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**DORNIER WINES FOCUSES ON CHENIN BLANC FOR THEIR
RANGE OF WHITE WINES**

South Africa, Stellenbosch, October 2009; **WITH** roughly 18,8% of the total vineyard area in South Africa planted to Chenin blanc, it is South Africa's most planted varietal. And while it was once considered the workhorse of the wine industry it has lost its Cinderella status and today demonstrates its versatility by the different styles of single cultivar wines it is made into - from fruity luscious whites to sumptuous wooded wines to dry quaffers. Not to mention its role in brandy and in dessert wines.

Since their inception as a wine estate - Dornier Wines has been making white wine with a Chenin blanc focus. Today they produce three different tiers of wines including three tiers of Chenins - Cocoa Hill Chenin blanc, Dornier Chenin blanc and their flagship Donatus White - a blend of Chenin blanc and Semillon. These wines all showcase handsome varietal-driven offerings and Dornier has recently released new vintages of each of these wines.

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Different Styles of Chenin Blanc

When asked about why they produce three different Chenin Blanc focused wines, winemaker JC Steyn referred to the six styles recognised by the Chenin blanc Association of South Africa. 'Of the six styles, we currently offer three: The Cocoa Hill Chenin blanc fits into the Chenin blanc Association's *fresh and fruity* category. Grapes for this wine were harvested at lower sugar level in order to obtain this fresh and fruity expression - as opposed to the grapes for the Dornier Chenin blanc which were rather ripe in order to fall into the category known as '*rich and ripe unwooded*' says Steyn.

JC further comments 'Our final offering and flagship white wine - the Donatus, falls into the Chenin Blanc Association's *rich and ripe wooded* category'. However it must be noted that we really make a point of it to obtain a certain level of freshness in the Donatus White blend. Often this comes from the Semillon, but harvest time for the Chenin is crucial in also obtaining these elements for the main variety. One attribute we portray is how well Chenin blanc handles wood ageing.'

Resistant to many diseases, vine vigour, and the tendency to early bud break as well as late ripening suits Chenin blanc to grow in warm climates. The vines grow well in many soil types and terroirs. In the old days, in spite of its wide plantings most Chenin blanc was made into serviceable, but generally bland wine. There was general tendency to over-irrigate and over crop, reducing most Chenin blanc to the forgettable.

But today, careful viticultural practices have easily overcome Chenin blanc's weaknesses and have resulted in many excellent flavour-packed wines. Here, more and more wine farms are placing greater emphasis on suiting specific vineyards to the varietal and undertaking more stringent viticultural practices to ensure quality grapes. The result is wines that demonstrate excellent terroir and varietal characteristics.

2009 Cocoa Hill Chenin Blanc – Fresh & Fruity (unwooded)

The 2009 Cocoa Hill Chenin Blanc (R45.00) demonstrates that terroir is key to producing flavour – the grapes for this wine were grown in prime terroir in the decomposed red granite soils of Cocoa Hill, which gives the range its name.

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The 2009 vintage was considered one of the best in the last six years, with a mild, dry temperate climate, allowing for better quality. While yields were slightly lower, this led to more intense flavours. Grapes selected for the wine ranged from vines aged from 19 to 52 years and were gently pressed to allow the wine to speak for itself, with as little intervention as possible. The juice was individually fermented in stainless steel tanks for 10 days and then remained on the full lees for a further two months, to allow for maximum fullness and complexity.

Winemaker JC Steyn describes the wine as offering up flavours of banana, honeysuckle and ripe loquats. Nuances of citrus coupled with an appealing warmth and richness are testimony to the fact that the wine was left for so long on the lees. The finish shows clean and crisp tropical fruit.

2009 Dornier Chenin Blanc – Rich and Ripe (unwooded)

Grapes for 2009 Dornier Chenin blanc (R75.00) – a completely new addition to the Dornier line-up, were regarded as one of the best at harvest since 2003. Again crop levels were slightly lower, allowing for concentrated fruit flavours.

This time the fruit came from the semi-arid Swartland area, which is extremely well known for its dry-land bush vine Chenin blanc grapes. With a somewhat harsh terroir, the fruit delivers singular quality and highly expressive flavours. Grapes were lightly pressed and then aged in steel tanks and older oak barrels, with the wine remaining on full lees for a further five months before filtering and bottling.

Winemaker JC Steyn describes the wine as demonstrating fresh whiffs of litchi, ripe, white pear and peach on the nose, while offering up fabulously rich flavours, with a concentrated yet silky mouth-feel. A crisp finish with a distinct mineral quality adds to the final appeal. The wine has good ageing potential of at least two years.

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2008 Dornier Donatus White – Rich & Ripe (Wooded)

Dornier's flagship range - Donatus offers singular quality, elegance and complexity in its wines. The 2008 Donatus White (R110.00) is a blend of Chenin blanc (65%) and Semillon (35%) and admirably combines the opulence and complexity of barrel-aged Chenin Blanc with the freshness and rich mouthfeel of the Semillon.

Winter leading up to the 2008 vintage provided almost ideal conditions, with cold weather and good rains offering optimum conditions for complete vine dormancy, thus resulting in an even and good quality crop. The cooler temperatures meant that grapes ripened slowly, with intense flavours developing in the two varietals.

Grapes were harvested in the cool early morning hours and only the minimum yields were extracted. The wine was fermented slowly in both first- and second-fill French oak barrels to allow for maximum freshness and both varietals spent seven months on the full lees in the barrel, resulting in a singular roundness and depth.

With eight months of oak maturation, the wine has a luscious golden hue. Steyn describes the Donatus White as being handsomely rich with aromas of white pear and cumquat, complemented by nuances of honey and citrus. The Semillon gives a fullness and richness combining well with the freshness, elegance and complexity of the Chenin blanc. With a deliciously silky finish with a densely layered aftertaste, this fine wine will age well for up to five years.

For more information on Dornier Wines and their Chenin blanc varietals call (27) (21) 880 0557, email info@dornier.co.za or visit www.dornier.co.za

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