



# Spit & Gargle

*Text Lisa Witepski*

**T**he man next to me is gargling and spitting. Ordinarily this sort of behavior would be frowned upon, even by those of us whose etiquette is more Naomi Campbell than Emily Post.

However, this is the wine route, and I must confess that my little party has also been committing its fair amount of transgressions today. Take, for example, my friend's pronouncements that "these nuts are revolting", before she duly spat out the offending item, only to discover that it was not a nut. It was, in fact, an olive pit. And because only the pit remained, it is safe to assume that she had been munching on a previously enjoyed bar snack.

Again, ordinarily, this is the sort of misadventure that would send one reaching for mouthwash – water, at the very least. But no, because it is the wine route, we reach for our riesling. Or our chardonnay, pinotage, cab sav – whatever it is we happen to be tasting at the moment. Alcohol is a first-class germ killer, don't you know.

If I'm creating an image of the wine route that makes it appear yob-like rather than snob-like, please think again. Au contraire, the gentle area stretching between Paarl, Franschhoek and Stellenbosch is one of my very favourite in

the country, precisely because of its grandeur and stateliness.

We're talking centuries-old oak trees standing bastion at the foot of acres and acres of grapevines; each row marked out by a scarlet or snow white rose bush. We're also talking gracious manor houses, beneath whose gabled countenances surely loom the ghosts of former slaves and settlers. Then there are the barrel rooms, where dust motes float between sunbeams and dance above enormous oak barrels, and a musty, winery smell fills your nostrils like a rich merlot.

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Let's not forget the languorous lunches that are as much a part of the wine route as a visit to the estate tasting rooms. For just one afternoon, you can imagine how it must have felt to be one

of those early wine farmers, whose hunches that the Cape's Mediterranean climate may just produce a product as fine as that of France proved to be correct, forming the foundation of a world renowned industry centuries later.

Whether a hearty farm-style lunch or a gourmet treat, any meal enjoyed at the estates' shade-dappled tables is to be remembered...

Especially since it's likely to be toasted by one of our wonderful wines. Cheers to that!