

No one older than 35 has any excuse for making New Year's resolutions. If by that not-particularly-advanced age you don't already know what you are able to change, and haven't accepted what you can't, there are no miracles the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January will bring to your life. This practical but rigorous approach may help to avoid self-delusion, but it brings a sense of loneliness - especially when all around you people are talking about nothing else. Advertisers - who are trained to sniff out human weakness in much the same way as comrades close to the ruling party know how to nose a deal - add to the noise. As January dawns the billboards light up with news of how, with just a little resolve, you can lose those kgs you picked up on holiday.

A few years back Jay Mcinerney, easily one of the more entertaining of the American wine writers, produced a list of his new year (wine) resolutions. Most were useful injunctions worth at least as much to his readers as they were to him (though the promise never to drink the wine served at charity functions savoured of a more personal trauma). It occurred to me that the one acceptable habit - come the new year - was to review the way your preferences have changed and to be more conscious of accommodating where your tastes are going, rather than what they once were.

I know of countless people who carried on buying red wine while most of what they were drinking was white (or vice versa), almost as if their buying patterns bore no resemblance to what they were actually consuming. So I have resolved to review my own consumption habits and to amend my shopping accordingly. This doesn't sound like much but it means that 2016 will see me dramatically increasing my white wine buying. It may be the generally warmer weather of the past year, it may be the fabulous quality of the white wines currently being produced in South Africa - either way I'm now consuming more whites, and proportionately fewer reds.

Happily there has also been a vast increase in the choice and value of what is available. The Cape makes infinitely better whites than reds - and this performance is pretty much across the board. There are fabulous Chardonnays - wines which Burgundy's Veronique Drouhin said should be causing her compatriots at least a little apprehension. My favourites include Chamonix, Paul Cluver, the wooded and unwooded wines from Rustenberg and Jordan, Mulderbosch, Dewetshof (Limestone Hill), Ataraxia, Bouchard Finlayson (Kaaaimansgat), and Glen Carlou (the unwooded). There are equally wonderful Chenins, too many to name, though it's worth noting that the variety offers extraordinary stylistic breadth, a function both of diversity of plantings as well as the diversity of winemakers, many of whom have chosen this cultivar to express their own particular aesthetic.

Despite (or perhaps because of) its popularity, sauvignon blanc is probably the least consistent of the white varieties - in terms of quality. However, at the top end of the table there is an array of world class wines. My favourites here include Cape Point, Cederberg (and Ghost Corner), Steenberg, Oneiric, Highlands Road (the older vintages are worth tracking down), Jordan (The Outlier), Lomond and Cape of Good Hope Altima. Sauvignon-semillon blends (the traditional components of white Bordeaux) have done consistently well in the Cape, starting with Blanc de la Bri in the 1980s and continuing through to Steenberg Magna Carta, Highlands Road Sine Cera, Vergelegen GVB, Delaire-Graff, Morgenster and Cape Point Isliedh.

Finally, while there are not many Rieslings still being produced, there are some fine examples - Paul Cluver, Hartenberg, and Jordan come to mind. There is also a decent Gewurztraminer from Paul Cluver and a truly delicious Gruner Veltliner from Diemersdal

to provide that burst of fruit when you want an aromatic - rather than fizz - for an aperitif. At least when it comes to drinking wine, 2016 is looking good.