

dornier



2003 | DONATUS  
STELLENBOSCH  
SOUTH AFRICA

# Dornier flies high

Dornier Merkur is the name of a plane built by Claude Dornier that flew from Zurich to Cape Town in 1926/27. It was one of the first trans-African flights and the first ever on a seaplane. The trip has been documented in a book and a film by pilot and photographer Walter Mittelholzer. The original propeller can be seen in the departure hall of the Cape Town International Airport.

BY GAWIE MARX

Established in 1995, Dornier nestles at the foothills of the Stellenbosch Mountain. A visit to the estate unveils its unique character - a character that is reflected in its wines.

Dornier represents a masterful synthesis of contrasting, complementary elements. A slick, industrial-chic 500-ton winery, an elaborate Sir Herbert Baker masterpiece and one of the Cape's oldest cellars highlight Dornier's heritage. Vibrant, surrealist-inspired paintings of founder and German artist, Christoph Dornier, bring minimalist, bare-brick walls to life.

Behind the modern image, winemaker JC Steyn believes in making elegant wines offering a fusion of both Old and New World styles. He comments, 'Dornier's focused range of premium blends already reflects the unique character and tremendous potential of this section of Stellenbosch's Blaauwklippen Valley.

Just like its vineyards, the Winery is a winemaker's dream with its perfect design, light-filled spaces and state-of-the-art equipment.'

## MASTERS IN THE ART OF CREATING THE PERFECT BLEND

'To stand apart, we needed to create something unique,' said the late founder, Christoph Dornier. 'By blending, you can combine the best wines, filling in with one varietal where another is lacking to produce something really exceptional - harmonious and balanced. In this way, we showcase the best of Dornier in a unique style synonymous with complexity, rich texture and a multi-layering of flavours based on a sense of creative exploration.'

This vision is perfected by Dornier's winemaker, JC Steyn. A graduate of Stellenbosch University, Steyn holds a degree in Viticulture and Oenology. He joined Dornier Wines after gaining

experience into the full spectrum of viticulture and winemaking as right-hand man to charismatic winemaker of Cape Town's Signal Hill Winery - Jean Vincent Ridon. Here, Steyn attained invaluable insights into the European wine palate and winemaking methods and was given the opportunity to consult for Chateau Kalechick in Turkey as well as several local wineries.

Unlike most producers, Dornier Wines decides on the style of wine before harvesting. Grapes are picked exclusively on taste, whilst the secret to the complexity, body and character of the wines lies in the staggered harvesting of each vineyard block. To ensure each varietal expresses its full character, each block can mature individually before final blending. Without favourable environmental conditions, even the best wine estate cannot succeed; at Dornier, however, vines flourish in prime wine-

growing *terroir*. Dornier's vineyards each boast their own micro-climate and soil composition, and are generally situated between 170 and 200 metres above sea level.

### ARCHITECTURAL COURAGE

Christoph Dornier, who sadly passed away in 2008, said that he did not want another Cape Dutch building. 'I wanted to create something that would instantly set us apart from the norm.' Helping him realise this vision was Paarl-based architect Johan Malherbe. Like its wines, Dornier's 500-ton winery combines traditional materials and an age-old concept with pioneering, modern twists to create a functional yet stylish and elegant building.

A sweeping, curved roof reflects the profile of the surrounding mountains. Glassy water from an expansive pond mirrors the roofline and serves to cool the maturation cellar beneath. Inside, an administration area flows effortlessly to the cellar, Industrial materials such as glass, stainless steel, anodised aluminium and wood predominate to give a pared-down, minimalist feel, whilst splashes of colour from artwork adorning treated face-brick walls and sweeping lines soften the scene. Aesthetically, it has a New York loft style feel. Operationally, it's a masterpiece that's been described as 'one of the best wineries in South Africa because of its simplicity.'

Stainless steel fermentation tanks are suspended and walkways have been widened to prevent a cramped working environment. Light filters through from expansive windows on the guest plaza to allow transparency of the winemaking process.

