



Waterford

Tasting Room:

Mon - Fri | 09:00 - 17:00

Sat | 10:00 - 17:00

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Waterford Wine Estate

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A taste of the best things in life, at Waterford Estate

Linger in the Cape-Mediterranean courtyard at Waterford Estate for a taste of chocolate and wine

Oak trees and vines are showing their autumn foliage; the dew gives it a jewel like quality. Ducks greet us happily as we slowly cross a small bridge over the pond. Indeed, there's no need to rush. A dust road lined with citrus trees and lavender takes us further towards the Mediterranean

Cape Town Events Calendar

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style mansion. Antonia and I are about to ease into The Wine and Chocolate Tasting at Waterford Estate, one of the most superb things to do in the Cape Winelands of Stellenbosch.

More lavender frames the simple stone stairs that lead up to a Cape-Tuscan designed courtyard. At the centre is a fountain around which seating areas, trees and walkways are symmetrically arranged. Everything seems to be in its place. Orange roses on the tables. Even the sand is perfectly raked, for playing boules. No one is in a hurry at Waterford Estate and our city pulse stayed behind in Cape Town. We opt for the inside seating area, which includes couches next to a fireplace.

Unique taste sensation of hand crafted chocolate and fine wine

A dedicated wine expert named Tom joins us at a table formally set for The Wine and Chocolate Tasting for which the wine estate is famous (R60). Three unique wines and three special chocolates are displayed on a wooden board. Cocoa beans and wine both contain tannins, which means they should be able to go together. At Waterford, however, the fine Belgian chocolates are specially crafted to match the wines produced on the estate.

First up is the Kevin Arnold Shiraz, paired with Masala Chai Dark Chocolate. Kevin Arnold is the widely acclaimed and much loved senior winemaker that helped to make Waterford famous in South Africa. The soil of the Helderberg gives wine grapes grown here some chocolate mocha flavours, which fuses well with the comforting Asian spices of the chocolate. In fact the smoothness of the shiraz heightens the spice flavours in the wine.

Then the unique wine tasting continues with a Cabernet Sauvignon, a varietal that generally contains the most tannins of all. This classic style Cabernet is all bitter cherry and cigar smoke. It is paired with Rock Salt Dark Chocolate. Waterford Estate's corporate logo is cleverly moulded into all the chocolates. The salt neutralizes the tannins, which then gives the wine a significantly smoother edge.

The dessert wine is called the Waterford Heatherleigh, made from Muscat and Semillon grapes and paired with Rose Geranium Milk Chocolate. Not being a fan of very sweet wine, I enjoy this milder version and when paired with the chocolate I am sure to have discovered one of the best taste sensations possible. A treacle-y apricot-y taste adventure that everyone should experience at least once in a lifetime.

See, smell, touch and taste what's outside and inside the bottle

For a little bit more of an active adventure, Waterford Estate also offers two hour Wine Drive

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safaris at R500 per person. This includes a drive through the vineyards with the winemakers themselves and a chance to discover the natural elements that help to create the wine you taste along the way. The Cape Winelands is home to the most intense concentration of flowers and plants on earth, known as the Cape Floral Kingdom. Small bucks and unique birds like the Cape Eagle Owl may also be spotted along the way. That's if you can take your eyes off the spectacular vistas of Table Mountain, the Helderberg and the Stellenbosch mountain.

For another R50 you also get to taste The Jem (named after the owner of the estate, Jeremy Ord). With 93 points in Wine Spectator and 4½ stars in the John Platter Guide, this is the flagship wine of Waterford Estate. Winemaker Kevin Arnold likes to say that this is 'the best wine we can make with what we've got'. It's a personal style of wine, unique to Waterford Estate. It's made of predominantly Cabernet grapes, which gives it heavy cassis and berry flavours. The addition of Shiraz and Mourvedre adds a bit of spice, while some other smaller varieties balance out the flavours. It has a sharp sensation on the tongue, yet it's still quite easy drinking for a heavy wine and should go quite well with red meat, especially Springbok. The red wine cellar, where the wine is kept in French oak barrels, is decorated with African art and elaborate chandeliers. The wine barrels are neatly stacked and clearly kept with pride.

Waterford Estate doesn't have a restaurant, nor does it serve any food that is not meant to prepare your palate for yet another wine sensation. It's all about the wine and the slow pace at which you should be lingering over a glass and a piece of chocolate in the courtyard.

By Lize de Kock

Waterford Estate is open for wine tasting Monday to Friday from 09:00 till 17:00 and on Saturdays tastings can be done from 11:00 till 15:00. Open on Sundays from 11:00 till 17:00 only between 11 June and 11 July 2010. Wine prices start from R40 (Pecan Stream is their most affordable wine range) while The Jem is sold for R680 per bottle.

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