

Mossop wines for every season

Down the hatch



David Biggs

The spirit of the late Tony Mossop was very much present at the recent launch of some new Axe Hill port vintages in Durbanville.

Among the wines we tasted were the last ones he made, including - for me - two delightful surprises.

I particularly enjoyed the 2004 Axe Hill Touriga National Dry Red Wine. Although Tony was essentially a port man, he made this one barrel of dry wine using traditional Portuguese grape varieties. It's packed with rich, musky fruit aromas and flavours and has a big, 14% alcohol content. Perfect with a full-flavoured winter stew.

Tony's Axe Hill Dry White Port was another delightful surprise. It's made from Chenin Blanc, which always seems to do well in SA, and produced by the "solera" system usually used in the making of sherry. This means some of each vintage is held back to be blended into the next one, so there is never a particular vintage on the bottle.

This great wine is perfect as an aperitif and should be released for sale toward the beginning of summer.

It was good to see the Mossop name being kept to the forefront with two fine new wines made by Tony's son, Miles, and marketed under the Miles Mossop label.

The first is the 2005 Saskia, a blend of Chenin Blanc and Viognier, fermented in barrels and given a long time on the lees to provide a big, mouth-filling wine with layers of on-folding flavours.

The other is labelled Max 2004 and is a red blend made of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot

and Merlot. It's full of ripe fruit flavours and just enough wood aroma to add interest without taking over.

I think most buyers will drink it quite soon, but I'd keep it for a couple of years. I think it has a long life.

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It's great to see some excellent new wines coming from the high, cool vineyards in the Elgin mountains.

Paul Cluver has already shown what promise these chilly mountain peaks hold for wine lovers, now Oak Valley Estates are coming up with some fine new releases.

Winemaker and viticulturist Pieter Visser has produced a good 2005 Sauvignon Blanc, full of the clean, crisp citrus and grapefruit character one would expect from those vineyards. It's available in rather limited quantities at specialist wine shops for about R65 a bottle.

More dramatic is his Mountain reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2005, made from a single vineyard producing only 3,8 tons of grapes a hectare. It's an elegant, flinty wine with very subtle notes of grapefruit and (some say) nettles on the palate. Not much of this was made, so it's available only from the farm. It sells at R100 a bottle.

The Oak Valley range includes a delicious Chardonnay 2005 and a really elegant Pinot Noir 2005 worth watching out for.

While you're tasting the wines try to get a look at the estate's huge flower production business. If you've bought flowers from a Cape supermarket recently, chances are they came from Oak Valley.