



www.SA-Venues.com  
SOUTH AFRICA EXPLORED

## WATERFORD ESTATE –WONDERFUL WINE AT WATERFORD

POSTED TO: [ACTIVITIES AND THINGS TO DO, WESTERN CAPE](#)  
ON 21 February, 2011

### Waterford Estate

It's a beautiful sunny day, and I can tell the day is going to be hot. I'm heading down the highway towards [Stellenbosch](#), watching the mountains come ever closer. My goal is the [Waterford Wine Estate](#). To my mind this little winery is the jewel in the [Stellenbosch Wine Route's](#) crown. Waterford is a relatively young estate, which was founded by the Arnold and Ord families in 1998. Don't discount it because of its age though; this estate produces some fantastic wines. The estate can be found in the picturesque Blaauwklippen Valley, and the winery was designed by architect Alex Walker in the manner of the classic Bordeaux chateaus of France. The buildings are beautiful, and local stone was used to give the buildings their warm glow ...

Out front there is an old orange orchard, which you drive through as you approach the wine cellar. The verge of the road is flanked with fragrant lavender. Depending on the time of year you visit, you'll be bathed in the fragrance of lavender or orange blossom. Once you have arrived, you go up the steps and through the huge arch into the coolness of the courtyard, making you feel as if you are entering a castle. Inside the courtyard is shaded by trees and is dominated by the Waterford fountain. Tables are scattered around, draped with starched white linen and beautiful bunches of flowers. It looks like the perfect place to do some wine tasting and get some respite from the heat.

Waterford believes in their wine, and as such want no distractions; they don't do functions, they don't even serve light lunches or snacks, this is where you pay homage to wine, and the Waterford wine tasting experience is usually something to remember. One of the main reasons that people are drawn to Waterford is that they offer a wine and chocolate tasting. What could be more seductive? The setting is fantastic; a beautiful shady courtyard, tinkling fountain and delicious wine. The chocolate tasting consists of three of the estates wines, paired with three different chocolates.

The sommelier sets out the wines and the chocolates, before explaining the order in which to drink the wines, left to right as well as the history of each of the wines – what mix of grapes, and what you can expect to taste. They are often busy as they are popular, so you will find that you may not have their undivided attention, but the service is pleasant and they are knowledgeable about their wines. The chocolate tasting starts off with the Kevin Arnold Shiraz, a deep spicy red with a wonderful coffee aroma, with hints of spices such as nutmeg and mace. The wine has about 20% Mourvedre added which gives it complexity. The waiter explains that we should smell it, and then taste it, before sampling the chocolate, which has hints of Marsala

Chai spice, which in turn enhances the way you experience the wine. Savouring the musky spicy flavours, I find the wine has added depth and complexity. I'm not normally a red kind of guy, but this Shiraz could well convert me.

Next comes another deep burgundy wine, which when I smell it, remind me of delicious French stews laced with red wine and fragrant herbs. This is the Waterford Cabernet Sauvignon. It has mellow depths, with a dry finish that's quite pleasant. What? I like another red? This coming from someone who usually avoids red wines. I then have a nibble of chocolate which is laced with flakes of sea salt, which bring out the umami aspects of this wine. I have another sip, and suddenly I'm in my Grandmother's kitchen, one of her rich stews bubbling on the stove. This is what wine is all about exclaims my partner as she sips and savours her glass.

The final wine is a sweet dessert wine. This is one of the reasons for my journey – the Heatherleigh Natural Sweet, which is the colour of molten sunshine flecked straw. I smell the aroma; it's floral and sweet with a touch of spice. I'm reminded of a rose with a similar deep scent. I have a taste. It's quite sweet, and that's not to everyone's taste. It not sweet like honey is though, the initial sensation is quickly followed by a light acidic finish which lingers. It dances on the tongue like the water in the waterfall. This is one of my favourite wines and one of the reasons I'm drawn back here. Afterwards we linger, savouring the wine, and talking idly. Eventually we set off to explore the cellar and I am hit by that sweet musty yeasty smell of grapes being processed into wine. The tour is informative, and you will learn a lot about the process of winemaking. At last we reluctantly get back in the car and move on – but not before buying a couple of bottles of wine.

**Address & Contact Details:** The Waterford Wine Estate can be found on the Blaauwklippen Road, Helderberg, Stellenbosch. They can be contacted on +27 (0)21 880-0496.

**Stellenbosch**



by **jim** » Mon Mar 16, 2009 11:18 am

On a recent tour of South Africa we went to Stellenbosch for a days wine tasting. We had no idea where we were going but I saw a sign by the side of the road "Waterford Estate". By this time we were already in late afternoon so we decided to go for it.

After driving for what seems like hours the road turned from a tarmac road into a dirt track. We were really not sure if we had taken a wrong turn or if the place was even there! Eventually we came out the other end and into what seems like a paradise! The

place is amazing to look at and the view as you enter the property is exquisite.

