

BY GREG
LANDMAN

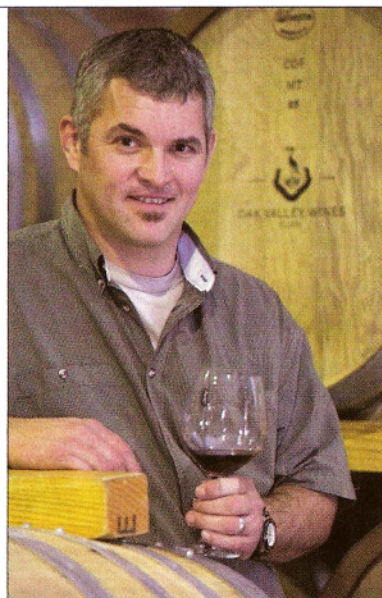
FINE WINES

OAK VALLEY WINES

WINEMAKER

PIETER VISSER

Pieter was born and bred in the Elgin Valley (pronounced with a hard G) so it seemed natural for him to go into farming. He trained at Elsenburg and went to work as a fruit farmer, moving in 1993 to the orchards of Oak Valley. Owner Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen was set on making wine and appointed Pieter to produce it, a gamble that has paid off brilliantly. Pieter and his wife, Elzaan, live with their daughter, Melisse, on the Oak Valley estate, where they love entertaining. Both are physically very active and Pieter was instrumental in introducing mountain bike trails to Oak Valley.



AND HIS WINES

When the second wine you have ever made wins the British Decanter Regional Trophy for the best Sauvignon Blanc, you must be doing something right. (*Decanter* is one of the world's leading wine magazines and its annual awards are considered among the most prestigious.) Oak Valley Wines winemaker Pieter Visser puts a lot of it down to luck, but he is being too modest as it's obvious when you talk to him that he's a perfectionist – though in a really nice rather than painful way. He's passionate about what he does and doesn't leave anything to chance. He'll tell you that he doesn't believe in cutting corners even though "wine is made in the vineyard."

Making wine can never be an exact science.

Last year his red Bordeaux-style Blend 2004 walked off with the Decanter International Trophy, an even bigger achievement than his previous win as it was competing against wines from all over the globe. So Pieter's wines can stand with the best. And they are wines of great character with serious, but very drinkable, charms. On the almost 2 000ha of prime land which is the home of Oak Valley Wines, owner Anthony Rawbone-Viljoen allows him free reign provided the results show in the wine – a challenge Pieter seems to be handling with ease. Apart from occasional trips abroad to collect trophies and promote sales of Oak Valley wines, Pieter remains an unspoiled 'country boy' with nary a hint of pretension about him. He knows what he can do, and he does it well.

Oak Valley 021 859 4110

OAK VALLEY RED BLEND 2005



A big Bordeaux-style wine packed with dark red fruit. Merlot driven (69%) with 27% Cabernet Franc and a touch of Cabernet Sauvignon – a superb blend, well supported by 18 months of wood. Great with red meat. Even better on its own. R98 on the farm.

OAK VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2007



Marvellously elegant, Sauvignon Blanc-led blend, with glorious 'minerality' (the new buzzword), acids that won't strip your palate away and plenty of ripe fruit on the nose and in the mouth. A match made in heaven with sushi and game fish. R120 at Oak Valley.

OAK VALLEY CHARDONNAY 2007



New French oak barrels have left their fragrant mark on this fabulous wine for those who like wood that doesn't intrude but is nevertheless there. Nice and fruity with delicate acidity. Brilliant with light Thai curries, chicken, and roast leg of pork. R95 a bottle.