wine. Tannin polymers formed without anthocyanins, as they are in a white wine, taste bitter when they are of moderate size, while larger ones are responsible for the mouth-puckering astringency in young wines. As red wine ages, the pigmented tannin complex forms larger and larger polymers which may eventually exceed their solubility in the wine and precipitate as sediment.

A significant number of flavour precursors as well as flavour compounds also have the phenol structure. Examples of these are vanillin, the key aroma compound of the vanilla bean, and raspberry ketone, the impact compound of raspberries. The ester methyl salicylate, familiar as oil of wintergreen, is also a phenolic compound. These and many others are either grape constituents or are produced as trace components during alcoholic fermentation and by glycoside hydrolysis during the subsequent processing and ageing phases.

The *Interloire* website\(^9\) recommends that winemakers inspect and taste the fruit on a regular basis leading up to harvest. According to most South African winemakers, and especially Bruwer Raats, such inspection and tasting of the fruit on a regular basis is paramount. Marius Lategan also believes in properly tasting the grapes by using his tongue, chewing the skins and crushing the pips in his mouth. Timing of harvest in the Loire is paramount to achieving a riper, richer, more balanced style of Cabernet Franc—harvest should ideally commence when fruit and phenolic ripeness are optimum. It is suggested that in warm years the flavour ripeness will occur earlier than phenolic ripeness and that in this instance the timing of harvest should be linked to flavour ripeness and not phenolic ripeness to ensure that typical fruit flavours of the variety and region are preserved.
Phenolic ripeness is dependent on hang time and not on weather, whereas sugar ripeness is dependent on weather. Most winemakers observe sugar, pH and acid levels to determine when their grapes are ripe. This does not mean that the flavour components are ripe, as these require time to achieve optimal ripeness. Sugars, flavours and tannins are linked, but they have different maturation paths.

- Phenolic ripeness is the point at which several factors need to be considered. The first is that the total amount of anthocyanins \([A]\) has to have reached a maximum as this concentration will contribute to the flavour profile.

- Secondly, the grape must be in a state to release these anthocyanins under winemaking conditions; in other words, the compounds need to be extractable from the grape skins in order to contribute flavour in the wine. This is determined by the ratio of anthocyanin concentration at winemaking conditions \([A]3.2\) [anthocyanin extraction at pH 3.2] to the total concentration of anthocyanins \([A]1\) [anthocyanin extraction at pH 1].

- Thirdly, the total amount of tannins present in the grape (sum of skin and seed tannins) must not be in too high a percentage of the total phenolics; otherwise they would be considered as green.

THE FOLLOWING POINTS ARE IMPORTANT:

- \([A]1\) [extraction at pH 1] is the potential colour (in terms of phenolic compounds – anthocyanins – available) and thus colour that grapes can theoretically deliver. Marais recorded an excellent correlation between anthocyanin levels (colour) and the flavour quality of wine. A1 is also an indicator of quality of the grapes and indicates the suitability of terroir to the variety. It will vary with stress. Ideally, one of the aspects of phenolic ripeness is for \([A]1\) to peak and turn slightly downwards (one should however be careful of false peaks).

- \([A]3.2\) [extraction at pH 3.2] is the colour that we can obtain under winemaking conditions, and hence a percentage difference of the two is the extraction \(Ea\)%.

MP
is the tannin contribution of the pips which, ideally, should be < 15%, otherwise bitter tannins are obtained. The balling, acid and pH are self-explanatory.

An indication of [A]1 quality as per assessment (by Dr Andy Roediger) is given below. It should however be borne in mind that this is also season dependant, and some vintages are not as good as others:

Table 1: Quality levels of Cabernet Sauvignon and Franc according to anthocyanin concentration [A]1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Good quality</th>
<th>Excellent quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet Sauvignon</td>
<td>&gt; 1600</td>
<td>&gt; 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabernet Franc</td>
<td>&gt; 1150</td>
<td>&gt; 1400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXEMPLARY

Table 2: Phenolic ripeness of Cabernet Franc during 2003 vintage at Lanzerac winery comparing two blocks LCF and LCF2
Based on phenolic results in Table 3, which indicates far higher anthocyanins in block LCF 2 than in block LCF (a wet block), it can be deduced that Cabernet Franc does not like to grow in wet areas. The two blocks’ samples above, at Lanzerac, clearly indicate the difference in terroir. Sample LCF was taken from a wet area, where even the planting of grass between rows, did not alleviate the water excess. This is evident from the low anthocyanin counts of [A]1, relative to block LCF2, which is planted on granitic clay further up Stellenbosch Mountain. The anthocyanin count [A]1 delivered by this block is considerably higher than that delivered by block LCF.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>TPI (%)</th>
<th>Ea (%)</th>
<th>[A]1 (mg/L)</th>
<th>[A]3.2 (mg/L)</th>
<th>Skin tannin</th>
<th>Seed tannin</th>
<th>Mp (%)</th>
<th>Tan/[A] ratio</th>
<th>Brix (°Bx)</th>
<th>pH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31-Jan-07</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>1489</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-Feb-07</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Feb-07</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>1293</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Feb-07</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb-07</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>1246</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-Mar-07</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>1302</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Phenolic ripeness of Cabernet Franc during 2007 vintage at Amani winery

