

# Biltong never tasted this good, thanks to Alto Rouge

By Ilse van den Berg

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Taking French friends who have never been in South Africa around Cape Town is a treat - especially when there's wine involved. The French love their wine and so do I. But more so, I'm always keen to show off our impressive South African wines.

I also wanted to let them try top traditional South African dishes - how could I let them leave without having tried a bobotie, koeksister, melktert and, of course, biltong?

Fortunately, I'd heard that Alto Rouge (which has always been one of my favourite red wine producers) launched a new pairing experience - a biltong and red wine pairing. What could be more perfect?

Situated along the elevated northern slopes of the Helderberg Mountain, Alto has earned its reputation over close to a century as one of South Africa's most respected red wine estates.



Image sourced from [www.alto.co.za](http://www.alto.co.za)

The precise understanding of the terroir and the vines that thrive here has been shaped over generations and led to just five varieties being grown on the estate. Only five wines make up its portfolio; these feature in the Alto Wine & Biltong Tasting.

On a clear, sunny day, as you relax in the tasting room, your eyes graze over the green vineyards towards Lion's Head and Table Mountain in the distance. I, however, wasn't able to show that to my guests due to the thick, low-hanging clouds. That clearly didn't matter as they were way more interested in our lovely hostess and the wine and biltong pairing we were about to embark on.

The champion status of Alto wines comes to the fore in the new pairing experience, curated by Alto winemaker Bertho van der Westhuizen and award-winning food writer and stylist Vickie de Beer, who is also the food editor of *Rooi Rose* magazine.

Each pairing was designed to highlight a characteristic in the wine, while simultaneously demonstrating its versatility.



## Alto Rouge paired with barbecue-flavoured biltong

Alto Rouge is paired with barbecue-flavoured biltong. The aromas of cigar box and oak spices in the wine enhance the smoky, spicy, and tangy flavours of the barbecue-flavoured biltong. Always a go-to wine for me, my guests walked away with a box of the Alto Rouge and kept on commenting that "it's unlike any wine they have ever tasted." In a good way.

## Alto Shiraz paired with a smoky biltong

The Alto Shiraz with its delicate spicy quality, married to a dark fruitiness, makes it the perfect accompaniment to a smoky biltong.

## Alto Cabernet Sauvignon paired with salty, naturally-cured biltong

The rugged tannic structure of Alto Cabernet Sauvignon was enhanced by a salty, naturally-cured biltong with a trace of fat. According to Van der Westhuizen, the latter softens the tannins and enhances the red, plum fruit and sweetness in the

wine.

## Alto MPHS paired with Alto red wine biltong with Parmesan and white truffle

Van der Westhuizen also discovered how the process of fermentation releases more umami flavours in full-bodied, well-aged wines like the Alto MPHS, which is used for the fourth pairing and named after the farm's founding winemakers.

De Beer adds that the intensity of flavour in this rich wine is well matched with umami foods like the Alto red wine biltong with Parmesan and white truffle.



Image sourced from [www.alto.co.za](http://www.alto.co.za)

## Fine Old Vintage & Sweet wine paired with Alto red wine and Gorgonzola biscotti

For the Fine Old Vintage and Sweet pairing, the sweetness in wine balances salt and acts as a foil to rich foods. According to De Beer, that's why the Alto Old Fine Vintage pairs well with soft, silky Gorgonzola - like the Alto red wine and Gorgonzola biscotti - or rich duck liver pâté.

*The Alto Wine & Biltong Tasting is available at the estate tasting lounge on the farm and costs R110.*

Alto is located on the Annandale Road off the R44 between Stellenbosch and Somerset West. For more, go to [www.alto.co.za](http://www.alto.co.za), email [info@alto.co.za](mailto:info@alto.co.za), call 021 881 3884 or make contact on [www.facebook.com/AltoWinery](https://www.facebook.com/AltoWinery) or via Twitter [@AltoWines](https://twitter.com/AltoWines).

## ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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