We parked up, walked up into the courtyard and were greeted by one of the servers. We were seated in the corner of the maple tree filled courtyard. Such a pleasant place to spend an afternoon.

We were offered the standard wine tasting or the "chocolate and wine" experience. The latter consisted of the standard wine tasting plus 3 wines that were paired with chocolate. This sounded like a gimmick to me, but in most cases I'll try anything once, so we opted for the chocolate and wine.

The service was very good, the wine glasses were large, and we were presented with generous amounts to try. The server was very knowledgeable too, explaining each wine in turn and the background of how it is made and why it tastes as it does.

The wines from Waterford were really quite special. The whites were very fruity and very different from anything I have tasted before. I can't remember the name of the one I liked most, but I believe it was one of the Pecan river bottles.

The flagship wine seems to be the Kevin Arnold Shiraz. To be honest I don't think there was a single wine I didn't like, but that one was certainly very nice.

The chocolate experience was very interesting. Once we had tasted the standard selection our server presented us with a wooden block, like a very thick table mat, laid out in 3 sections. On each section was a wine glass and a slab of chocolate. In between was an explanation of why the chocolate was paired with the wine.

The selection was as follows:

Cabernet Sauvignon – Dark Chocolate

Kevin Arnold Shiraz – Masala Chai Dark Chocolate  
Heatherleigh Natural Sweet desert wine – Rose Geranium Milk  
Chocolate

We were advised to take a sip of wine, then take a bite of chocolate, then take another sip of wine. I was amazed as to how different they tasted and how well they complimented each other. I had ever heard of having chocolate paired with wine before, but this certainly worked really well.

The first was the Masala Chai Dark Chocolate with the Cabernet Sauvignon. This was a lovely combination and made me wonder why I had not discovered chocolate and wine before!

The second was the Kevin Arnold Shiraz with the Rock Salt Dark Chocolate. You can actually see the salt in the chocolate and it is there to make the strong flavour of the Cabernet just that little bit easier to drink. I must say it really worked and this was the one that completely sold me on the concept of chocolate and wine.

The most interesting was probably the desert wine, paired with the Rose Geranium Milk Chocolate. I am not usually a desert wine drinker, but this was so smooth and combines so nicely with the milk chocolate that I think I am now a convert! I just wish I'd picked up a bottle at the time.

To be honest the surroundings help a lot when tasting wine. It is so easy to get totally lost in the experience. By the time we had finished I was seriously tempted to see if they had accommodation available!

This was definitely my most memorable and enjoyable wine tasting experience (only slightly pipping the Yodeling experience of of the Peju winery in California!). The setting is simply amazing and the atmosphere is great. I would recommend this to anyone visiting the Stellenbosch region of South Africa and if you go wine tasting there you **MUST** visit Waterford!

by **jim** » Mon Mar 16, 2009 11:18 am

On a recent tour of South Africa we went to Stallebosch for a days wine tasting. We had no idea where we were going but I saw a sign by the side of the road "Waterford Estate". By this time we were already in late afternoon so we decided to go for it.

After driving for what seems like hours the road turned from a tarmac road into a dirt track. We were really not sure if we had taken a wrong turn or if the place was even there! Eventually we came out the other end and into what seems like a paradise! The place is amazing to look at and the view as you enter the property is exquisite.

We parked up, walked up into the courtyard and were greeted by one of the servers. We were seated in the corner of the maple tree filled courtyard. Such a pleasant place to spend an afternoon.

We were offered the standard wine tasting or the "chocolate and wine" experience. The latter consisted of the standard wine tasting plus 3 wines that were paired with chocolate. This sounded like a gimmick to me, but in most cases I'll try anything once, so we opted for the chocolate and wine.

The service was very good, the wine glasses were large, and we were presented with generous amounts to try. The server was very knowledgeable too, explaining each wine in turn and the background of how it is made and why it tastes as it does.

The wines from Waterford were really quite special. The whites were very fruity and very different from anything I have tasted before. I cant remember the name of the one I liked most, but I believe it was one of the Pecan river bottles.

The flagship wine seems to be the Kevin Arnold Shiraz. To be honest I don't think there was a single wine I didn't like, but that one was certainly very nice.

The chocolate experience was very interesting. Once we had

tasted the standard selection our server presented us with a wooden block, like a very thick table mat, laid out in 3 sections. On each section was a wine glass and a slab of chocolate. In between was an explanation of why the chocolate was paired with the wine.

The selection was as follows:

Cabernet Sauvignon – Dark Chocolate

Kevin Arnold Shiraz – Masala Chai Dark Chocolate

Heatherleigh Natural Sweet desert wine – Rose Geranium Milk Chocolate

We were advised to take a sip of wine, then take a bite of chocolate, then take another sip of wine. I was amazed as to how different they tasted and how well they complimented each other. I had ever heard of having chocolate paired with wine before, but this certainly worked really well.