Block H at Amani estate exhibits a typical example of how Cabernet Franc in certain areas does not show vast anthocyanin change throughout the season. This block consists of essentially Longlands sand. Yet on other soils such as De Toren’s Escourt/Kroonstad, which is slightly gravelly with clay as subsoil, it can show higher values of anthocyanin concentrations, as can be seen in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>TPI (%)</th>
<th>Ea (%)</th>
<th>[A]1 (mg/L)</th>
<th>[A]3.2 (mg/L)</th>
<th>Skin tannin</th>
<th>Seed tannin</th>
<th>Mp (%)</th>
<th>Tan/[A] ratio</th>
<th>Brix (°Bx)</th>
<th>pH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09-Feb-05</td>
<td>Onder</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Feb-05</td>
<td>Onder</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-Feb-05</td>
<td>Onder</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>1106</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Feb-05</td>
<td>Onder</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-Mar-05</td>
<td>Onder</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-Mar-05</td>
<td>Onder</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>1399</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Phenolic ripeness of Cabernet Franc during 2005 vintage at De Toren winery
The difference in peak anthocyanins ([A]1) in the two different sites above highlights the fact that Cabernet Franc delivers better quality grapes in terms of anthocyanin count, which results in better wine from grapes grown on heavy clay/gravelly soils than from grapes grown on the lighter sandy soils. This was also confirmed with viticulturist Kevin Watt.

Phenolic ripeness results show that Cabernet Franc can achieve excellent colour in the Cape (specifically Stellenbosch), as is exhibited by the high anthocyanin counts at Lanzerac and De Toren. In addition, Cabernet Franc does reach ripeness as is shown by the high extraction values (Ea%) at Amani, De Toren and Lanzerac (LCF2). The tannins also ripen very well, as is indicated by the low Mp% in all the examples cited above, at a reasonable alcohol level. Thus, Cabernet Franc could do very well at selected sites in the Cape, achieving physiological ripeness with ease.

Bruwer Raats strongly believes in decomposed dolomite granite for the growing of Cabernet Franc in South Africa, believing that full physiological ripeness can easily be achieved at 22,5 – 23 °Balling, with pH counts of 3,4 – 3,5 and with acids of 6,5 – 7.
CHAPTER 15: CABERNET FRANC IN THE WINERY

For years, Loire reds suffered from a lack of extraction.¹ Since the 1980s, winemakers have worked hard to extract greater colour and tannins from their red wine musts, by the use of prolonged skin contact, temperature control, and pump-over regimes. In many a Loire autumn and winter, temperature control is just as likely to include heating the must as cooling it.¹

Chaptalization is the norm in the Loire. It is usually done to a maximum of an additional 2,5% alcoholic strength of the finished wine except in exceptionally hot vintages.¹

According to South Africa’s Bruwer Raats, Cabernet Franc is extremely challenging in the cellar, mainly because its colour is unstable (“there is a lot of colour, but you lose it easily early in the process”). He believes in cold soaking (cooling the must down to 12 - 14˚C) for 5 – 7 days prior to the onset of alcoholic fermentation in order to extract all the colour and all the fruit very early on in the winemaking process. He follows this regime in all vintages and also believes in a soft and gentle extraction and that Cabernet Franc should never be over extracted.

YEAST

Given that Cabernet Franc wines are generally a lighter style than its relative Cabernet Sauvignon, with fewer tannins and mellow tones of strawberry and blackberry on the nose, AB Mauri recommends the following yeasts for best results with Cabernet Franc grapes:⁸⁶ AWRI 796, BP 725, Maurivin B, PDM, AWRI 1503.

Anchor recommends WE 372 for the vinification of most red grape varieties. It enhances red berry and floral aromas⁹³ and Môreson winemaker Clayton Reabow uses this yeast for his “warmer climate, aromatic, fruit-forward wines”, while he uses D254 for his “cooler climate, classic, violet wines”.

Lallemand recommends the following yeasts for Cabernet Franc:⁸⁷
Bruwer Raats prefers the Lalvin ICV-D254 and Enoferm BDX for his wines. He prefers the former for more extraction (in the case of poorer soil or smaller berries) and the latter for wines made from a more vigorous vineyard. Johann Fourie (KWV) uses Enoferm BDX for 90% of all his wines made from Bordeaux varieties.\textsuperscript{88}

The yield for the Hermanuspietersfontein Cabernet Franc is 47,6 hectolitres (7 tons) per hectare. The grapes are cold macerated prior to fermentation for 3 – 4 days and receive 1 week extended skin contact after fermentation. Approximately 3 punch-downs per day are done. Fermentation temperature is 24 – 26 °C and malolactic fermentation takes place in tank. The wine is matured in wood for 16 months, and new and second-fill 225 litre French oak is used. Swartskaap is bottled in April and remains in bottle for 3 months before release. Maturation potential is estimated at 7 years and longer.\textsuperscript{78}

The Môreson Cabernet Franc grapes are destemmed, sorted, lightly crushed and then transferred to open fermenters where the mash undergoes cold soaking for 48 hours at temperatures close to 16 °C. It is then inoculated with the desired yeast strain and fermentation takes place under controlled temperatures, never exceeding 28 °C. A punch-down and pump-over regime is followed during fermentation, and the grapes also go through a 2-day pre-ferment maceration period and a 1-week post-fermentation maceration period.
After fermentation, the free run juice is drained and transferred to tank. The skins are pressed and added to the free run. No press wine is added back to the free-run wine. Maturation at Môreson takes place in third- and fourth-fill French oak barrels and lasts for 24 months.⁸⁹

