

Wineries to Watch

EIGHT SMALL PRODUCERS OFFERING VARIETY AND VALUE

South Africa's wine industry continues to expand: Since 2000, annual production has increased by more than 225 million liters, the number of wineries has nearly doubled and the country's exports to the United States have risen steadily.

Though small wineries are the driving force behind a large portion of this growth, many of their wines are still difficult to track down in wineshops and restaurants Stateside. (Even some of the Cape's top wineries do not have U.S. distribution.) Yet bottlings from these smaller producers offer quality and bring diversity to the marketplace, and they're more than worth the search. Here's a selection of promising South African wineries that have recently entered the U.S. market.

—James Molesworth

DE MORGENZON

Founded in 2003 by owners Wendy and Hylton Applebaum, De Morgenzon produced its first wines in the 2005 vintage. The winery name, "morning sun" in Dutch, was inspired by its location on the slopes of the Bottelray Hills in the prime Stellenbosch district.

"We get mostly morning and midday sun, with the afternoon sun behind the hill already, so it's a gentle ripening," says winemaker Carl van der Merwe. "It's still technically a warm area, but by Stellenbosch standards, it's cool. If you don't have the afternoon sun, the wines tend to be more elegant in style."

Van der Merwe joined the operation in July 2010 and is now in charge of production. He'll be busy, as he's also studying for the Master of Wine degree.

"I think having an understanding of the world of wine would have a deeper impact on how you make wine, so inspirationally speaking I think it's important to have that broader knowledge," says van der Merwe, who worked at Stellenbosch's Quoin Rock before joining De Morgenzon.

The estate totals 99 acres of vines so far, with 25 more acres to be planted. Chenin Blanc and Syrah are the lead varietals, with Chardonnay, Grenache, Mourvèdre and others. Production currently stands at 12,000 cases annually, with plans to go to 25,000 cases.

The Chenin Blanc leads the portfolio, and van der Merwe plans to add both sparkling and dessert-style Chenin bottlings, along with a Chardonnay- and Roussanne-based blend. On the red wine side, the value-priced Syrah will be joined by a higher-end Rhône varietal blend.

91	Chenin Blanc Stellenbosch 2008	\$30
89	Chardonnay Western Cape DMZ 2009	\$15
88	Chardonnay Western Cape DMZ 2008	\$15
87	Shiraz Stellenbosch DMZ 2008	\$15

