



*The wheels are turning at Rusticus ... albeit old ones.*

## Of the land from the Busch

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"I'll show you if you promise not to laugh," said the jovial man with the beard, when I asked to take a closer look at his little cellar, situated at Klaas Voogds West, a stone's throw from the towering Langeberg mountains near Robertson.



*Past the kokerbome ... on a gravel road, is Pat's cellar domain.*

It was another equally jovial man, this time a down-to-earth Afrikaner, the mischievous Johnny Burger of nearby Rietvallei, who introduced me to the intrepid 'new' local winemaker, Pat Busch, originally from Germany.

But, make no mistake; this man whose name kept on reminding me of Pat Boone — although I'm gladly from a more recent musical era — is very much a no-nonsense man of the *platteland*. And he speaks, with a much more gruff voice than singer Pat, a mixture of English

and Afrikaans with a German accent. It was his affinity with nature and, excuse the pun, the bush, that got him to develop a rare wine 'outback'.

So, although *ou Pat* immediately struck me as very civilised, I laughingly promised him not to laugh and followed him into the cellar.

Well, here one suddenly entered a magical little world of days gone by ... filled with signs of improvisation and creativity. Quite small, not much bigger than a double garage, you found here a sort of museum of

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show me his vineyards, spread out in picturesque little valleys and high up against the hill slopes of his two farms, Berg-en-Dal and Bergplaas – originally developed as fruit farms – also featuring a popular guest resort, the Pat Busch Private Nature Reserve.

The vines are gravity irrigated from mountain streams originating in the reserve. At the cellar, grape bunches are destalked and berries are gently split by traditional methods ... very traditional. His cellar also features a quaint, antique little basket press and some open *kuipe* from waxed cement.

He has been supplying to Ashton Co-op since 1980, but decided to give his own labels a bash from the 2002 vintage.

Pat's story in the Cape goes back to January 1965 when he settled in Cape Town as a fashion buyer. He enjoyed escaping to nature so much that he "rented the mountain" at Kloos Voogds from 1970, where he often stayed in a remote stone dwelling. When taking over the farm in 1979, he moved into the main house.

"In 1985 I retired here to sit on the stoep and do nothing." But it has not worked out that way. With his wife, Karin and son, André, they have their time cut

out running the reserve, farming and the wine business. "Jy weet mos, hulle se behind every successful man is a tired wife."

André today also runs a taxidermist business, while his younger brother, Stephan, is in exports and studying to become a wine master.

Their kingdom comprises five guest cottages and three guest farm houses, on 2 000 hectares, of which 18 are under vines. Pat also looks after three other farms where he is in partnership.

When I visited their (obviously rustic) homestead at about noon, a cosy fire was already going in the huge fireplace, near a wall covered with mounted horns and heads of antelope.

Their guests have the option to explore a myriad hiking trails, bird and wildlife watching ... revelling in the fynbos riches including a variety of proteas, ericas, lilies and ferns ... catching bass in the dams. Or simply settling down to some rustic wines at night.



LEFT: Rustic, is the word ....

BELOW: In the nature reserve.

*Rusticus (Latin) ... of or belonging to the land.  
This translation embodies our philosophy and  
inspiration to craft fine, handmade wines  
according to traditional methods  
– from the back labels of the Rusticus wines.*



wine industry gadgets and machinery – all impeccably neat, painted in bright colours and in perfect working order. A working museum.

This is what Pat proceeded to demonstrate as he started up an antiquated *ontstingelaar* and *doppiepomp*, driven by a massive belt and pulleys, from a grinding motor in the corner of the room. This was accompanied by quite a bit of stuttering and noise, which gradually steadied to a pleasant beat, once Pat kicked, slapped ... and patted ... here and there.


He explained that the local wine farmers had over the years been incredibly generous in letting him purchase and "inherit" old equipment – just as generous as they had been with advice and letting him into their vinous secrets ... so he can today boast his first range of wines, all red, under the very apt name of Rusticus.

"This is what it's all about ... rustic, basic ... he explained to me." I later found his wines to be an extraordinary combination of fruit and grape power, with a touch of robustness and earthiness. A Shiraz, Ruby Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Pinotage, Cab and Merlot ... "all six!"

These wines are more old Cape style, with spicy wood and not too bold in the fruit department. Pat

explained that he had been told by experts that since his vines were very young, but yielded good aroma, it should not be messed up with too much wood. So he used small refill barrels.

"You don't want too much wood if you enjoy it by the fireside ... so you can easily say 'O shucks, it's empty, I'm opening another'."

In a quite battered "sports utility vehicle" that Pat seems to drive more like a tractor, he went to 



**RIGHT:** Pat Busch in his fermentation cellar.  
**BELOW:** Guest cottages in a serene landscape.

