

# WINE

## top picks

- Boschendal (p200)
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With over 200 wineries within a day's drive of the city, Cape Town is the natural hub for touring the Western Cape's Winelands. This is where South Africa's wine industry – now the ninth-largest in the world – began back in the 17th century.

Scores of new wine producers join the industry each year, and while many are content to remain as micro-wineries, honing their wines to perfection, others are seeking to capitalise on the industry's popularity by adding museums, restaurants, accommodation and other attractions. The more notable of these are reviewed in this chapter, along with vineyards that are renowned for their fine wines – all are within easy reach of the city. For those without their own wheels, there are plenty of tours of the Winelands (p195).

If you're looking to broaden your knowledge of the local wines further, the [Cape Wine Academy](#) (Map pp64–5; ☎ 021-889 8844; www.capewineacademy.co.za) runs wine-appreciation courses. Although the headquarters are in Stellenbosch, there are courses held in Cape Town in two locations: the [Cellar Cuvée Classique](#) (Map pp82–3; www.cccq.co.za; Palms Décor & Lifestyle Centre, 145 Sir Lowry Rd, Foreshore) and [Manuka Café & Fine Wines](#) (Map pp64–5; ☎ 021-701 2046; www.manuka.co.za; Steenberg Lifestyle Village, Tokai). A hands-on winemaking course (R50 per person) is run by [Fynbos Estate](#) (Map p207; ☎ 022-487 1153; www.fynbosestate.co.za) in the Paardeberg mountains, 15km outside Malmesbury, an hour's drive from Cape Town.

If you don't have time to get out to the wineries, there are several wine shops in Cape Town with excellent selections, including Vaughan Johnson's Wine & Cigar Shop (p131) and Wine Concepts (p129).

## HISTORY

'Today, praise be the Lord, wine was pressed for the first time from Cape grapes.'

Jan van Riebeeck, 2 February 1659

Although the founder of the Cape Colony, Jan van Riebeeck, planted vines and made wine himself, it was not until the arrival of Governor Simon van der Stel in 1679 that winemaking began in earnest. Van der Stel created the estate Constantia (later subdivided into the several estates in the area today), and passed on his winemaking skills to the burghers who settled around Stellenbosch.

Between 1688 and 1690 some 200 Huguenots arrived in the country. They were granted land in the region, particularly around Franschhoek (which translates as 'French Corner'). Although only a few had winemaking experience, they gave the infant industry fresh impetus.

For a long time, Cape wines other than those produced at Constantia were not in great demand and most grapes ended up in brandy. The industry received a boost in the early 19th century as war between Britain and France, and preferential trade tariffs

between the UK and South Africa led to more South African wine being imported to the UK.

Apartheid-era sanctions and the power of the Kooperatiewe Wijnbouwers Vereeniging (KWV; the cooperative formed in 1918 to control minimum prices, production areas and quota limits) didn't exactly encourage innovation and instead hampered the industry. Since 1992 the KWV, now a private company, has lost much of its former influence.

Many new and progressive winemakers are leading South Africa's re-emergence onto the world market. New production regions are being established away from the hotter inland areas, in particular in the cooler coastal areas east of Cape Town around Mossel Bay, Walker Bay and Elgin, and to the north around Durbanville and Darling. The older vines of the Swartland northwest of Paarl (and in particular the Paardeberg area – see p204) are also producing some very high-quality wines.

## WORKERS' WINES

The black and coloured workforce numbers some 350,000 toiling in vineyards owned by around 4500 whites. Workers often receive