The Warwick current vintage (2008) is aged in barrels for 24 months and 60% new oak is used.⁹⁰ At Avontuur, the Cabernet Franc grapes are cold-soaked for 2 days. Both fermentations are done in tanks and the wine is barrel matured for 10 months in second- and third-fill French oak.⁹¹

Washington winemaker Chris Upchurch believes that the toasting of barrels used is important with Cabernet Franc. He uses a heavier toast, like medium-plus, for it.⁹ Larry Walker quotes him as follows:

“When you match wine with oak, there are really two components, wood and toast. So the more toast you have, the less wood flavours. You would think a lighter wine like Cabernet Franc would take a lighter toast. The opposite is true, because of the aromatics. Like Pinot Noir, the heavier toast tends to show the aromatics of the wine better than if it had more wood.”⁹

According to Bruwer Raats, the oaking regime is determined by the style, the market-readiness and retail price of the wine. Cabernet Franc demands a lot of attention in the vineyard and is expensive to produce (the labour involved being an expensive component), hence attention and detail in the cellar is required to produce quality wine. It is usually expected from Cabernet Franc producers to use smaller oak barrels for maturation. He uses medium-to-high/high intensity toasting. Alternative oaking methods are also used with success. An example is Raats’s Granite Blocks Cabernet Franc, which is aimed at the United States market at a price point of 7.99 - 8.99 US$—a prime example of a wine where alternative oak treatment was used to match price/quality ratio successfully (half-used oak chips were used during fermentation).

Leopard Frog Vineyards’ Aphrodite Africa Cabernet Franc 2004 is the first South African Cabernet Franc aged for an unprecedented 60 months in new French oak (Nevers) of medium plus toast followed by 24 months bottle ageing prior to release. The wine won a Gold Medal at
the Challenge International du Vin in France in 2011 and is generally sold in North America and Asia, with Canada and the USA being its largest markets.⁹²

Tim Atkin MW regards the use of too much new oak on Cabernet Franc as a worrying tendency. He warns that “most of the time the structure of Cabernet Franc wine cannot support the weight of all that timber”. According to him, “I want Cabernet Franc to taste of Cabernet Franc, not splinters”.⁵⁴ For this same reason, Marius Lategan advises to stay away from heavily toasted barrels, because it could accentuate ‘green’ characters. He recommends using 300 – 400 L medium to medium plus toast barrels from the Central forests of France with a tight to very tight grain in order to focus on the elegance of Cabernet Franc, rather than on ‘toastiness’.

Bruwer Raats regards himself as “not a big oak guy” and actually requested Mercurey to lower the usual barrel toasting temperature but to extend the time period of toasting the barrels in order to avoid charry flavours and ensure a much deeper toasting. This enables him to use new barrels and up to fifth or sixth fill barrels.
CHAPTER 16: PERFORMANCE OF SA CABERNET FRANC IN RECENT WINE COMPETITIONS/JUDGING

The Veritas Awards is seen as South Africa’s biggest competition for market ready wines, and is regarded as the largest awards competition by way of entries: 314 wineries entered the 2010 competition, with a total of 1 753 wines—indeed perhaps the “Oscar” of wine competitions.

2010 VERITAS AWARDS

Silver: Oldenburg Vineyards 2008 (16 points awarded for a silver medal)

It is interesting to note that this same wine scored only 2½ stars in the Wine Magazine panel tasting in June 2011. At this same panel tasting, the Zorgvliet Silver Myn 2007 and the Ondine 2008 scored higher, at 3½ and 3 stars, respectively.

Bronze:
- Avontuur 2008
- Buitenverwachting 2006
- Longridge 2007
- Ondine 2008
- Raka 2007
- Raka 2008
- Zorgvliet Silver Myn 2007

2011 VERITAS AWARDS

Gold: Longridge Cabernet Franc 2007

Silver:
- Lisha Nelson Cabernet Franc Signature Range (O/D) 2008
- Whalehaven Cabernet Franc 2007

Bronze:
- Druk My Niet Find Art Collection Cabernet Franc 2009
- Oldenburg Cabernet Franc 2007
- Ondine Cabernet Franc 2008
OTHER AWARDS

Plaisir de Merle’s Cabernet Franc 2008 has been awarded a National Certificate for the top Cabernet Franc at the 2010 SA Terroir Wine Awards (the fifth competition since 2006) and also received the Paarl District Terroir Award.

Hermanuspietersfontein opened its doors in 2006, and for three of the next four vintages Swartskaap, their single cultivar Cabernet Franc, walked off with SA Terroir Wine Awards in 2008, 2009 and 2010.78
CHAPTER 17: THE MARKETING OF CABERNET FRANC

Loire rosés and Chinon and Saumur-Champigny red wines have long been popular wines in Paris brasseries where they are often served chilled, with everything from roast chicken to classic French onion soup. Jim Budd sees this as rather double-edged sword: “a commercial success, yes, but with a reputation for being light and easy drinking”.¹⁴

