



LUNCH WITH JEAN ENGELBRECHT OF RUST EN VREDE

Friday 2 July 2010 ... and the mood in Cape Town leading up to the quarterfinals of the World Cup between Germany and Argentina is at fever pitch. I cleverly escape to Rust en Vrede, which always lives up to its evocative name by providing a tranquil and serene sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of city life. Established in 1694, it is one of the oldest and most venerable wine estates in the Stellenbosch region.

Indeed, this breathtakingly beautiful farm with its superb Cape Dutch architecture is widely regarded as a Cape First Growth, and with good reason. Since the late 1970s when the Engelbrecht family made it their home, the motto has been 'quality at all cost' and today the estate's reds are famous the world over. Among its many accolades is the fact that in 2000 it became the first South African winery to be featured among the prestigious Wine Spectator magazine's "Top 100 Wines of the World" - a distinction that was repeated four years in succession. Another feather in the cap of this Cape wine aristocrat followed when Rust en Vrede was selected by President Nelson Mandela to be served at the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize dinner in Oslo.

Jean Engelbrecht has been the driving force behind Rust en Vrede's success since the late nineties. Having known and dealt with him for over a decade it was high time to meet him on his own stamping ground, and where better than the top-end Rust en Vrede Restaurant? Recently rated among the Top 100 Restaurants of the World, the place is buzzing, with acclaimed chef Dave Higgs and his team catering for a fully booked-out lunch.

Jean, a former airline pilot, spends more than 30% of his time marketing his wines abroad. Today however, having just returned from the family's farm in the Kalahari, he looks relaxed in his khaki outfit - more like a game ranger than the owner of a world-class wine company. Chatting to him it becomes clear why this dynamic personality is regarded as one of the pioneers of South Africa's new-generation wine industry. His passion for wine is obvious and when he speaks about the future of the South African wine industry, his view is optimistic: "We are in a good position to capitalize on a renewed interest in South African wines. Our wine industry is a showpiece for our country and international consumers know that premium South African wines are just that ... premium." Asked what he regards as the main challenges

facing South African wine producers, Jean's reply is short and to the point: "To survive the recession, keep building on the quality of the past 5 years, and market our industry as one of the success stories of our country."

JEAN IN A NUTSHELL

Q Most memorable moment?

A Meeting president Mandela - and he spoke Afrikaans to me!

Q Favourite hobbies?

A Flying, golf, hunting

Q What would you be doing if you weren't involved in wine?

A Continuing my career as a commercial pilot.

Q Highlights in your career?

A The high standard of the colleagues that I work with.

Q What do you regard as the main factors behind R & V's success?

A Consistency, attention to detail.

Q What makes the R & V's terroir special or unique?

A The Helderberg terroir has produced the highest rated wines from SA.

Q How can we make wine more accessible to the majority of the SA population?

A By portraying wine as a consumer friendly product that can have a rightful place in our South African life - uncomplicated, hearty and informal.