

# SA's pinotage and seasonal produce shines at Groot Phesantekraal

 By Leigh Andrews

6 Sep 2019

Groot Phesantekraal wine farm, tucked into the Tygerberg hills in Durbanville, offers an entirely different wine valley experience to what you may have come to expect from the Constantia, Paarl and Stellenbosch wine valleys. Here's what to expect, and why we recommend making a more-ish meal of it with both wine tasting and brunch!



Groot Phesantekraal. All images provided.

Entering the working farm's vineyards on one of those "Cape Town's best kept secret" mild winter Saturdays, we soon found ourselves at the main restaurant and wine tasting area, having first marveled at the intriguing green domes and perfect right angled hedges around the courtyard area.

The glassed-in reception area is invitingly decorated with plush couches and wine-related reading, so before we knew it, we were lost of another world before winemaker Etienne Louw welcomed us to the wine-tasting 'chicken coop'.

Designed by Jacques Erasmus of Hemelhuijs and fourth-generation owner Ronelle Brink, it features a very low doorway that may prove interesting to navigate after you've had a tasting or two.

## Wine-tasting in a chicken coop? Don't knock it till you try it!

But we were just getting the day started, so navigation was a breeze. Seated in the cool, dark, cellar-style room lit with chandelier-style lights made of old glass decanters, we looked upon the individual tasting charts placed at our seats and were pleased to note the wine tasting would comprise three white and two reds, as it was nowhere near noon yet.

Louw conducted the tasting personally, and spoke us through snippets of Groot Phesantekraal's history since 1897 and current standing, while also sharing insights into the Durbanville wine-growing region's specific selling points.



Groot Phesantekraal's wine range. All images provided.

Louw knows what he's talking about, having been at Groot Phesantekraal since 2017 but a resident Durbanville wine maker since 2006, having formerly made a name for himself at Altydgedacht. He acknowledged Durbanville is a relatively small winemaking valley, but most are loathe to leave it because it offers both the country fresh air and convenience of urban living.

From a winemaking perspective, it's a fantastic area – one of the coolest wine-growing regions –resulting in wines with a stylistically different sparkle. As there's no actual winery on site, they rent cellar space at Diemersdal.

## Rich wines blend with rich history

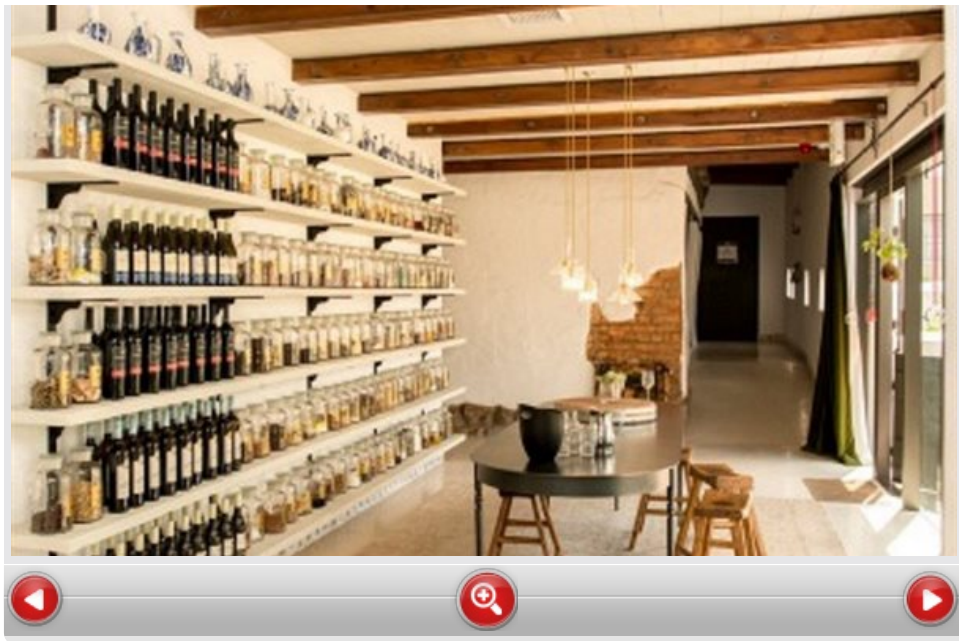
Louw shared that the Brink family's own wine brand, Phizante Kraal Wine, was launched in 2005 in very small quantities and rebranded to the farm's current name in 2017, along with the Brink family crest, honouring more than 120 years of Brink family ownership.

But as this is one of Durbanville's oldest farms, Groot Phesantekraal's heritage actually dates back to 1698 when Cape Governor Simon van der Stel granted the land to its first owner, captain and bountyhunter Olof Bergh of the VOC.

