

# North Shore News

S. African wines a tasty bargain; The Vancouver Magazine Restaurant Awards are always preceded by a lively wine tasting which invariably includes a worthwhile line-up of South African wines, and this year's fling -- widely regarded as the restaurateurs' party of the year -- proved no exception.

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Illustrations: Colour Photo: Photo submitted / These buildings are part of the Leopard's Leap winery in South Africa, which produces Lookout Red, an economical, ultra food friendly drop. ;

Running through the labels we came across some familiar names; and in the glass were reminded once again that, often as not, South Africa can deliver some pretty competitive drops at just about every price point.

If you're in a budget kind of mood (and who isn't these days), this short list should get your attention.

## - The Winery of Good Hope Chenin Blanc 2008

Of the flight, this wine caught our attention for its crisp character and firm acidity delivered at an excellent price. Chenin Blanc in the Cape (as elsewhere) was for too long dismissed as merely a base for brandy. Not any more.

From maritime influenced Stellenbosch comes this flinty, quite mineral and vibrant Chenin with a surprisingly broad palate and crisp close. We're thinking oysters. Now, please! BCLS \$13.99

## - Robertson Winery Sauvignon Blanc 2008

Just when you thought it was impossible to find anything of serious value for under \$10, along comes this zesty little number from one of the Cape's perennial budget producers.

It's not complicated. Doesn't have to be at this price. But what you do get is a crisp, well made drop that's varietally correct with a splash of green apple plus enough freshness and backbone to park on your patio. And did we mention the screwcap? It's a no-brainer! BCLS \$9.99

## - Leopard's Leap The Lookout Red 2006

For some inexplicable reason, the People's Purveyor has opted to de-list the Lookout white, a sad state of affairs for another excellent value. Never mind, you can still find it at Everything Wine . . . and at least we can still score the well made medium bodied red, a juicy but structured blend of Cabernet, Shiraz and Cinsault--and four more varieties not mentioned. Bright berry and spice notes, not jammy but clean on the palate with good acidity that makes it ultra food friendly. (The winery also supports the Cape Leopard Trust, which works to save the animals from extinction.) BCLS & Everything Wine, \$11.99

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'Tis the season for spring releases and special tastings -- including the sixth annual Naramata Bench Tasting, which rolls into the Roundhouse April 21 from 6 to 9 p.m.

In addition to the usual suspects you'll be able to taste the inaugural release of the Annual Naramata Red Blend, a co-pro between five wineries intended to offer an expression of the bench's terroir.

Hillside, La Frenz, Lake Breeze, Laughing Stock and Soaring Eagle variously contributed wine to make up the 50 per cent Cab, 30 per cent Merlot and 20 per cent Cab Franc blend.

In all, 16 wineries will be pouring. Some don't miss drops would be: Laughing Stock Portfolio '06; Elephant Island sparkling Pink Elephant '07; Township 7 Sauvignon Blanc; Poplar Grove Pinot Gris '08; Kettle Valley '07 Old Main.

Pours are paired with tastes from Miku, Vij's, Goldfish, Wild Rice, Pair Bistro and Social at Le Magasin, Naramata Heritage Inn and Hillside Winery Barrel Room Bistro.

Visit [www.naramatabench.com](http://www.naramatabench.com) for more information. For tickets call 1-800-663-1900.