



## IS THE NEW SPARKLE AT OVERHEX THIS FESTIVE SEASON

If you thought pink was still the most instagrammable wine, the hashtag #orangewine changed the hue of interest a few years back, reaching millions of views on social media platforms. As a result, wine enthusiasts have become more curious about this new, non-interventionist style of white winemaking. And judging by its popularity in trendy wine bars globally, it is more than just a passing trend.

Attracted to non-conventional wine styles, Head winemaker at Overhex wines in Worcester, Ben Snyman, struck this Orange wine iron red hot, taking it one step further for the South African wine industry. Snyman has successfully lobbied for a new Orange wine category, adding a sparkling twist to this hands-off winemaking style.

"Orange wine can be a tricky concept for consumers. The wine can be made from any white grape cultivar, but the pressed juice is left in contact with the skins for anywhere between four days to a year. As a result, it will develop a deeper orange hue with more tannin imbued into the wine during this time. And, albeit the wine retains its brilliance, the added aromas and textures tend to be atypical to those unfamiliar with this style. So, why not add a sparkling character to the wine to make it more enticing for consumers new to Orange wine!"

Snyman started experimenting with Orange wine two years ago, utilising different vineyard blocks and applying various techniques to acquire the desired result. "The first step was to find the most suitable grape varietal. Chenin Blanc and Pinot Gris are very oxidative and can quickly develop intense nutty and earthy characters through extended skin maceration, overshadowing the fruit and making it too austere. After various experiments, wine of origin Worcester presented the purest and most intense fruit to produce a Sparkling Orange style."

Snyman had to consider the stringent wine law in South Africa, offering little room to experiment in this category. "SAWIS (South African Wine Industry Information and Systems) has created a formal category for Still Orange wines, and it needs to





comply with various chemical parameters. Therefore, you must register what you plan to produce and comply with the chemical standards so that it qualifies as an Orange wine." According to SAWIS, the characteristic defining an Orange wine is a wine made where the pressed juice remains in contact with the grape skins for at least 96 hours. Sulphite levels may not exceed 40mg/l, and sugar levels are curbed at 4g/l. The colour may vary between a light golden and a deep orange hue.

"During the 2021 harvest, I submitted a proposal that included a category for Sparkling Orange wine as I believed it could create a new, innovative class from which the whole industry could benefit. And yes, it was approved!" Snyman shares with delight. In October, the Cape Wine trade show in Cape Town was the perfect platform for Overhex wines to launch this Sparkling Orange wine named: Get Lost. It attracted international and local visitors to the stand, appreciative of the challenge to produce such a quirky, dry, and characterful style of sparkling wine. "South African consumer palates have developed significantly, favouring drier styles over sweeter wines. They also appreciate terroir's invaluable role and understand how the fruit can differentiate a good wine from an ordinary one," Snyman added.

Get Lost is made from a Chenin Blanc vineyard in Worcester, selected for its provocative and pure fruit expression in this style of wine. The grapes were harvested at 20-21 balling in the morning and kept cool to prevent microbial spoilage. It was then crushed with no sulphur editions, and the juice fermented at 17 degrees Celsius on the skin for seven days to extract the desired colour and tannin to balance the intense tropical aromas. Deliberate exposure to oxygen added colour stability, and ripe tannin acts as a natural antioxidant to preserve the wine. The wine was then racked off the skins and went through malolactic conversion for added stability, preventing the wine from going through a second fermentation in the bottle. "It was interesting to see how the colour changed from golden to orange during this process. Then, after racking, a smidge of sulphur was allowed to protect the purity of the wine from any volatile aromas. And lastly, sparging the wine with CO2, adding a delicate fizz.

The result is a lively and intriguing rendition of a Still Orange wine, the bubbles adding vibrancy and bringing an amalgamation of green apple and ripe citrus aromas to the surface with a delicate nutty and earthy quality toning the fruit. On the palate, the fizz melds with a creamy texture that adds length and persistence to the wine. And then, just as that mouth-filling astringency of an Orange wine settles in, the fizziness refreshes your palate with hints of orange blossom and bruised pear.

**"I believe this wine will become an ambassador for consumers new to Orange wines, enrich the South African wine offering and enhance the quality and perception of this category."**