Bergh's married Anna de Koning, daughter of a freed slave in the Jan van Riebeeck household in 1676 and together they farmed the Groot Phesantekraal land, with records showing that by 1756 some 40,000 vines had been planted on Groot Phesantekraal.

In 1759 the property was sold to the Louw family, and eventually purchased by Arend Brink in 1897. Current custodians André (Oubaas) and Ronelle Brink planted vineyards covering 50ha of its 840ha expanse in 1996.





The wines themselves spoke of this rich history, as we started with the luminous **Groot Phesantekraal Sauvignon Blanc 2019**, with dominant tropical passionfruit and green-fig flavours on the nose, as well as. The grapes are picked late in season, so there's little greenness and more fermentation profile, which explains the hints of freshly cut grass.

It was deliciously soft and light, and a Michelangelo Double Gold and Gold Wine Award-winner for excellent value, but Louw laughed of our compliments by saying: "If you're a Durbanville winemaker and can't make a good sav blanc, go try something else."

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Sauvignon Blanc Experience First dish and slushies are out!!

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So we did, sampling the Veritas Double Gold-winning **Groot Phesantekraal Chenin Blanc 2019** next.

With upfront clean and crisp tropical fruit like guava, as well as hints of green apple and citrus, Louw confessed this is his personal favourite as there's not much chenin grown in the Durbanville valley. You can see these grapes through the restaurant's glass doors. At optimum picking point there's lower acidity.

“ *Louw has noted that the general drinking public of 2019 is averse to searing acidity, so this was a conscious decision to keep the levels lower.* ”

A lightly bubbly wine that's not bone-dry means it has a lovely mouth-feel, this one is extremely friendly on the wallet and Louw says it over-delivers on the R60 cellar door price.

Next, it was time to sample the 2018 Silver Michelangelo International Award-winning **Groot Phesantekraal Anna de Koning 2017**, with its concentrated yet elegant sweet melon fruit flavours, as well as honeyed almond, nougat, candied nuts and citrus notes on the nose.

This reserve wine is a variation on the chenin, and barrel-fermented with less new oak so the cultivar shines through.

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Named after the wife of Groot Phesantekraal's first owner Olof Bergh, Anna's portrait hangs in the Groot Constantia manor house as she inherited it after Olof's death.

By then we were ready for red, first swirling the **Groot Phesantekraal Cabernet Sauvignon 2017**, which has heady herbal notes well supported by red and black fruits, with a hint of minty spice, vanilla and cigar box tobacco. This wine harks back to the old world as stylistically it's reminiscent of Bordeaux wines.

Louw called the Cab Sav a good expression of what they do at Groot Phesantekraal and a true expression of the terroir of the vineyard, because even if picked fully ripe, that 'lead pencil' grippy palate flavour is retained.

Saving the best for last, we ended with the farm's showstopper, Gold Michelangelo International Award-winning **Groot Phesantekraal Berliet 2017**.

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One of the tastiest pinotages we've come across, it's the SA varietal at its best, packed with the juicy ripe red fruit as opposed to Paarl and Stellenbosch's dark fruit, along with subtle toasty American oak and elegant tannin structure shining through the full-bodied mouthfeel.

Named after the French passenger car that was soon taken over by Renault, with Brink's late-father's orange Berliet having been lovingly restored and now showcased on Groot Phesantekraal's grounds, this wine is set to develop further complexity with careful cellaring for 8 to 10 years. Louw said the more you work with pinotage, the more it shines as SA's truly

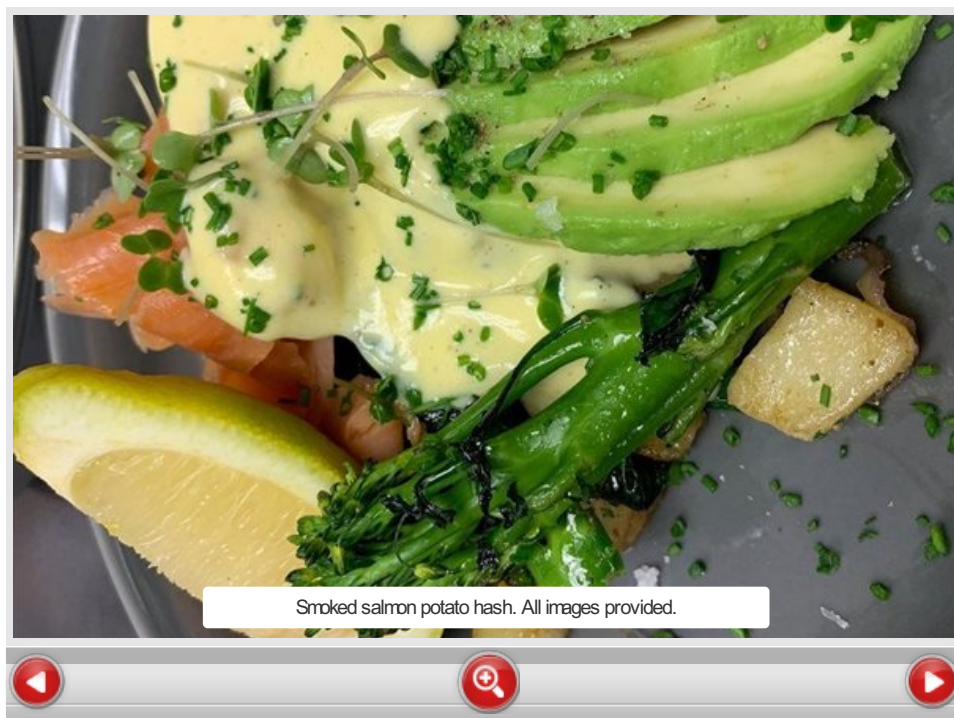
commercially offering.