The first was the Masala Chai Dark Chocolate with the Cabernet Sauvignon. This was a lovely combination and made me wonder why I had not discovered chocolate and wine before!

The second was the Kevin Arnold Shiraz with the Rock Salt Dark Chocolate. You can actually see the salt in the chocolate and it is there to make the strong flavour of the Cabernet just that little bit easier to drink. I must say it really worked and this was the one that completely sold me on the concept of chocolate and wine.

The most interesting was probably the desert wine, paired with the Rose Geranium Milk Chocolate. I am not usually a desert wine drinker, but this was so smooth and combines so nicely with the milk chocolate that I think I am now a convert! I just wish I'd picked up a bottle at the time.

To be honest the surroundings help a lot when tasting wine. It is so easy to get totally lost in the experience. By the time we had

finished I was seriously tempted to see if they had accommodation available!

This was definitely my most memorable and enjoyable wine tasting experience (only slightly pipping the Yodeling experience of of the Peju winery in California!). The setting is simply amazing and the atmosphere is great. I would recommend this to anyone visiting the Stellenbosch region of South Africa and if you go wine tasting there you MUST visit Waterford!

### **Simon Williamson**

*March 22nd, 2011*

The highlight of living in Cape Town is not the mountain, as some would lead you to believe. It is not the sea which is often too cold in which to swim. It is not even the way it conveniently manages to keep poor people out of the lines of vision of rich people. It is undoubtedly its proximity to the Cape Winelands - as good a reason to live there as any. In fact, if I were to start a city I would ensure that there was a plethora of possible vineyard sites within spitting distance beforehand.

While living in Cape Town, I visited plenty of farms in and around Paarl, Franschhoek and Stallebosch, and they are all so good that it became tricky for any one of them to stand out. Until I won a prize at a press conference to spend a night at Waterford Estate (Note: I was/am under absolutely no obligation to write about it).

It is one of the few vineyards in Stellenbosch at which one can spend the night in a large, beautifully furnished room on the second floor of its main building. Breakfast and six or seven bottles of wine are provided and the view out of the bedroom is so wide guests can see sunrise and sunset from the bed.

**The eye-watering view out of the bedroom window.**

What the vineyards do offer, generally, is beauty, and Waterford Estate doesn't disappoint. Although I arrived in a crap mood because the sign for the vineyard had fallen down and I'd covered most of the roads of the Western Cape finding it, the way it was set up from the gate to where guests park was incredible. I could describe it, but rather just look at these.

That being said, prettiness is not something which necessarily differentiates one farm from another - you'll rarely see an ugly one. There are two stark criteria which push Waterford Estate's notability ahead of most others.

**Both pics are of the main building at Waterford Estate. This is what is immediately presented to all visitors here. Pretty damn decent, I'd say.**

The first is the idea of a wine safari. I am not sure of other farms do this, but Waterford boast a concept in which you taste the wine while sitting sitting by the orchard in which (at least some of) its grapes were grown. Our guide (whose name escapes me) was involved in the whole wine production process from seed-planting right through to putting the cork in the bottle, so we were given a thorough explanation on every part of the farm which we drove through (and drank near). We were regaled with tales of how crops had been affected by massive winds and fires, how grapes are selected, how the quality is maintained and so on. All the while in a stunning setting.

The highlight of the safari was sampling Waterford's signature wine, The Jem. This creation of this wine was a nine-year process with a plethora of concoctions attempted before Kevin Arnold, cellar master, and his team gave it the ok. We sampled this sitting on a hill with a view that stretched nearly the whole way to Cape Town.

**This is a proper wine safari - this truck having arrived at Waterford for safari purposes from Singita.**

The wines on the safari were matched with food - we sampled olives and nuts with the white wines and droewors and biltong with the reds. It all paired up beautifully, but it post-safari that Waterford surprised us again.

Three of Waterford's top red wines: a Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and it's premier product, The Jem.

I am sure most of you who have traversed wine country will have sampled the nectar alongside food. Well, Waterford Estate pairs up wines with chocolate. Usually putting two things people like together is a decent recipe for popularity. Well, how's about two things people absolutely adore? The secret is in the high-quality chocolate provided, flavoured beautifully. A deep dark chocolate, a brown rose-water flavour and a milk chocolate accompanied with four of Waterford's high-quality wines. I suppose the message is that wine is not just a meal accompaniment, it is a leisure pursuit too - not something wine-producing countries like South Africa need to know, but the rest of the world could be taught a thing or two.

The chocolate-pairings and the wine safari do make Waterford stand out within the region. However, and most importantly, it still provides the main top-quality aspect that one would expect anyway: superb, well-thought out wines.

It certainly gets my stamp of approval.

**Follow Simon on Twitter - [simonwillo](#) or read more of his postings on his [blog](#)**