

John Platter

2007

L 'Avenir Estate

Stellenbosch • Est/1 stB 1992 • Tasting & sales Mon-Fri 9-5 Sat 10-4 • Fee R15 • Closed Easter Fri, Dec 25 & Jan 1 • Tours by appt • Picnic hampers available • Luxury B&B guest house • Tour groups • Farm-grown olives & olive products • Owner Michel Laroche • Winemaker Tinus Els, with Stephan du Toit • Viti adviser Johan Pienaar • 53 ha (7 varieties r/ w) • 380-400 tons • 25 000 cs 50% red 43% white 7% rose • PO Box 7267 Stellenbosch 7599 • info@lovenir.co.za • www.lovenir.co.za • T 021 889-5001 • F 021 889-5258

Shortly after publication of last years guide, L'Avenir became the latest Cape property to attract a famous French name: Chablis royalty Michel Laroche, whose eponymous domaine includes an extensive 100ha landholding and grand crus in Blanchot. Laroche brings his family's 150-year winemaking heritage, 12 years in southern France and five in Chile to bear on his latest venture. L'Avenir's reputation for benchmark pinotage and chenin will be burnished by Tinus Els (with extensive local and international experience as a 'flying winemaker'), succeeding semi-retired Francois Naudé (still consulting), assisted by incumbent Stephan du Toit. Refurbishments include a new irrigation system, own bottling line, sundry winery equipment and new-look luxury accommodation.

- * * * * * **Grand Vin Pinotage Replaces** 'Black Label Reserve as flagship offering. Concordant with **name, 04 concentrated** & flamboyant with powerful, long-haul tannins, effusive berry fruit & intense **oak coffee** & mocha. Behind the fireworks & drama, impressively pure & focused winemaking; truly deserves long **maturation to** achieve its potential. 12 mths new Fr barrels.
- * * * * * **Pinotage** As always from this property, textbook **pinotage: 05 banana, strawberry** scents & some high-toned which precede berried, tarry palate with green olive hint. Tannins very fine but persistent, need few yrs to soften, mesh with abundant fruit. 14.5%. VDG & SAA laurels for **04**, similar but with friendlier tannins. 13 mths Fr oak, 30% new.
- * * * * * **Stellenbosch Classic** NEW Bdx-style blend with drop pinotage (9%) in **04 -which winemaker Els intends 'excluding** from future blends'. Very satisfying, with plush red fruits & supple tannins, **weighty yet** balanced palate. Oak currently touch obvious on finish but structure/fruit shd absorb, given a few **yrs. 12 mths older Fr barriques.**
- * * * * * **Cabernet Sauvignon** None since perfectly **proportioned 03**; last ed showed opulent cassis & cedar matched by firm cab tannins & freshness. 18 mths Fr oak, 33% new, rest 2nd fill.
- * * * * * **Chenin Blanc** One of first success stories in the Cape chenin renaissance. **06** (* * * *) attractive thatch & floral notes, long, tangy farewell; 5% oaked portion adds mid-palate weight. Bit 'blunt & unfocused mid-2006, might settle & reach heights of class **05.**

*** **Cape Vintage** From cab, irresistible if unclassic. None since 03 (***), which succeeded delicious 99 Law 85g/l sugar; beefy 19% alc followed Portuguese lead. Last tasted mid-2005.

Rosé de Pinotage **NEW** *** **06** attractive salmon hue, dusty strawberry nose & flavoursome palate with a gentle tannin grip. Low 12.5% alc great for lunchtimes. **Chardonnay** ***
Despite a string of Chardonnay-du-Monde medals for this consistent white, new chablis styling focuses on fruit: only 15% (Fr) oak fermented, so **06** wood character much subtler, more supportive. Promising. No **05**. Charming if slightly warming **04** won gold at Santo Classic 2005.
Sauvignon Blanc Full-flavoured & vibrant **06** (****) lifts the bar with 'drink me' granadilla & ruby grapefruit, 'keep me' mineralogy & balance. **05** (***) had a more subtle mineral character, needing bottle-ageing to fill out. **L'Ami Simon** ** Honest country red blend of cabs f & s, merlot & pinotage in 03. Herbaceous lifted nose; lots of chunky sweet fruit. **Vin d'Erstelle** *** Off-dry white from colombard, riesling (53/39) & splash crouchen. **05** showed spicy fruit salad scents, juicy kick, finished drier than 6. 4g/l RS suggested. -CvZ