“Whatever one puts in the bottle must give a sense of place and personality. Winemakers have a responsibility to make wines people love to drink,” concluded Louw.

## Bottled and jarred

So that rounds out Groot Phesantekraal's current vintages, along with the 100%-Chardonnay Groot Phesantekraal Blanc de Blanc 2016 Méthode Cap Classique.

And despite the fact that Groot Phesantekraal's own extra-virgin olive oil is also available from the tasting room for R70 a bottle, the Anna de Koning and Berliet reserve wines were so impressive that we took home a bottle of each, at cellar door prices before stepping out into the light of day.

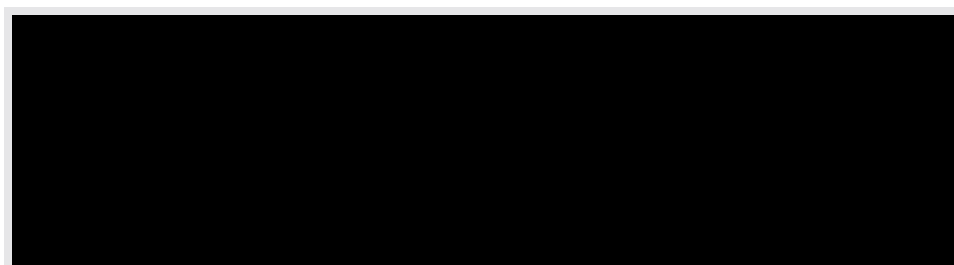


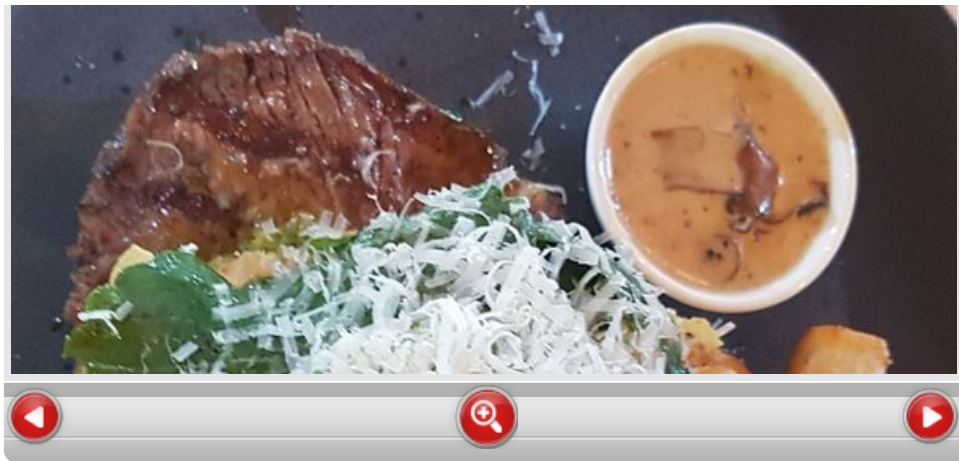
Further enhancing the sensory experience, there's a whole wall of shelves holding over a hundred of the tastes and scents of Groot Phesantekraal's wines captured in glass storage jars, featuring everything from garlic flakes to coffee, eucalyptus, bullets (metal and gunpowder) and pencils (lead and wood) featured.

It's an interesting stop between the tasting room and main restaurant, but did little to distract us from our mission: Next stop, brunch!

## Fast, fantastic brunch

Run by Juan and Maret van Deventer, with Juan serving as head chef and chef Maret, running the front of house, a meal at the restaurant at Groot Phesantekraal is another treat for the senses.







