

## WINE & DINE

► BRYAN MACROBERT

*The Hughes Family Wines*

*Nativo White Blend 2013*

Bryan MacRobert is a busy man. In addition to overseeing the winemaking processes at The Hughes Family Wines, he also consults for a cellar in La Rioja, Spain, and he has his own projects.

After graduating with a degree in oenology and viticulture from Stellenbosch University, MacRobert worked a number of harvests in the Swartland at Lammershoek and The Sadie Family Wines. And during the winter months, he worked harvests in Priorat, Spain – trips he funded by restoring old cars.

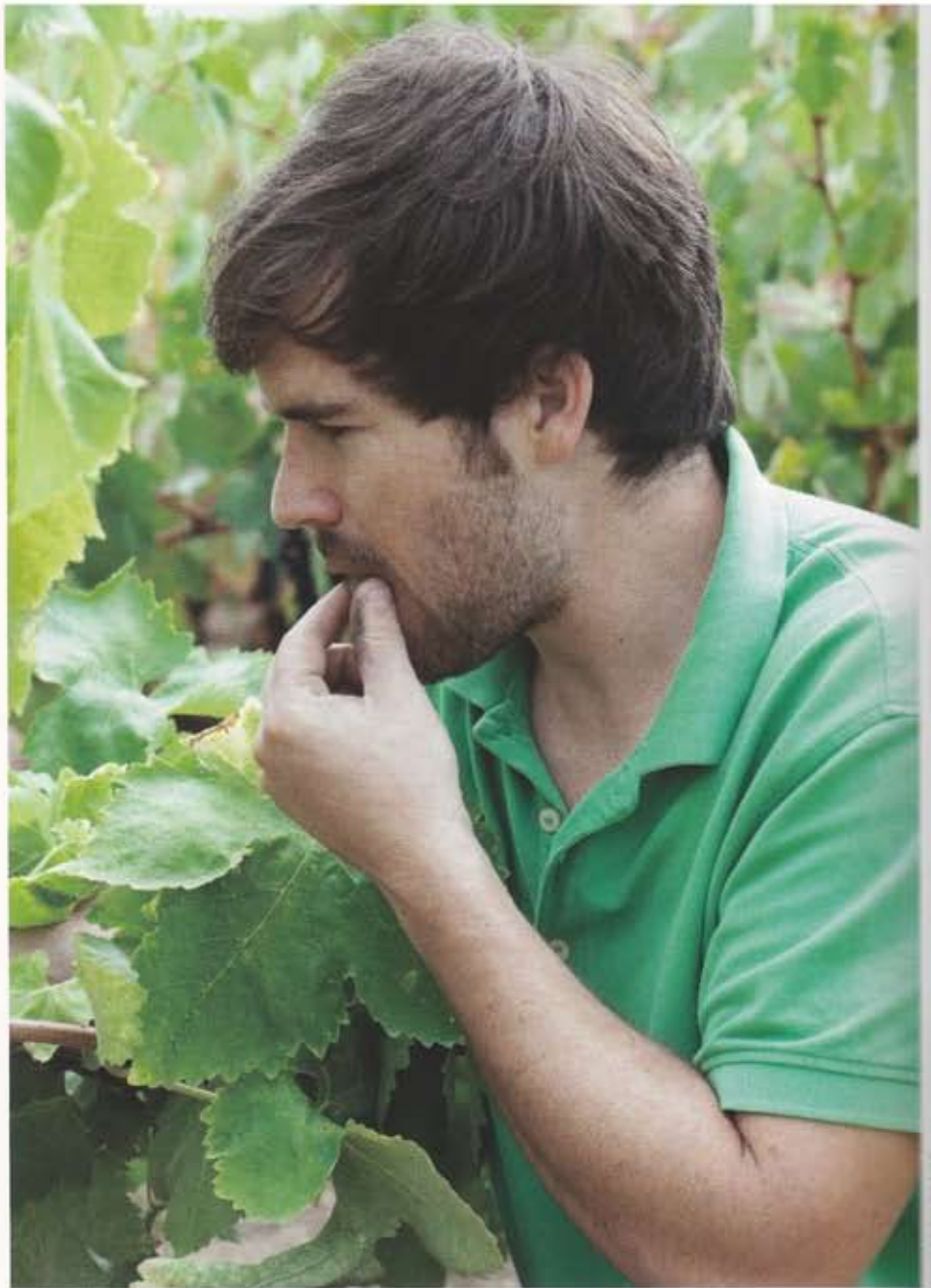
‘While working harvests between South Africa and Spain, I started my own label, Tobias in 2010, and in 2013, I registered my own company, Bryan MacRobert Wines CC, including a new range called Abbotsdale. In Spain, I’m working on my own project, Laventura Bodega y Viñedos SL, which was established in 2013. It’s focused on producing high-quality wines from old vineyards that are situated on amazing sites in La Rioja.’

MacRobert, who grew up on a small farm outside Malmesbury that had vineyards originally planted with Chenin Blanc and Hanepoot, believes the Swartland has a lot to offer the South African wine industry.

‘A large percentage of the vineyards in the Swartland are still dry-land farmed and yield fewer tons per hectare than your average wine region in South Africa. Low yielding vineyards can almost always be associated with quality, especially in the right hands.’

‘The supply of really good grapes has opened the gap for experimentation and development in the cellar. The winemakers in the region are up for trying new things and this has resulted in excellent wines.’

The Hughes Family Wines, which is owned by Argentinian-born Billy Hughes and his family, produces two wines per vintage – a red blend and a white blend. The blends vary each year depending on the vintage; the Nativo White Blend 2013 is a blend of Viognier (58%), Chenin Blanc (22%), Roussanne (10%) and Grenache Blanc (10%). ‘The Nativo White Blend 2013 is a great wine. The farm is 100% organically farmed, starting with biodynamic



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elements and preparations, and the results are starting to show in the quality of the grapes and the wine.

‘The blend is interesting, and it expresses the elegance and finesse one can achieve in the warmer Swartland using the right varieties, agriculture and winemaking. The wine was made without adding anything except a little sulphur, which is still well below half the permitted value and is a testimony to what you can make with the right grapes.’

MacRobert, who believes that the key to making high-quality wine lies in getting

good grapes into the cellar, considers being shortlisted as a finalist in this competition a great achievement.

‘Looking back at the reputation and quality of the previous nominees and winners puts the nomination into perspective. It is great to be recognised for what you are doing.’

For more information on the 2014 Diners Club Winemaker of the Year Award finalists, visit [connoisseurs.dinersclub.co.za](http://connoisseurs.dinersclub.co.za).