

# WINE

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JUNE 2008

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French chef Laurent Deslandes doesn't merely come up with a match for the Herold Black Sheep Pinot Noir 2005, he boils half of it away in the dish! **Joanne Gibson** reports.



# Black Sheep, pink fish

**T**he appealing back label of the Herold Black Sheep 2005, a wine made in tiny quantities at a cellar near George along the Garden Route, includes the following dictionary definition: "Black Sheep n. a disreputable member of a family or group, or an individual asserting freedom of expression, refusing to conform but with redeeming characteristics."

Certainly the wine doesn't seem to meet Bizerca Bistro chef Laurent Deslandes' expectations of a Pinot Noir. "And it's not easy to match food to a wine you aren't 100% about," he sighs, admitting that he isn't familiar with many local examples, having only arrived in Cape Town with his South African wife and restaurant manager, Cyrillia van der Merwe, and their two small children towards the end of 2007.

"I'm more used to Burgundy and the cool-climate Pinot from Tasmania and New Zealand," explains Deslandes who was born, bred and classically trained in France but then spent 10 years in Australia where he and Van der Merwe ran Collitts' Inn, a very successful country lodge in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. "If you closed your eyes when tasting this wine, you could almost mistake it for a dry rosé," he adds with Gallic frankness.

Describing it as dry but very fruity with fairly high acidity and some smoky, earthy and wood notes, Deslandes is nonetheless pleased that the Black Sheep encouraged him to think outside the box. "Before tasting it, I imagined a typical Pinot Noir that would pair nicely with duck breast, but as soon as I tried it I knew it was a red wine that would go with fish – an unusual combination that is perfect for people who like fish but don't like white wine."

The result is a generous slab of fresh salmon poached in red wine, served with leeks, baby onions and mushrooms and smothered in a buttery Pinot Noir reduction, with crispy pancetta providing a deliciously contrasting flavour and texture. "It's nice to have something a bit different sometimes," sums up the chef who is fast earning critical acclaim for his gentle and down-to-earth approach as much as for his simple yet delicious bistro fare.

## Salmon poached in red wine and served with a Pinot Noir reduction

(Serves 4)

4 salmon fillets (180g each) with skin on

500ml fish or chicken stock

750ml red wine for poaching

375ml Herold Black Sheep Pinot Noir

150ml smoked pork belly or pancetta

200g baby onions

8 medium-sized leeks

8 baby waxy potatoes

8 brown mushrooms

125g butter, diced

Thyme, bay leaves, black peppercorns

**Start by preparing the stock,** vegetables and Pinot reduction. Reduce one bottle of red wine by half, then add the fish or chicken stock, thyme, bay leaves and pepper.

Take the salmon fillets out of the fridge, season with salt and allow to rest.

Blanche waxy potatoes until cooked (10 to 15 minutes), then peel and cut in half.

Dice the pancetta or smoked pork belly, then stir in butter until crisp. Preserve the fat.

Trim and wash the leeks, then tie with string and blanch in water and salt until soft. Strain and compress on a rack under a weight to drain all the water.

Peel mushrooms and remove "feet", then cook gently in the pork fat with the baby onions.

Reduce half of the Black Sheep Pinot Noir until it becomes syrupy (about 100ml).

Poach the salmon fillet in the red wine stock and simmer for five minutes or until medium-rare. Remove from heat.

To make the sauce, add 50ml of the red wine stock to the Pinot reduction, then add the diced butter and whisk until it becomes thick.

Arrange the pancetta and vegetables on a plate. Place the salmon on top, spoon the sauce over, and sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Below: Bizerca's Laurent Deslandes, still not convinced by the wine.

