



Vinum Africa brings together passionate wine minds, from contrasting corners of the world, balancing different nationalities, wits and cultures. The overlapping common ground is incarnated in the form of their friendship and their wines. Innovation often comes from creative destruction. Consequently, they like to break down unnecessary barriers and formalities, and create offbeat wines with down to earth and novel or curious objectives.

EDOUARD LABEYE (winemaker)

Edouard is a real-life dynamo. Relentless, a workaholic, a wine addict and with an experience that most of us will never acquire in two lifetimes. Based in the Rhone Valley in France, Edouard works with many of the top emerging estates from the appellations of the Languedoc and the Rhone Valley. 20 years of incessant, hands-on toil, alongside the greats and the less-greats, have filled him with knowledge and skills that combine effortlessly with his natural good humor and flair. Since 1997, Edouard has spent between 4 and 7 weeks a year in the winelands of the Cape, working each vintage with some of the most exciting young talents in the land.

ALEX DALE (marketing)

Alex is the resident locomotive. Balancing a legendary caustic humor with uncanny levels of creative energy and an alarming compulsion for professionalism and quality, Alex maintains perpetual motion in all things Vinum Africa. Born in the UK, matured in Burgundy and adopted by the Cape, Alex is one of the most experienced and credible international marketers and traders of (good) wine in South Africa. With shareholdings in wine-affiliated operations in South Africa, France and Australia, Alex always adds perspective and acumen to Vinum Africa's operation. His friendships and contacts around the world opening-up larger doors than such a humble wine operation would normally aspire to.

VINEYARDS

Vinum Africa's vineyards are comprised of selected prime parcels of land in the Stellenbosch region – several along the Helderberg Mountain and several in Devon Valley. These sites offer excellent soils, northern, north-eastern & north-western exposures and healthy, mature vines, all of which combine cozily with nature's gentle cool ocean breezes to bestow on these vineyards spectacularly ideal environments. Each of the vineyards is highly specialized, and each small enough to afford Vinum Africa great focus. Also, by selling-off the excess grapes or bulk wine they do not want, like or require, Vinum Africa is able to maintain ideal standards for its own wines. The yields range between 40 and 48 hl / hectare, depending on the specific vines and the vintage. 5,000 to 10,000 cases of each wine are produced per annum, depending on vintage conditions (having kicked-off in 1999 with 1,000 cases). The 2004 vintage also saw a number of great new vineyard blocks come on-stream and plans are in the works to plant more Chenin Blanc on the Helderberg Mountain in 2005 & 2006.



WINEMAKING

Once you've got good grapes, the winemaker should get in the way as little as possible. Edouard Labeye heads up Vinum Africa's non-interventionist, micro-winemaking-team, with Alex's younger brother Gus jetting over for a few months each vintage from Burgundy to lend a helping hand (the latter aptly dubbed The Flying Cellar Rat). The whole process is generously fueled and inspired by copious and thorough sampling of the previous years' wines, whilst the rest of the crew generally stands around, get in the way and invite other like-minded people over to help sample last year's wine, get in the way and unselfishly help the whole proceedings along. Organizationally, their talented and faithful team leader, Heather Whitman, kicks the team into gear on a regular basis, while juggling all the paperwork and managing the business-side of their creative habit.

THE RANGE

Cabernet Sauvignon traditionally always made South Africa's most famous reds. That's evolving now that Shiraz has found a new home in some great spots around the Cape. In Stellenbosch, however, Cab is still King. Having successfully developed vineyards on some of the choicest sites in Stellenbosch, The Winery thought that it would be a worthy novelty to create an excellent Cabernet-Sauvignon at a particularly reasonable price, the objective being to produce, consistently, one of the finest Cabs in the appellation, but to sell it at a price beneath its potential "real" value. Why bother? To create great demand on the one hand, whilst guaranteeing that the wine will sell-out every year on the other- 2 tremendous assets for any producer in today's market place. The gamble has paid-off nicely and Vinum Africa Cab continues to go from strength to strength with each vintage.

Chenin Blanc, for so many years, has been the ugly duckling of the Cape wine industry. A handful of like-minded producers, towards the end of the 1990's, started putting tremendous effort into specializing in high quality Chenin Blanc, and especially on the ocean-facing vineyards of Stellenbosch.

The team at The Winery decided that they wanted their Vinum Africa range to be composed of a value for money Cabernet (King of reds) and a premium Chenin (ugly duckling of whites). A totally contradictory and unorthodox approach, but a dynamic that they believe in and enjoy. Chenin remains totally under-rated across the planet, which is not only a travesty but a wonderful opportunity. Not least when one sees the great fruit quality The Winery achieves every year on the Helderberg Mountain in Stellenbosch.



PACKAGING

The Vinum Africa packaging design is extracted from evolving dimensions of an abstract mural, combining positive political, historical and social progression. It brings together a stark, imposing ethnic-like symbol, on a tranquil background, and contains the product of much acquired wisdom, serenity and honor. It is wholly atypical of traditional Cape wine packaging design, and it sets Vinum Africa apart as much visually as they aim to be philosophically. And the name? From the Latin meaning, simply, wine, Vinum Africa is stating the obvious, stripped-back to its simplest form, to its basic values. But what is in a name? The name will be judged throughout the experience of the wine. And if you use your mind's eye, you might just be able to discern that the symbol actually spells out the word Vinum.

Vinum Africa should be a surprise; it should be gratifying and it should be worthy of repeating. If the Vinum Africa team has managed to combine that for you both visually and in the glass, then they have shared their simple vision.