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South Africa, Land of Contrasts
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Of the fifty countries on the African continent, eight produce wine. South Africa, a country roughly twice the size of Texas, is by far their most successful wine area and is the 7th largest producer in the world. It contains more than 290 conservation parks, 8 World Heritage sites and 7 distinct biomes. The roots of the South African wine industry date back to 1659, when Jan van Riebeeck, the founder of Cape Town, produced the first wine recorded in the country. At one time, Constantia, a sweet Muscat-based wine was both the preferred, and most expensive in Europe, a favorite of Frederick the Great and Napoleon. Later, apartheid boycotts, government interference, and the establishment of a huge and dominant nant wine grower’s cooperative (KWV) resulted in mostly lackluster, uninspired wines and little exports. Winemakers openly smuggled vines into their vineyards, (called wine farms in South Africa) to bypass the restrictions.

Until quite recently, the region’s principal grape was the very popular Chenin Blanc, locally known as Steen, with half the harvested dedicated to the production of brandy and spirits. Chenin Blanc wine is still very popular, but as the market has changed and the stranglehold of the co-op was relaxed, the world has begun to value and invest in South Africa’s red just as much as their white wines.

The wine regions of South Africa are defined under the “Wine of Origin” act of 1973. All South African wines listed as “Wine of Origin” must be composed entirely of grapes from its region. With a Mediterranean climate that is marked by intense sunlight and dry heat, many South African vineyards rely on irrigation as essential to viticulture. The region has endured 2 years of drought and destructive wildfires, but they are still producing good quality wine, just less of it.

The heart of the South African wine industry is the western Cape Province. It contains the world’s largest proportion of the area under vine. The area is divided into 12 wine regions, with the Stellenbosch and Paarl regions being the most successful. Stellenbosch is a wine region known for its Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Chenin Blanc. Activity in this region has grown 15% over the last five years, making Stellenbosch a major player in the Southern Hemisphere wine market.

Chenin Blanc is a versatile grape with an ability to produce white, rosé, and some very good red wines. The South African producers are well known for their Chenin Blanc and they produce a wide variety of wines ranging from dry to sweet. The wine region is known for its Chardonnays, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Syrah. The area is known for its high-quality wines and is a major player in the world wine market.

The Cape Town area is known for its “Wine of the Month” event, which is held monthly on the first Saturday of the month. It is a great opportunity to taste the wines of South Africa and to learn more about the wine region. The event is held at the Cape Town harbor, where visitors can learn about the local wines and their production.

The Stellenbosch region is known for its “Wine of Origin” act, which ensures that all wines produced in the region are of the highest quality. The area is known for its Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc wines, which are very popular in the market.

The Paarl region is known for its “Wine of Origin” act, which ensures that all wines produced in the region are of the highest quality. The area is known for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines, which are very popular in the market.

The Western Cape region is known for its “Wine of Origin” act, which ensures that all wines produced in the region are of the highest quality. The area is known for its Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc wines, which are very popular in the market.

The South African wine industry is a major player in the world market and is a great opportunity to learn more about the wine region. The region is known for its high-quality wines and is a major player in the world wine market.