

MONT ROCHELLE

HOTEL & MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS

PROFILE: DUSTIN OSBORNE WINE MAKER

27-Year old Dustin Osborne is the accomplished wine maker at Mont Rochelle Mountain Vineyards in Franschhoek. A qualified oenologist and viticulturist, he embodies the spirit of, and is recognised among the most promising of South Africa's new wine makers. Drawing on experience gained at prominent cellars in the Cape Winelands and abroad, he has fast gained a reputation for producing top quality Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon from Mont Rochelle's 16 hectare vineyards.

Testimony to his penchant for excellence, Osborne's entries, on behalf of Mont Rochelle Vineyards, for the esteemed **Monde Selection International Wine Contest 2009** in Brussels (Belgium), both scored Gold: *Mont Rochelle Cabernet Sauvignon 2004* and *Mont Rochelle Syrah 2004*. Significantly Mont Rochelle was one of only three South African wine producers to be named among the Gold Award winners this year.

Osborne was appointed as wine maker and Viticulturist at Mont Rochelle in July 2007, where he produces around 10 000 to 12 000 cases of wine every year. A farm boy at heart, with a deep-seated love of the land, his gentle wine making approach has resulted in the creation of a number of superb wines carrying the acclaimed Mont Rochelle label.

Born into a farming family in Brandfort, near Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State in 1982, this true son of the soil set his sights on becoming a wine maker at the tender age of 16, while completing his High School education at Hilton College in Natal in 2000.

Determined to realize his ambition, he immediately enrolled at the prestigious Lincoln University in Christchurch, New Zealand, inspired by this country's reputation for producing world-class Sauvignon Blanc. Here he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Viticulture and Oenology, qualifying in 2005.

His impressive portfolio includes tenures under the guidance of accomplished international Cellar Masters in both the Southern and Northern Hemispheres, gaining an in-depth understanding of all viticultural practices.

Hardworking to a fault, he spent his university vacations working in the vineyards of the famed Peregrine Wines, in Queenstown, Central Otago, in New Zealand in 2002. This was followed by a stint volunteering at the Villiera Wine Estate in Stellenbosch, where he worked mainly with Pinotage and Chardonnay for base wines in 2004, with a season as vintage Assistant Winemaker at Burrowing Owl Vineyards in Okanagan Valley, Oliver British Columbia in Canada, where he also worked as Senior Lab technician (2004).

Thereafter he gained cellar experience at the Jordan Vineyard and Winery in Sonoma County, California (Alexander Valley) in 2005, returning home briefly to take up the reins as vintage cellar hand at Joostenburg Wines in Paarl. Following this were tenures at the Villa Maria Estate, Blenheim, in Marlborough New Zealand (2006); Tsillan Cellars Winery, Lake Chelan, Washington, USA, where he held the position of Assistant Winemaker, and, finally returning home to work with various varietals at Delheim Winery in Stellenbosch, before being approached to join Mont Rochelle.

When asked what distinguishes Mont Rochelle's wines, his passion is evident. 'The terroir at Mont Rochelle is exceptional and the climate in this corner of the Western Cape lends itself to exceptional, Mediterranean-like conditions with dry summers and high winter rainfalls. The Franschoek valley also experiences the strong south-easterly wind, which brings in cooler air, allowing for a longer ripening period. This results in more physiologically ripe fruit – all in all idyllic conditions for a wine maker. Also, Mont Rochelle wines are handcrafted, producing a far superior product,' he proudly adds.

His unequivocal approach to winemaking is based on a firm belief in allowing the wines to mature naturally, with minimal intervention. 'I believe in a gentle approach, allowing the wines to develop to their full potential,' he quips.

Mont Rochelle is renowned for producing a superb Syrah, cultivated especially as a 'food wine', and speaking to the heart of this wine maker's ultimate indulgence. He counts as one of life's finest experiences a glass of Mont Rochelle Syrah 2004, sipped while savouring the Lamb shank with creamy pureed potatoes, from the menu at Mont Rochelle's award-winning Mange Tout restaurant.

A self-proclaimed 'outdoorsy type' he spends his leisure time pursuing his love of golf or participating in an impromptu rugby match with a few friends, before heading off to the nearest pub - for a beer!

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