Cabernet Franc played a cameo role (as did Merlot and Chardonnay) in the movie Sideways. It, too, was brought into disrepute by the main character Miles (played by Paul Giamatti). But unlike Merlot and Chardonnay, whose images suffered, Cabernet Franc got the last laugh. Late in the film, Miles, in a fit of hopelessness, swallows the contents of his prized bottle of 1961 Cheval Blanc at a local burger roadhouse from a plastic cup, clearly having forgotten that he does not like Cabernet Franc.⁵

Although marketing wine is not rocket science,⁹⁸ most varietal Cabernet Franc producers agree that it is a little hard to sell, although they also agree that once people taste Cabernet Franc, they find it very appealing. In the words of David Lake (Columbia Winery, Washington): “it comes around quickly, has vivid fruit and makes friends easily”.⁹

Bruwer Raats seems to understand that niche marketing is critical and has opted for a sophisticated international niche strategy where his unique product is sold on a global basis, but in limited quantities and in restaurants. The USA market accounts for half the Raats exports, which is unusual for a Cape winery.⁶² Bruce Schneider of Schneider Vineyards, on the North Fork of Long Island, agrees that Cabernet Franc is a niche variety but is of the opinion that increasingly more people are discovering it, especially in restaurants in the USA.⁹ Tim Costner also holds the view that Cabernet Franc is definitely gaining attention among American consumers.⁶⁸
According to Michael Fridjhon, it is sadly unlikely that Cabernet Franc will form part of the trinity of South Africa’s most respected wines.\textsuperscript{13} He uses the analogy of New Zealand, put on the world wine map by Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, and gives the following explanation:

“The trouble with having a reputation for one kind of performance is that it’s difficult to persuade the punters that you can do other things equally well. If you are good at two, the difficulties increase exponentially. Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc put New Zealand on the world wine map. Accordingly, it’s taken years for international consumers to recognise the fabulous quality of Kiwi Pinot Noir.

When the Kiwis started winning international shows with their Gimblett Gravels Shirazes, it seemed almost inconceivable that this might also be a variety from which New Zealand could produce world-class wines. You can almost see the fit between Sauvignon and Pinot—they’re both cool-climate cultivars. But when Hawkes Bay takes on Barossa and wins, there’s little left of the original coherence.

Over the past two decades, South Africa has built an international reputation for its Sauvignons and its Chenins. Both are Loire varieties, so the fit made sense. Chenin suffered initially because, for most wine drinkers, it’s simply not sexy enough. There’s enough badly made wine—from the Loire, but also from California, the Cape and even Australia—for no-one to see the point of the claim. As Taki Theodoracopulos, writing years ago in \textit{The Spectator} said: “That’s a little like saying, ‘the prettiest girl in Istanbul’.”

Cape Sauvignon has had to mark out its territory between the flamboyant Kiwi styles and the more mineral wines of the Loire. It has succeeded because there are enough consistently good examples, and because the international appetite for quality Sauvignon seems insatiable.

There is now increasing evidence that the Cape has—in Cabernet Franc—another potentially world-class performer in its vineyards”.\textsuperscript{13}
The biggest problem for Cabernet Franc across the globe is that no one markets it. Cabernet Franc is one of the forgotten grape varieties that rarely gets any of the limelight afforded to star varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon (arguably the most highly regarded red wine grape) or Syrah. In the Loire valley, it is a solo performer that does really well though. In the June 2011 issue of *The Drinks Business*, Patrick Schmitt states that in any discussion about overlooked and unfashionable sources of French wines, the western and middle Loire always emerges as a key candidate. He interviewed Noel Bourgrier, the manager of Famille Bougrier, a 20 000 hectolitre operation in Touraine, who believes that he deserves a greater share of key markets, such as the UK. Bourgrier is clear that the next step for his company is to “add value”, and he wants to emphasise, in a (according to Schmitt) refreshingly unpretentious manner, “that the Loire makes friendly wine that is easy to drink, and we are very competitive in terms of price”. He also identifies one further benefit, concluding that “the advantage in the Loire, like Alsace, is that the majority of wines are mono-variety”.

Chinook Wines in Prosser, Washington makes Chinon-style wines, aiming for very drinkable, soft wines with low tannins and fairly low total acidity. Their wines are 100% Cabernet Franc and are bottled in Burgundy bottles to let the consumer know that these wines are not Bordeaux-style wines. The wine has been extremely successful in restaurants.

So why are South African Cabernet Franc wines not locally and universally acclaimed? The answer to this seems to lie in the fact that Cabernet Franc battles universal acclaim. Mark Wagner, of Lamoreaux Landing in the Finger Lakes region of New York, agrees that not many people recognize Cabernet Franc and regards this as its only downside. From a marketing viewpoint, he thinks education of people is key. Most South African producers agree with this.

Chris Keet makes the very interesting point that the ‘Franc’ part of the name does not work well at all for the Afrikaans consumer. The word ‘vrank’ in the Afrikaans language has a very bad connotation meaning “acrid, acid, tart, harsh, astringent” with some dictionaries translating the word to ‘sour’.

Lang & Reed Wine Company in the Napa Valley is a rarity in the USA, because they produce only Cabernet Franc. Founder John Skupny has many years of experience on the marketing side
of the wine business, but admits that it has not been easy. Skupny regards the metropolitan areas as the hot markets for Lang and Reed, citing San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York City as their top markets. They specifically target accounts that are a little more aware. John Skupny believes that in some areas “they just don’t get what Cabernet Franc is about”. Their export markets are doing well, especially the United Kingdom, Japan, Hong Kong and France. John Skupny is of the opinion that, overall, Cabernet Franc does well in markets where there is some knowledge of the Loire reds “and where there is an appreciation of a good price-value ratio”.

