

LIQUID ASSETS: *BEST BUYS*

And the award goes to... by Clive Vanderwagen

The end of 2010 was jam-packed with wine events. Thousands flocked to convention centres around the country to taste new vintages and feast on fine wines. The award-winning wines and brandies always get the industry into a whirlwind of excitement. Each year our wine producers spend thousands entering their wines into competitions in the hope that theirs will stand out about above the rest and be lauded with accolades and those little round stickers we see on bottles. These awards have launched some estates to new heights; for others it's just another notch on their already very notched belt. While controversy abounds (can a wine really be judged as spectacular in a few minutes?), no winemaker is unhappy when his wine emerges as a double gold Veritas winner or a gold medal winner in the Old Mutual Trophy Show.

But what does this mean for the person in the bottle store looking for a pleasant wine to go with dinner? Should we, the F&HE readers who drink wine because we like it, take a Michelangelo gold award seriously and ignore any bottle not lit up like a Christmas tree with gold, silver or bronze stickers? The best answer to this question is: why not? Most of us base our wine purchases primarily on cost. Once we've found our price range we look at brands and usually opt for an estate or label we recognise. And more often than not, when trying to choose between a few recognised estates at similar prices, we'll select the one with an award sticker on it.

While you may concur with the recommendations of a panel of judges, the only way to find out if you really enjoy a wine is to taste it. If you like it, write the name down and buy it again. You may not enjoy a wine that has



won all sorts of awards, just as you may hate a movie that's scooped all the Oscars. Your palate is your palate and should be trusted. The real award for any winemaker is that you buy his or her wine – preferably cases of it.

A FEW WINNERS

- **Dieu Donné Merlot 2008 – R150** (Michelangelo Grand D'Or) is a full-bodied wine packed with dark berries and a pleasant tannic structure. Drink now or keep it for four more years. Only available from the cellar door.
- **Fleur du Cap Noble Late Harvest 2009 – R105** (double gold Veritas, gold at the 2010 International Wine Challenge in London and Platter's White Wine of the Year) has gorgeous notes of honey, litchi and dried fruit, with peaches and dried fruit dominating the palate.
- **Journey's End Chardonnay 2009 – R125** (diamond award at the 2010 Winemakers' Choice Awards and

Michelangelo Grand D'Or) is a classic-style chardonnay that begs to be eaten with seafood or pasta dishes. Filled with buttery citrus notes and simply delicious.

- **Klipdrift Gold – R200** (double gold Veritas) is a multilayered potstill brandy full of ripe peaches, pears and citrus, complemented by traces of sweet spice, chocolate and hazelnut.
- **Nitida Calligraphy 2009 – R115** (double gold Veritas) is a Bordeaux-style blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc that teems with mulberries and purple plum flavours.
- **Zevenwacht 360° Sauvignon Blanc 2009 – R80** (double gold Veritas) is delightfully fresh and crisp with whiffs of tinned peas, asparagus and khakibos.
- **Saronsberg Shiraz 2007 – R165** (double gold Veritas and Michelangelo Grand D'Or) is a superb wine with dark berries, plums and floral notes, and undertones of delicious spice.