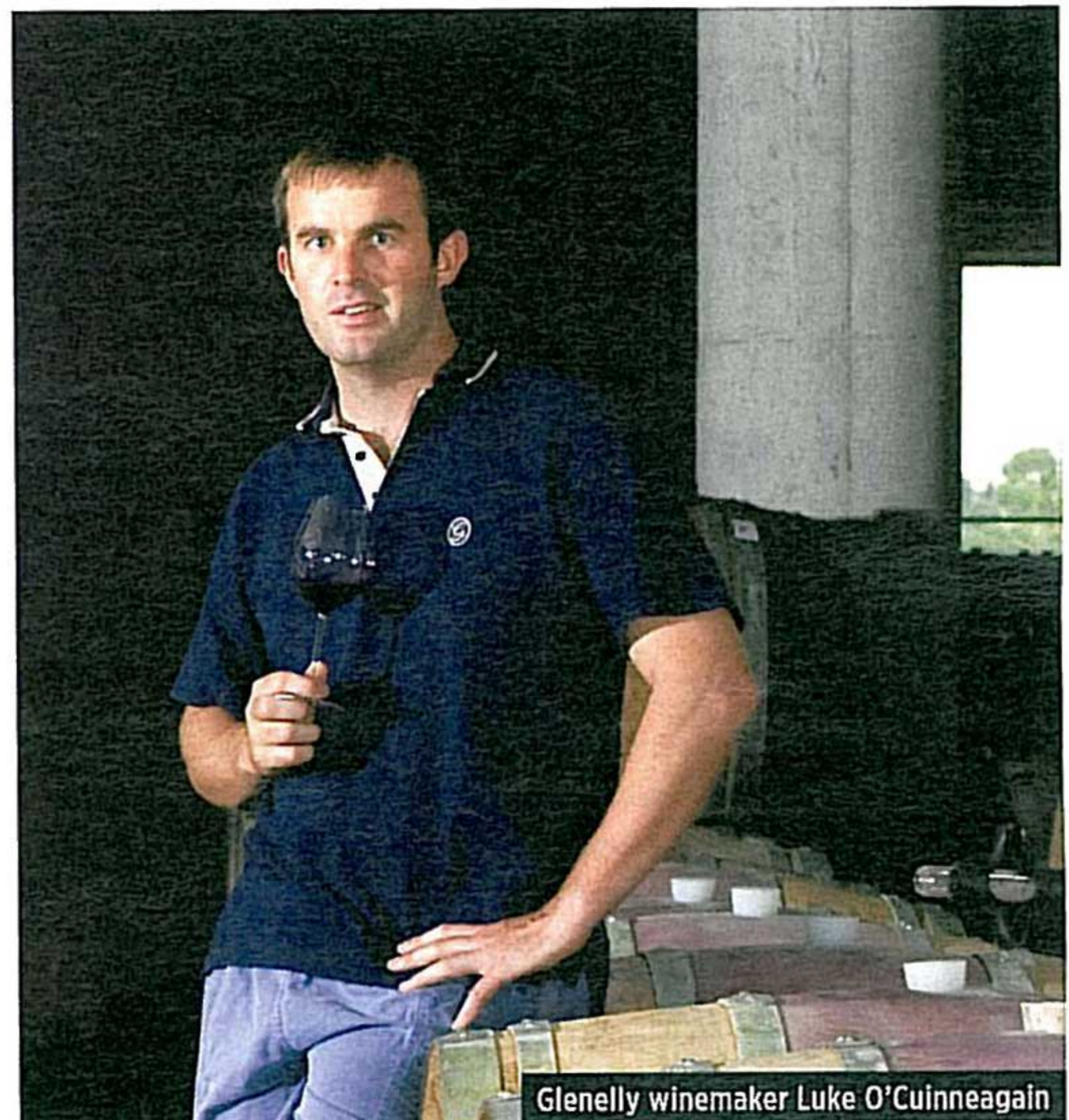
GLENELLY

In 2004, former Château Pichon-Longueville-Lalande owner May de Lencquesaing purchased a 303-acre estate in South Africa's Stellenbosch district, just around the corner from the famed Rustenberg estate. The Glenelly vineyards now total 148 acres, with two-thirds of that already in production. The debut 2006 vintage for Glenelly was made entirely from purchased fruit; the 2007 from half estate fruit, as the vineyards became viable.

Château Pichon-Lalande cellar master Thomas Dô-Chi-Nam helped oversee the initial planting of the estate, and winemaker Luke O'Cuinneagain joined the project two years ago to oversee construction of the winery facility and the start of production. O'Cuinneagain, who worked previously at neighboring Rustenberg, also spent time at Screaming Eagle in California and Château Angélus in the St.-Emilion appellation of Bordeaux.

The flagship bottling is the Lady May, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot, the latter a grape that O'Cuinneagain is particularly enthusiastic about (it's also a significant part of the blend at Pichon-Lalande). The workhorse red, labeled simply Western Cape, is a blend of Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with a drop of Petit Verdot. There are value-priced bottlings of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Merlot and Chardonnay as well.

91	Lady May Stellenbosch 2008	\$50
90	Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch The Glass Collection 2008	\$18
88	Chardonnay Stellenbosch The Glass Collection 2010	\$18
87	Shiraz Stellenbosch The Glass Collection 2009	\$20
84	Merlot Stellenbosch The Glass Collection 2009	\$20



Glenelly winemaker Luke O'Cuinneagain

EDDIE WILSON