According to Roland Peens, director and shareholder of Wine Cellar Fine Wine Brokers and Cellars in Observatory, they have stocked some Chinon and St.-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil wines in the past with little success. When questioned as to why these wines had little success in the South African market he responded as follows: “The red wine apppellations in the Loire are not very well known around the world and especially not in South Africa”. He posed the following question: “Do people know that they are Cabernet Franc?”

Furthermore, according to Roland, these wines lie at the northern edge of red wine growing in France. “They typically are lean in body with high acidity and rustic tannins. Therefore they are not easy for South African palates to understand and appreciate, seeking more sweetness and alcohol”.

He concludes, stating that with the warm vintages of 2003, 2005 and 2009 and with more producers taking the reds more seriously, the wines are, however, becoming better and more approachable.

In South Africa, the variety is obscure, even to wine professionals. They might all recognize the valuable contribution Cabernet Franc makes in a blend, but might not all recognize the wonderful flavour profile and unique attributes of the single varietal wine. Scoring at wine competitions and tastings seems inconsistent, to the point that Bruwer Raats sees the entering of his Cabernet Franc into local wine competitions and local professionally rated tastings as “playing the lotto”. This sentiment is shared by David Bate of Leopard Frog Vineyards.
Michael Fridjhon believes that South Africa’s Cabernet Franc is underrated, but that perceptions are unlikely to change. Consumers are not aware of the brand ‘Cabernet Franc’. Môreson’s viticulturist, Lochner Bester, when interviewed, summed it up as follows: “when people see ‘Cabernet’, they do not read any further. It is Cabernet Sauvignon”. A brand in the wine business may certainly be linked to a grape: the famous and famed Cabernet Sauvignon, the ever-present Chardonnay, the fashionable Pinot Noir, the popular Pinot Grigio. The classy Cabernet Franc, the subtle Cabernet Franc, the elegant Cabernet Franc could perhaps be considered.

Maybe it is Cabernet Franc’s name (the ‘Cabernet’ part of it) that is shooting it in the foot. Would it have made a difference if this marvellous grape variety was known throughout the world and on wine labels as ‘Bouchet’ or ‘Breton’, perhaps, and not always mentioned alongside Cabernet Sauvignon? It is interesting to note that Schneider Vineyards call their lighter Loire style ‘Le Breton’ on the label. Marius Lategan agrees with Hermanuspietersfontein’s marketing strategy of rather calling its single varietal bottling ‘Swartskaap’, although it could be argued that using a single variety on the label immediately gives a bottle of wine an own identity. It is interesting to note that Cabernet Franc is the only single red cultivar bottled as such by Hermanuspietersfontein.

Newcomer to the single varietal bottling in South Africa, Hillcrest Estate in Durbanville, sells its 2008 Cabernet Franc only from the cellar door. A three-pack consisting of Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec is made up and, according to winemaker Graeme Read, sells rather well.

Although there are many successful producer associations in South Africa (for example The Pinotage Association and the Chenin Blanc Association), many South African producers feel that yet another association to actively promote Cabernet Franc is not the answer. According to Môreson winemaker, Clayton Reabow, the interest is simply not there, and such an association could take away individual freedom and impose sometimes prescribing, costly suggestions, like the use of a particular capsule or emblem on Cabernet Franc wines.

‘Project Cabernet Franc’ was an initiative by Interloire, the official body for Loire wines, and was introduced to increase the appeal of Loire reds. It was said that Loire reds are
underappreciated and have little presence in export markets. With this in mind, Interloire devised a special initiative to adapt Loire reds for the 21st century and then tell people all about them. It was named ‘Project Cabernet Franc’, and wine consultant Sam Harrop MW was brought in to work with the Interloire technical team to write a winemaking protocol for producing more export-friendly reds.95

Thirty-five wines were selected by Sarah Ahmed MW, Jamie Goode, broadcaster Joe Wadsack, and buyers Christine Parkinson and Nick Room from a total of 103 submitted. Their brief (which reflects the aims of Interloire’s 5 year-old Loire Cabernet Franc project) was to select those wines best suited to the UK market, without compromising the unique terroir styles, and which they considered having the best commercial chances of success.

Project Cabernet Franc is not concerned with the variety’s illustrious history and standing. It is about the future, about making wines for modern consumers, survival in a tough market, and ultimately profitability for the Loire producers.

According to Nick Passmore (Bloomberg Businessweek, 29 April 2010), Cabernet Franc wines are experiencing a resurgence in the USA market at the moment as a result of the public’s growing preference for more fruity wines.³ It seems as if Project Cabernet Franc is paying off, although the organization has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on the generic image of the Loire and not enough on the individual appellations and for becoming “a big bureaucratic machine which doesn’t deliver value for money”.99

In conclusion, Andrew Jefford quotes Claude Papin, the President of the Technical Institute of the Vine and of Wine, Loire Valley as follows in his book The New France:

