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Morgenster blends Boland and Italy with finesse

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Winemaker Henry Kotze, Giulio Bertrand and consultant Pierre Lurton



It always seems to be a beautiful day when its time to head to Morgenster, and this was no exception. A group of wine media and trade representatives filled the tasting room then filed into the cellar where tables, dressed in white, sported enough glasses to indicate a tasting of some magnitude. In front, courteous host Giulio Bertrand, winemaker Henry Kotze and Gallic consultant Pierre Lurton from Chateau Cheval Blanc introduced the lineup which comprised the release of the Bordeaux-style flagship wine and the 2013 vintages of his Italian Collection. Starting with what was, for me, an outstanding wine, the Morgenster White 2015 is a blend of 55% sauvignon

blanc and 45% semillon, satiny, yet frisky, exhibiting both herbaceous notes, a touch of oiliness, and a whiff of fruit, in an elegant, irresistible combination. Bottled just two months ago after 10 months in oak, this was produced from bought-in grapes from vineyards close to the estate. Their own white grape vines will be ready to produce fine wines soon, but this wine, due for release in September at around R150, is worth waiting for.

On to the Italian cultivars, starting with the Caruso rosé, made from sangiovese, with its low- alcohol level of 12,5% makes a great introduction to Morgenster, with discernible backbone, plenty of berry fruit balanced with savoury notes, selling at around R80.

Tosca 2013 is a blend of 76% sangiovese, 12% each of cabernet and merlot, selling at just under R200, is an enjoyable meld, a great food wine, and probably more popular with locals than the Nabucco – the 2013 vintage of which is 100% nebbiolo, This cultivar has its fair share of fans, and is distinctly different from our reds, and should be paired with Italian fare.

The Lourens Valley 2012 may be regarded as a second fiddle red blend to the Morgenster, but is usually one that I have enjoyed hugely in the past. No change here – from its aromatic nose to a palate with fruit balanced with smooth tannins in an elegant and approachable combination, I would choose this for winter fireside sipping . It sells for around R145.

From the prelude to the main course, the release of the Morgenster 2012, the Bordeaux-style flagship of the estate, comprising, unusually, 72% merlot, along with 16% petit verdot and 12% cabernet. With alcohol levels of 14,5% ,this fresh and enjoyable wine elicited much discussion among wine writers who queried the choice of merlot as the lead cultivar, (one being regarded with some disdain by many a fundi.) Henry's answer was simply that this combination proved to be the best when he and Pierre took decisions on the components and proportions of the blend. Expect to pay around R370.

Back in the tasting room a team had produced a wide selection of delectable Italian snacks, each one matched to one of the wines we had tasted. From parmesan risotto to tiny meatballs, from quality smoked salmon to veal tongues on ciabatta, the visitors tucked in, savouring the pairings with relish.

As the noise levels grew, our host moved among friends and colleagues, surely pleased that both his ambitions have been realised – to produce great Bordeaux-style blends at Morgenster and to make fine wines from Italian varietals on his very lovely, historic Cape farm. His olive oils are also rewarding his sizeable investment very well.