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wine o'clock

Let's face it, life is a thirsty business... May your glass always be half full (of a decent vintage).



The heartbreak grape

Pinot noir (pee-noh nwar) is a bratty grape: it's incredibly fussy and needs very particular growing conditions. I can't put it better than Miles, Paul Giamatti's character, did in the film *Sideways*: 'It's thin-skinned, temperamental. It's not a survivor like Cabernet ... Pinot needs constant care and attention, you know? It can only grow in these really specific, little tucked away corners of the world ... Only someone who takes the time to understand Pinot's potential can coax it into its fullest expression. Its flavours are the most haunting, brilliant, thrilling, subtle and ancient on the planet.'

The allure of Pinot is not always immediately obvious to the uninitiated, especially as it's usually pricier than other red varietals. If you're expecting something brawny, you might be disappointed, as Pinot is a completely different animal. It's lighter in colour and on the palate – thanks to a lower tannin content (which makes it ideal for those who prefer red wine in summer, as it can be served chilled) – resulting in a more elegant wine. A really great Pinot can be transcendental, with velvety layers of flavour that transmute and intensify with each mouthful. It's not called the 'heartbreak grape' for nothing.

OUR TOP 6 PINOT NOIRS



NEWTON-JOHNSON FELICITÉ PINOT NOIR 2011 R85

This sexy, silky Pinot pairs well with Justine's fennel pork chops on page X.



PAUL CLUVER PINOT NOIR R120

Lots of wild berry fruit and wild mushroom scents on the nose... It's just wild (in a good way).



GROOTE POST RESERVE PINOT NOIR 2009 R121

This won Gold at the 2012 Veritas Awards (the Oscars of SA wine). Enough said.



HAUTE CABRIÈRE UNWOODED PINOT NOIR 2011 R80

This looks a bit like a dark rosé, but it isn't. What it is, is a fabulously juicy, dry Pinot that should be served chilled and quaffed with abandon on a sweltering day.



CRYSTALLUM CUVÉE CINEMA 2011 R230

On the nose: cassia, strawberry, cherry. On the palate: caramel, spice, cola. Sounds weird – tastes awesome.



HAMILTON RUSSELL PINOT NOIR 2010 R280

This Pinot pioneer regularly scoops awards (the 2007 vintage inspired my religious conversion to the grape).

CHEAP & CHEERFUL

It's always a good idea to have a few easy-drinkers on hand. Here's what we've been enjoying recently...



Weltevrede Vanilla Chardonnay R57: Melon, pineapple, mango, peach, passionfruit, butter-scotch, crème brûlée and, of course, vanilla.
Backsberg Dry Red R45: Ripe berry and floral aromas with a soft, fruity taste.

Ken Forrester Petit Chenin Blanc 2012 R40: quince, pear, crunchy green apple, grapefruit.
Alvi's Drift Pinotage 2007 R36: Full-bodied with plum & mulberry flavours. Fab with babotie.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANEL VAN DER MERWE, SUPPLIED

*Prices correct at time of going to print; may vary from store to store. *Alcohol not for sale to persons under the age of 18.