“To keep free wine-growers who work on a family scale, we have to cultivate the understanding of terroir. We must inform; we must educate. Every day, every day, every day. Marketing? We will always lose. Those who drink our wines, our clients, have to take over the educational relay from us if free winemakers like us are to continue to exist. Otherwise we will all finish like Heineken or Kronenbourg.”100
It is very interesting to note that one of the world’s most expensive wines is made from primarily Cabernet Franc. Château Cheval Blanc 2010 was released at an opening price of €900 (at the current exchange rate, approximately R8 671) from negociants, 21,4% more than its 2009 price of €700. The release price has, however, been received with a good deal of hostility by wine merchants and on Twitter.¹⁰¹

In California, Cabernet Franc is the second most expensive grape (after Pinot Noir) at $1 543 (approximately R10 312 at the current exchange rate) per ton. According to John Skupny of Lang & Reed Wine Company there certainly is no glut of Cabernet Franc grapes and it is difficult to find the grapes they need.⁹ According to Jancis Robinson, its relative scarcity makes Cabernet Franc some of California’s most expensive grapes, and it has become increasingly fashionable.¹

New Zealand Cabernet Franc costs NZ$1 773 per ton (R11 258,55 per ton at an exchange rate of 1 New Zealand dollar = 6,35 South African rands on 31-01-2012), making it the fourth most expensive grape there after Pinot Noir, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon (2009 figures).²⁵ In Australia, Cabernet Franc is the ninth most expensive red wine grape at a price of A$908 (R7 500,08 at an exchange rate of 1 Australian dollar = 8,26 South African rands on 31-01-2012) per ton (2008 figures).²⁵ In South Africa, Bruwer Raats pays R14 000 per ton for top quality Cabernet Franc from a top quality vineyard.⁴⁵

The marketing slogan ‘don’t make it if you can’t sell it”¹⁰² holds very true for Cabernet Franc. Many South African winemakers are of the opinion that it is extremely difficult to sell Cabernet Franc. Some producers even stated ‘wine nerds’ or ‘wine geeks’ as its target market.

Retail pricing points that will be most advantageous for selling Cabernet Franc should be targeted. However, wineries can rarely dictate those prices.¹⁰²
Larry Walker commences his article on the quiet invasion of Cabernet Franc as follows:

“If you are a vintner looking for a niche market varietal that no one is likely to see at trader Joe’s for $1.99, you might consider Cabernet franc. Or if you are thinking of putting in some vines and worried about the current grape glut, put Cabernet franc down on your ‘to check out’ list.”

Current cellar door prices of some South African producers are as follows:

- Antonij Rupert 2006 Cabernet Franc R430
- Avontuur R90
- Druk My Niet Find Art Collection 2009 R125
- Hermanuspietersfontein Swartskaap 2009 R164
- Knorhoek 2007 R80
- Lovane 2006 Cabernet Franc Illiwa R140
- Môreson 2008 R150
- Plaisir de Merle 2006 & 2007 R220
- Raats Family 2008 R280
- Raats Family 2009 R300
- Rainbow’s End 2009 Cabernet Franc R125
- Rainbow’s End 2009 Cabernet Franc (Limited Release) R138
- Warwick 2008 R198

Single varietal bottlings of South African Cabernet Franc are expensive (in the South African context) and there is not a vast price range to choose from.
CHAPTER 19: ENJOYING CABERNET FRANC

Since the Loire red wines are dry, with refreshing acidity, they pair well with many different dishes. They often do not shout ‘wine, wine’, but let the food show its best—not competing for attention. Master Sommelier Vincent Gasnier classifies red wines from Saumur Champigny and Chinon as ‘fruity, lively reds’ (as opposed to right bank Merlot which he classifies as “ripe, smooth reds” and left bank Bordeaux which he classifies as ‘rich, dense reds’), stating that “these great red wines from the Loire Valley, made mainly from the Cabernet Franc grape, are light in structure, with a concentration of fruit, spices and flowers”. According to him, it is this concentration of fruit and spice flavours that really appeals. He suggests enjoying a bottle of young Saumur-Champigny or Chinon with a summer picnic or barbecue, or an autumn meal of lighter roast meats.

Cabernet Franc is considered to be more food-friendly than Cabernet Sauvignon. The Vin de France website suggests the following food to be enjoyed with Cabernet Franc:

- Raw cured ham and deli meats
- Roasted poultry and veal
- Paella and tapas
- Goat cheeses.

When pairing food with wine, personal preference plays a big role: some people enjoy the fresh, vibrant fruit of a young Loire red, while others might like a more evolved wine. The lighter styles (which can be served slightly chilled) pair well with cured meats, grilled rainbow trout, steamed white asparagus, Pad Thai and goat cheese, while the more full-bodied Bourgueil or Chinon are perfect with stuffed quail, lamb kebabs, pork, grilled hamburger or eggplant Parmigiana. Aged Bourgueil’s sous bois flavours of wet leaves and mushrooms pair well with full-flavoured meat dishes, stews and casseroles, truffles and hard cheese.

Roger Ribaud, who was a prisoner-of-war with Gaston Huet from the Loire at Edelbach in lower Austria, wrote a wine and food pairing book (‘a memoir of great food and wine and how they can be brought into perfect harmony’) while in a German prisoner-of-war camp, calling it Le
Maître de Maison de Sa Cave à Sa Table (The Head of the Household from His Cellar to His Table). In the book he suggests serving a Saumur from the Loire with frogs and a Chinon with croque-monsieur (a grilled ham and cheese sandwich).

