

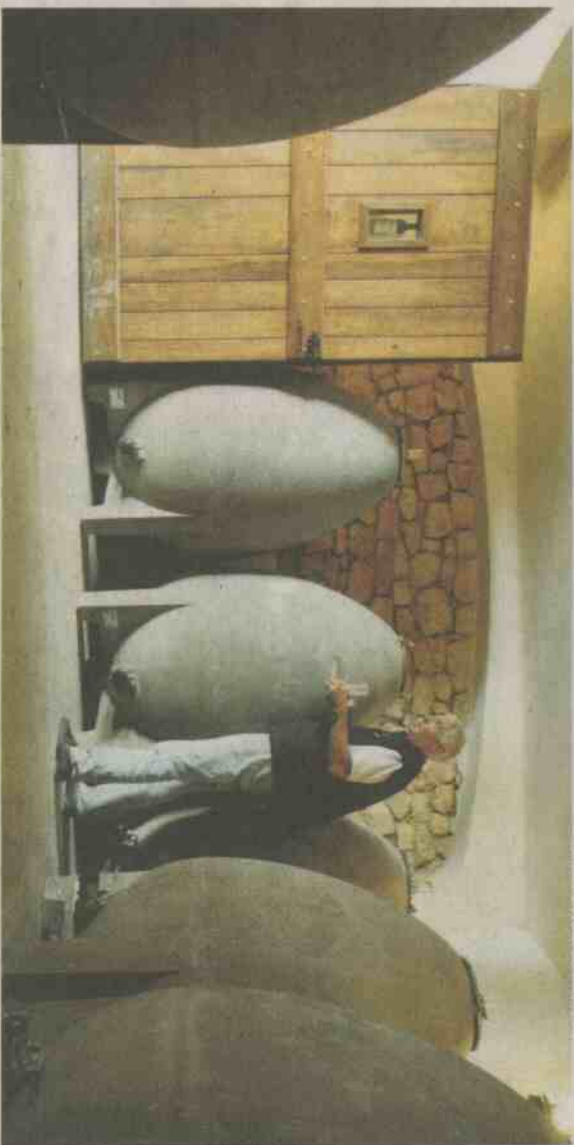
Marc Nomblot sounds like someone in a Lord Berners' fantasy or a minor character in Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. His day job is casting giant dinosaur eggs out of concrete, which have become all the rage among SA winemakers for fermenting grapes.

Designed with proportions determined by Pythagoras's Golden Ratio, they are being hatched all over the Cape: Eben Sadie has a clutch out in the Swartland, Adi Badenhorst is waiting for his to be laid on the Paardeberg, as is Johan Reyneke in Stellenbosch. Marc Kent has a matching pair at Boekenhoutskloof and Callie Louw swears by them in Tulbagh.

The secret of Mr Nomblot's eggs lies in their shape. The Buddha of Biodynamism, Nicolas Joly, explains that wines are fermented and aged in barrels, with their egg-like shapes replicating the life force. It's a serious business as barrel shape should reflect the winery's latitude — which explains why those of Burgundy and Bordeaux differ. That's something for SA producers, at far lower latitudes than the French, to consider. Proving just how important barrels are, Joly notes that any dog would rather sleep in an empty barrel than a kennel because of its life-giving shape. "It's important to rediscover the sense of shapes," he says. Nomblot eggs are widely used by biodynamic winemakers.

Biodynamism, which brings a spiritual and esoteric dimension to winemaking, is fast moving from the fringes into the mainstream.

Described by Brendon Shaw on www.thecru.co.za as the world's foremost wine blogger, Alder Yarrow has a name minted in biodynamic heaven. Joly says that the herb yarrow, fermented in a cow's horn and buried in the soil, is a "phone num-



Picture: PHILLIPPE MAEDER

BARRELS OF BIODYNAMISM: Winemaker Jean-Daniel Schlaepfer with some of the concrete eggs in a cellar in Saint-Rémy de Provence, France

Mr Nomblot's Egg

These grape-fermenting barrels are hatching all over the Cape, with their shape that replicates the life force

bert to connect to a specific process" when sprayed in homeopathic amounts on a vineyard. Other practitioners hang stag bladders stuffed with yarrow in an alder tree.

Aldbert Graf Von Keyserlingk noted "yarrow is also very helpful planted around cereal crops or vegetable beds to create a special 'space'."

As to the reason it is hung in an alder tree inside a stag's bladder: "The gesture we see in a stag's antlers is one of opening up towards the heavens. But he is ac-

tually doing this with his bloodstream, for his antlers do not develop from skin that hardens, as in the cow, but out of the bloodstream. A cow's horns ... regulate the vital processes in the inner organism, whilst the stag is able, having antlers, to take the surrounding world, including the influences that come from the outer cosmos, into himself."

paradigm by Swiss philosopher Rudolf Steiner, who was also big on bladders, noting "the bladder of the stag is connected ... with the forces of the cosmos. Nay, it is almost the image of the cosmos. We thereby give the yarrow the power quite essentially to enhance the forces it already possesses to combine the sulphur with other substances."

Southern hemisphere processes are not simply blind implementations of northern practice, as bath-water spiralling down a plughole in the reverse direction confirms.

If stags are replaced by spring-bok and Mr Nomblot makes his eggs in an ostrich style, a more authentic African expression may be expected.

SIDE BAR



Neil Pendock



Read Pendock Uncocked at <http://blogs.thetimes.co.za/pendock>

RECOMMENDED

PENDOCK'S PICK:

Mischka cabernet sauvignon 2005 R95
Some cabernets from Wellington have a wonderful blueberry flavour that is both exotic and unostentatious at the same time, a bit like Breyten Breytenbach's family home turned cultural project in Burger Street. Take a bottle along for dinner at To Dine For in Malherbe Street and order the rack of Karoo lamb.



READER'S RECOMMENDATION: Jane Broom in cyberspace chose Brampton Vignier 2007 R48

A symphony of violets and peaches, flavours most unexpected and wonderfully different. If you're tired of too acid sauvignon blanc and too woody chardonnay, this is Condrieu on a budget.

● Jane will receive a mixed case of Cape Legends wines for her recommendation. Readers are invited to send their picks to wine@sundaytimes.co.za.

SUNDAY TIMES TOP 10

November 9 2008

1. Mischka cabernet sauvignon 2005 — R95
2. Drakensig malbec/shiraz 2007 — R75
3. Olive Brook sauvignon blanc 2008 — R40
4. Hermit on the Hill pinot noir 2007 — R60
5. Romand Rebus red blend 2003 — R65
6. Toplay shiraz 2006 — R85.50
7. Clovelly shiraz 2005 — R200
8. Creation sauvignon blanc 2008 — R79.50
9. Spier Private Collection shiraz 2005 — R148
10. Cros Brice sauvignon blanc 2007 — R55

The Sunday Times Top Ten is compiled by Neil Pendock from suggestions made by independent retailers, supermarkets, chains and wine bars. We hope to be biased in favour of interesting wines with good value-for-money characteristics.