

White Gold in the Constantia Valley

by Theo Oosthuizen



Entrance to Klein Constantia Homestead

Situated only 20 kilometres from Cape Town's city centre, the estate is set amid trees and lush greenery on the slopes of the Constantia mountain. Home to the Jooste family, who have been involved in the South African wine industry for four generations, the gabled Cape Dutch homestead dates back to 1824 graces the 146 hectare estate.

Winemaker (since 2004 vintage), Adam Mason, who has brought an injection of enthusiasm and overseas experience to the winery. At the estate, he has been happy to return more to a hands-on, "artisan" style of winemaking, enjoying getting to know the vineyards together with Floricius Beukes, farm manager since January 2006.

'Family owned and run, Klein Constantia's philosophy is founded on quality rather than quantity, reflected in the wines regularly inviting accolades, both locally and internationally'

Meandering through the pristine lands of the Klein Constantia Wine Estate, peering through the rows of vines, we come across a herd of creamy white animals grazing on the lush green pastures. Charolais cattle – the white gold of the cattle breeds.

'Charolais in the heart of the wine lands'

Although a small herd, they are well settled and not disturbed by the passing public.



Grass-fed Charolais

Origin of the Breed

The Charolais has its origin in the region of the Bresse-Plateau in the Jura Mountains of Eastern France. From the plateau of Bresse the breed spread to the fertile Charolles area.

Here the Name Charolais came into use.

With the creation of the first Charolais Herd Book in 1864 the breed became even more important, and in 1907 there were already 1 026 000

Charolais. Today, with a strength of 3 million, the Charolais is the most important beef breed in France, and represents 80% of cattle found in the region.

In April 1966, the Charolais Breeders Association of South Africa was affiliated to the South African Stud Book and Livestock Improvement Association.

'CHAROLAIS: where QUALITY is not a statement, but a STANDARD'

They are easy stock to manage and offer huge rewards. Having a multitude of grazing option available to them, they forage well on grasslands.

Charolais are known for their breed standards and their ability to produce top grade meat with little effort.

Traits that they are known for are:

- Growth
- Fertility
- Carcass Quality
- Temperament
- Adaptability to all environments



Coat colour

With exception to most animals with white coats, the pigment in the Charolais' coat has made it less susceptible to skin and eye cancer.

When it comes to coat colour of cattle, there are a number of alleles that interact to ultimately determine the colour outcome. Charolais' white coat is due to the presence of a "diluter" gene.

'they forage well on grasslands'

If you are ever in the Constantia Valley, visit the Estate for great vintages and an immaculate landscape.

Photos taken on Klein
Constantia Wine Estate
www.kleinconstantia.co.za

Many thanks to the Owners and Manager for their assistance.

Charolais SA
www.studbook.co.za/Society/charolais

Theo Oosthuizen

Author
Cattle International Series
082 572 4278
theo.oosthuizen@gmail.com
www.easthousegroup.co.za **E**