A food suggestion with the Warwick 2008 Cabernet Franc is rare roast of lamb, lamb knuckles stewed with red onions, or a rich pork terrine. According to the Hermanuspietersfontein website, the Swartskaap is a herbaceous, full-bodied Cabernet Franc with European minerality and soft tannins, calling for richer food. Roast lamb with a hint of mint, brie, bacon and banana baguette, or camembert cheese is suggested. Bruwer Raats suggests that the Raats Family Wines Cabernet Franc be enjoyed with rich meat dishes like beef fillet, game birds or venison. His best pairing ever was a dish of braised Springbok loin with a white truffle sauce on polenta cooked by acclaimed South African chef Margot Janse.

OregonWines.com suggests serving the following cheeses while enjoying Cabernet Franc:

| Blue Cheese | Gorgonzola |
| Brie         | Havarti    |
| Camembert    | Sharp Cheddar |
| Camembert de Normandie | Smoked Cheddar |
| Extra sharp Cheddar | Swiss |

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Cabernet Franc can make lighter bodied, less tannic wines than many other red grapes; they are generally ready to drink soon after bottling and do not require cellaring. This reputation for refreshing, youthful wines should however not obscure the fact that there are many full-bodied, complex wines made from Cabernet Franc that can age majestically over a long period of time. Referring to the three Cabernet Franc based appellations from Saumur, Jim Budd is of the opinion that the wines are perfect for summer drinking, but that they also cellar surprisingly well. He recommends that the best will last a good 15 – 20 years. Fine old Cabernet Franc wines can, aroma-wise, be reminiscent of a forest after a rainstorm. Cheval Blanc proves that magnificent durability is possible.
Hermanuspietersfontein suggests that its Swartskaap 2008 will mature for 8 years and beyond.⁷⁸ According to the Warwick website, its current vintage (2008) is accessible now but will improve with up to 10 years.⁹⁰
CHAPTER 20: CONCLUSION

Worldwide, Cabernet Franc is one of the twenty most widely planted grape varieties. It resembles Cabernet Sauvignon, but it is lower in tannins, acid and extract, and it ripens earlier. In many regions, it is planted and used as a component of a Bordeaux-style blend, playing second fiddle to Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, adding to the harmony.

There has, however, been a recent increase in interest in this variety in South Africa and other New World countries, especially in North America, and well-made wines are gaining international recognition. Unfortunately, the general wine consumer does not really seem to understand Cabernet Franc. The popularity of Cabernet Sauvignon (generally regarded as ‘the king’ of red grape varieties) does not help either, and the name ‘Franc’ might be off-putting to the Afrikaans consumer in South Africa.

Tim Costner holds the opinion that Cabernet Franc is definitely gaining attention among American consumers and he has developed a theory regarding the variety’s growing niche within the American market:

“Over the past 30 years, U.S. consumers have come to accept Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot as two of the standards among fine red wine. Both varietals, along with Pinot Noir, will always be the front-runners among reds. Pedigree, history and tradition make this an immutable fact. Still, the adventurous consumer will continue to look elsewhere for new tastes and values. And since Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot have already been embraced by the masses (and can fetch top prices), the lesser-known Bordeaux varietals, such as Cabernet Franc, have now become the new frontier”.

When Cabernet Franc is vinted as a varietal in the hands of a master with just the right vineyards, it can indeed touch some very unique points on the palate, if not the 100-point scale, as suggested by Craig Camp. According to Karen MacNeil, there are five qualities a taster must assess in order to determine whether a wine is great: varietal character, integration, expressiveness, complexity, and connectedness. Well-made Cabernet Franc certainly shows all five.
Cabernet Franc is a food wine *par excellence*. It is not a super-concentrated, high-alcohol red variety, and it pairs well with a variety of cheeses and meat dishes.

South Africa (especially Stellenbosch) produces some very fine Cabernet Francs and wine drinkers should be made aware of its potential through tastings and ongoing education. The invasion of Cabernet Franc into South Africa has indeed been a quiet one, even though producers like Bruwer Raats relentlessly and tirelessly markets the variety in South Africa and abroad.

Cabernet Franc has the ability to show the world so many faces. It is the primary ingredient in what many regard as Bordeaux’s finest wine, it is the signature red wine grape in France’s Loire Valley, it produces interesting, distinctive wines in California’s Napa Valley and Paso Robles, Long Island and South Africa, and in Canada it produces Icewines.

The Cabernet Franc market is a niche market. The Cabernet Franc producer needs to understand the intricacies of doing niche marketing (which will become even more critical) well. Washington winemaker David Lake sums it up very well: “It is a little hard to sell, but once people taste it, they find it very appealing. It comes around quickly, has vivid fruit and makes friends easily”. Marius Lategan believes Cabernet Franc to be a variety for the ‘cultured palate’, for the consumer who likes to try something new and for the food connoisseur.

Cabernet Franc grown in the right *terroir* can produce wines that can contribute very positively to a blend. The positive attributes of Cabernet Franc are the spiciness, pepperiness, red and black berries, and the delightful fine-grained tannins. Cabernet Franc grown in the incorrect *terroir*, when overcropped with dense canopies and water stressed, can produce green, leafy, stalky and overly herbaceous (‘vegetal’) wines. The flavour profile depends on viticultural practices as well as cellar treatment.