### RAPHAEL DORNIER

"In five years, I see Dornier as one of the most prominent brands of South African wines. With our small range of unique blends, we will showcase the potential and character of our soil as well as our individual style which we will strive to improve from vintage to vintage, based on our tradition of creativity, innovation and perfection," says strategist and MD, Raphael Dornier.

Raphael holds a PhD in Business and Economics from the University of St Gallen, Switzerland, and is a Certified Financial Analyst from the CFA Institute, USA. This together with his 12 years' experience in business and financial consulting and venture management has defined his role as Dornier's MD, with its portfolios of marketing, brand strategy and financial management.

The estate currently produces three ranges: *Donatus*, *Dornier* and *Cocoa Hill*. The wines reflect the potential and character of their *terroir* as well as their individual style. They offer elegance and freshness that appeal to the modern wine connoisseur. The Cabernet, Merlot & Pinotage in the Dornier range have all received 4 stars in the recent John Platter edition with 4.5 stars for both the *Donatus* Red and White blends. "We aspire to produce modern wines that will last to become the classics of tomorrow," says Raphael Dornier.

Dornier's main export markets include Canada, Switzerland, The Netherlands, the UK and Germany. Dornier Wines has become a truly international brand





available in 19 different markets. In the past months they have added countries such as China, the UK, Belgium, Romania, Botswana and Mauritius. They have also strengthened their position in the home market considerably.


### BODEGA RESTAURANT

In the short space of just one year, *Bodega Restaurant* on the Dornier Wine Estate has become one of the winelands' most popular eateries. Their signature 'Farm Style Cuisine' is perfectly matched to their newly appointed chef - Naas Pienaar.

Having acquired invaluable expertise at a number of high-profile gourmet establishments both locally and abroad, Naas Pienaar feels a real synergy between *Bodega's* food philosophy and his own. 'I believe that food should be in abundance, but that it needs to be healthy, real food that has integrity and a twist,' says Naas.

After three years of medical school and under the mentorship of Quintin Crewe - a Restaurateur and Food and Travel Writer - Naas bravely decided to pursue his passion for all things culinary. Upon trading in his scalpels for a set of kitchen knives, Naas completed a two year stint at John Jackson's Professional Chef School in Cape Town. This was followed by training at one of London's award winning restaurants - Kensington Place - under the guidance of Chef Rowley Leigh.

Upon his return to South Africa in 1997, Naas went on to work for some of South Africa's most acclaimed culinary establishments, including the likes of The Cape Colony Restaurant at the Mount Nelson Hotel, The Michelangelo Hotel, The Cape Grace Hotel as well as Londolozi Private Game Reserve.

It was, however, at Makouvlei Restaurant - situated on an organic vegetable, olive and almond farm outside Barrydale - that Naas finally realised his passion for farm-fresh ingredients, which is why working at *Bodega* was so appealing. Here Naas gets to indulge in his love for freshly-baked breads, slow-braised foods, authentic cured meats and good old-fashioned 'plaaskos' - with a twist, of course. There are only a few places in South Africa that serve Perlemoen (Abalone), for which Naas' family has been passing on recipes from generation to generation. One of Naas' favourites is also the oldest, where the Perlemoen is slowly cooked with white wine and then the sauce is thickened with brown breadcrumbs and finished off with fresh lemon and a little grated nutmeg. 

Situated on Blaauwklippen Road, off the R44 opposite the Stellenbosch Golf Course, Dornier Wines is open for tastings Monday to Sunday from 10:00 – 17:00, lunch daily 12:00-17:00 and dinner Thursday - Saturday 18:00-21:30.

For further information call Dornier Wines on (021) 880 0557, email [info@dornier.co.za](mailto:info@dornier.co.za) or visit [www.dornier.co.za](http://www.dornier.co.za) and [www.bodega.co.za](http://www.bodega.co.za)