The restored restaurant section, also housed in the farm's original whitewashed, stone-floored open-beamed thatch roofed stable complete with original feeding troughs from 1767, was positively packed as Saturday brunch is a highlight at Groot Phesantekraal.

We went for flat whites, served in pretty pottery crockery on wooden saucers that complemented the wooden sugar spoon.

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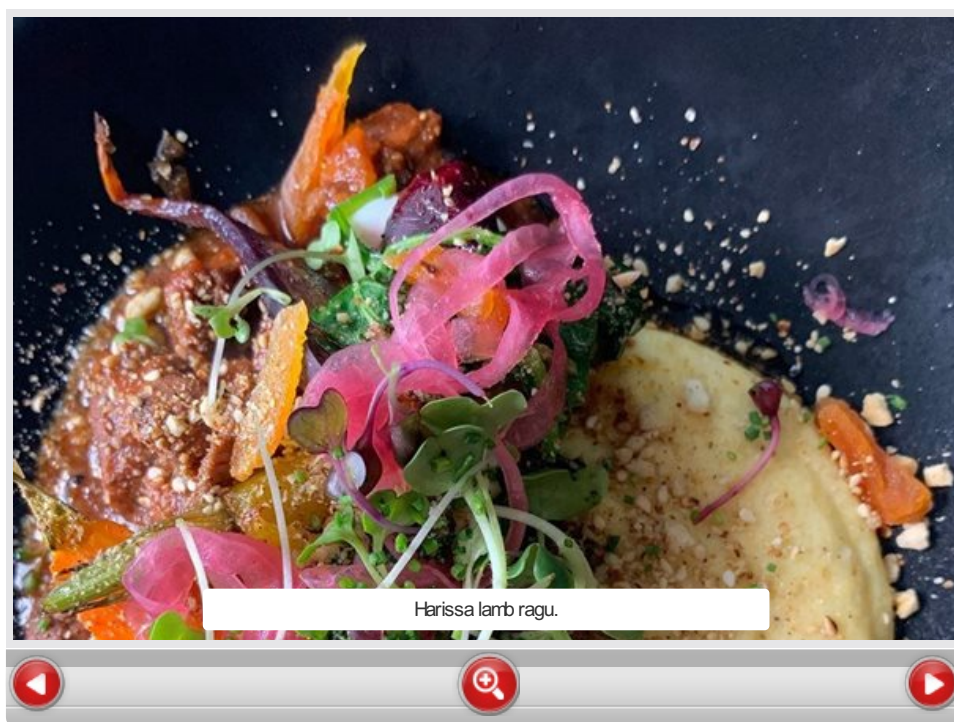
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A post shared by [Groot Phesantekraal Farm \(@grootphesantekraal\)](#) on Jul 26, 2017 at 2:15am PDT

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To eat, we went for the 'smoked salmon potato nash with baby spinach, red onion, avocado, broccolini and, Hollandaise chives' and the sweet hot cross-bun French toast respectively.

My husband's salmon plate was a pleasing blend of green, pink and yellow and he confirmed the taste was just exquisite; while sinfully cinnamonony and served with berries topped with hot, 'butterscotch crispy bacon', the hot-cross bun French toast is also truly delicious.



While service is fast, you're welcome to linger here. The cosy inside eating area was completely booked, proving the spot's popularity as a family weekend breakfast venue, there's also a courtyard eating area that would be just the thing on a sunny day.

No wonder it was recently listed as one of Cape Town's top five summer brunch spots.



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The all-day desserts like melted white hot chocolate and the burned sweet-potato pie, served with caramel-custard mousse and candied nuts were calling strongly but alas, I simply had no more space to do them justice. We'll be back!

*Leigh Andrews was a guest of Groot Phesantekraal. A five-wine tasting is R50 per person and brunch is served daily. You can also opt for an informal outdoor tasting on the grassy terrace, paired with a cheese and charcuterie platter. Menus change regularly according to seasonal availability, as much of the produce used is sourced on the farm. Click [here](#) to view the most recent menu update.*

*Groot Phesantekraal is situated 20 minutes from Cape Town, at on the R302 (Klipheuwel Way). It is closed on Sundays and Mondays, with the restaurant offering breakfast and lunch from Tuesdays to Fridays, as well as Saturday brunch and pizza and wine promos on the lawn. The restaurant will be open on 24 September to celebrate Heritage Day. Email [restaurant@phesantekraal.co.za](mailto:restaurant@phesantekraal.co.za) to make a booking, and call 021 825 0060 or visit [www.grootphesantekraal.co.za/our-wines](http://www.grootphesantekraal.co.za/our-wines) to purchase Groot Phesantekraal wines. You can also follow Groot Phesantekraal on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest updates.*

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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