Phenolic ripeness evaluations can be used to assess Cabernet Franc grape quality versus *terroir*, especially in terms of soil type and weather conditions, such as the amount of water. Cabernet Franc can ripen physiologically in South Africa as demonstrated by excellent extractions of anthocyanins.
Great Cabernet Franc is about nuance, it always surprises, it is subtle, expresses the variety and its terroir, and you will always come back for more. It certainly is not always a thick, lengthy book and not loud music to deafen the ears, but it is literature. And it certainly is beautiful music to the ears. And quite frankly, it can also carry the melody.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE: SINGLE VARIETY CABERNET FRANC PRODUCERS

1. Why produce a single variety Cabernet Franc in South Africa?

2. When did you make your first vintage of Cabernet Franc?

3. Do you think Cabernet Franc is becoming more popular as a single variety and if so, why do you think it is?

4. From which clone(s) of Cabernet Franc are your wines made?

5. Which rootstock(s) do you use for Cabernet Franc?

6. Which soil type(s) are your Cabernet Franc grapes grown on?

7. “Cabernet Franc makes Cabernet Sauvignon taste more like Cabernet Sauvignon” – true or false? Any comments on this statement?

8. Which techniques do you employ when deciding when to harvest/when ripe enough to harvest?

9. What are some of the basic specifications you try to achieve at harvest time, e.g. Balling, sugar, acid?

10. “Cabernet Franc is made in the vineyard, not in the winery” – true or false? Any comments on this statement?

11. What is the single biggest challenge in growing Cabernet Franc?

12. Do you use pre-fermentation maceration for Cabernet Franc and if so, for how long?
13. Do you use post-fermentation maceration?

14. Do you use cultured yeasts for making Cabernet Franc and if so, which strains?

15. Would you consider a wild/spontaneous ferment?

16. At which temperature(s) do you ferment?

17. Pigeage or remontage? And how often?

18. Do you believe that making Cabernet Franc is an art or a science?

19. How would you describe your style of Cabernet Franc?

20. What is your approach in terms of filtration?

21. What is your oaking regime with Cabernet Franc?

22. For how long would you cellar Cabernet Franc for?

23. What do you regard as your target market for your Cabernet Franc wines?

24. How do you think could Cabernet Franc be promoted as a single variety in South Africa?

25. Why would someone like MAN Vintners, for example, not consider Cabernet Franc in their (Bordeaux) blend, especially since it has a distinctive flavour profile and is a good crop bearer?
APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE: SOUTH AFRICAN BORDEAUX BLEND PRODUCERS

1. Do you use Cabernet Franc in your Bordeaux style blend and if so, what percentage, typically?

2. According to Michael Fridjhon, Cabernet Franc “adds to the harmony, rather than carry the melody”. Do you agree – YES/NO?

3. What does Cabernet Franc bring to a blend?

4. Why would you omit Cabernet Franc from the blend?

5. Would you consider producing a single variety Cabernet Franc wine in South Africa?
APPENDIX 3: THE PROJECT CABERNET FRANC PROTOCOL: A SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
(taken from the Interloire website)

Harvest and pre-fermentation

- On a normal harvest day, fruit should be in the cellar before 11:00 am when the ambient temperatures are still relatively cool.

- Consider the use of triage to remove dried berries.

- Avoid using the crushers – this will ensure the wines have less bitterness and more ripe fruit flavours.

- Pre-fermentation maceration is a technique used a lot with Cabernet Franc and it can be used to good effect if the fruit is ripe enough. Too often it is used on green unripe fruit. In this instance the process merely enhances the unripe, herbaceous notes and this should be avoided if the winemaker cannot guarantee the fruit is ripe enough at harvest.

- Producers to avoid spontaneous fermentation and to inoculate with select yeast strains to ensure a healthy and complete fermentation. Trials were carried out at one producer with a yeast strain that minimises the herbaceous flavours drawn from the fruit during fermentation.

- If the fruit is ripe, a fermentation temperature of 24 °C of the juice to enhance the primary fruit characters through definition. If the fruit is green a fermentation temperature of 26 – 28 °C.

- By checking the temperature twice a day you will get better control over fermentation.

- Ease off on the timing and frequency of remontage – be gentle.

- Consider using more Delestage if tannins are ripe certainly after 2 days of fermentation.
• Consider each parcel separately depending on the quality of the fruit during the extraction process.

Post-fermentation
• Wine should be kept at 20 °C during post fermentation to aid the extraction process.

• Check sulphur levels on wines once every two weeks, post MLF fermentation and adjust to keep levels at 25 ppm to avoid MLF and oxidation.

• For hygiene and quality use a lactic acid bacteria culture to start malolactic fermentation. Keep the temperature at 20 °C and monitor the malolactic fermentation closely. As soon as the malolactic fermentation is complete, add SO₂ to ensure the wines do not oxidise.

• With ripe fruit consider pressing a small percentage of production into barrels and allow wines to carry out their malolactic fermentation in barrel for added complexity and texture.

• Do not blend wines too early. Keep separate to give more flexibility at blending.

Bulk storage/Elevage

• Check SO₂ levels in tank and barrel frequently after malolactic fermentation.

• Ensure no lag between primary and secondary fermentation by inoculating with appropriate culture. This will minimize the chance of rogue yeast and bacteria activity and limit the production of off flavours and Brettanomyces will be detected early.

• Only consider oak use if the fruit is ripe enough both in sugars, flavour and body.

• Pad filter wines a week before bottling. Put through a membrane filter 1 micron at bottling.