



Local flava

Jim Hislop celebrates Heritage Day with Pinotage, the proudly South African varietal with its smoky, earthy flavours...

An inspired local wine braniac, Abraham Izak Perold, was the 'Pinotage progenitor'. This Professor of Viticulture at Stellenbosch University managed to pair the best qualities of Cinsaut (a red wine grape known in SA as Hermitage at the time) with Pinot Noir (with its black cherry and

raspberry aromas), the notoriously difficult-to-cultivate grape. He planted four seeds of this new variety in his garden at Welgevallen Experimental Farm and, being a busy man, or a ditz, promptly forgot about them. He later left Stellenbosch University and moved out of his house at the farm,

abandoning the sorry seedlings to the elements. Luckily for the world's Pinotage fans, the seedlings were saved at the last minute by a sharp-eyed young lecturer, just before a garden crew obliterated the historically important plants from the future face of wine.

After replanting them in a safer

place and a few viticultural tweaks by his successor, CJ Theron, the new Pinotage grape was born!

The first Pinotage was made in 1941 at Elsenburg. Later, a Bellevue Pinotage became the champion wine at the Cape Wine Show of 1959. This makes 2009 the 50th anniversary of the first officially



Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, Israel, Zimbabwe and 'Obamaland'. And a browse through various wine blogs will reveal that Pinotage is enjoyed in some pretty unusual places. One blogger drinks SA Pinotage at his favourite Ethiopian restaurant in Chicago – proof of its increasingly cosmopolitan appeal.

Pinotage isn't for everyone, though. It has a bold 'personality' and strong flavours. But if you're a fan of strong, dark, thick-as-mud coffee, the chances are you'll take to this local varietal, as it has similar characteristics. And cementing the link with coffee in many people's minds is the famous Diemersfontein Coffee Pinotage, the star of the show when this wine farm holds its annual Pinotage on Tap event, where you can grab a glug from the ever-flowing vat while a local band sets the musical tone on the stage. Although this wine may not be your typical Pinotage, it's a good place to start. Dip a strawberry into their gushing chocolate fountain, have a sniffer of wine and away you go.

As the popularity of Pinotage spreads, so too do its uses; from the sublime to the ridiculous. Today you can go to a spa and 'enjoy' a Pinotage wine bath, or even a Pinotage face and body polish (do you come out looking like a beetroot, I wonder?). You can buy a Pinotage grape jelly made from the varietal, which goes fabulously with roast lamb. Or try Lutzville's Pinotage jam on toast. Alternatively, if you're a chutneyholic like me, give Warwick Wine's Pinotage chutney a go.

Also, to further the local varietal's PR, there's the Pinotage Association, which champions all things Pinot. Their website (www.pinotage.co.za) lists various dishes to pair with this wine, from Boland Boeuf Bourguignon (nogal), to Mevrouw Melck's marvellous bobotie. It's perfectly suited to potjiekos too, so celebrate Heritage Day by enjoying it with one of these rich, local dishes.

So, c'mon, grab a glass of Pinotage and raise a toast to SA's amazing wine heritage and its proudly local varietal!

recognised Pinotage. The relative success of the wine, and the fact that the grapes ripen early, led to more and more farmers planting these grapes. The drawback was that some shoddy plonks were produced, when everyone and their grandmother tried to get on the bandwagon, without having the skills or knowledge to get it quite right.

Some did, however, and the rest, as they say, is history. From these rather humble beginnings, Pinotage is now spreading in popularity worldwide (though some obstinate wine snobs abroad remain stuffily unconvinced. Pinot envy perhaps?). Today you'll find it being cultivated in Australia,

6 wines to sip and savour

Jim suggests a variety of Pinotages at different price ranges. Whether you're on a budget or willing to spend a little more, there's something for everyone.

UNDER R30

Lutzville

Appearance:

Light ruby.

Nose: Pleasant, sweet berry flavours.

Taste: Unfussy taste with soft, delicate tannins. An easy drinker.

Try it with Springbok venison as part of your Heritage Day celebrations.



Simonsvlei Lifestyle

Appearance:

Raspberry red.

Nose: Seductive, sensual, slightly spicy bouquet.

Taste: Soft, happy-go-lucky, moderately spicy flavours.

An easy-drinking quaffer, great with pasta and, of course, chocolate!



UNDER R50

Stormhoek

Appearance:

Deep ruby.

Nose: A fruity, pleasing, fresh aroma.

Taste: Nicely balanced, honey, berry, coffee and choc flavours.

A great wine for a midweek, meaty dinner. The screwcap is an added bonus!



Beyerskloof

Appearance:

Dark ruby red.

Nose: The rich aroma of the Pinotage grapes 'jumps' out of the glass!

Taste: A full-bodied, delicious and smooth wine with rich berry flavours.

Enjoy it with seafood and lighter meaty dishes.



UNDER R90

Meerendal

Appearance:

A deep dark ruby colour.

Nose: Sweet, fruity, spicy dark chocolate aromas.

Taste: Full-bodied, juicy red and black berry flavours on the palate.

Savour with PnP free-range roast chicken, venison, or even yellowtail.



Diemersfontein

Appearance:

A dark, velvety ruby red.

Nose: Rich, smoky, coffee aromas.

Taste: Velvety (and of course chocolatey) vivaciousness.

Try this chocolate Pinotage with curry, game meats or decadent dark chocolate desserts.

