

Plenty to sniff about 'quaffer'

THE trouble with us wine hobbyists is that we often can't see the wood for the trees. The thought occurred to me at a recent tasting among mates, during which an incognito red did the rounds with a demand for comment and assessment.

My read: smooth, light acid, no dry-mouth tannin, fruity and three to four stars. That raised a laugh when the bottle with label was produced and all was revealed. There in all its glory was a Robertson Winery's Chapel Red which sells for about R19 retail and gets 1½ stars from sommelier James Pieterse with the brush-off line "soft, easy unwooded quaffer".

The Chapel Red is what the industry calls a "supermarket wine" which means it's for the plebs, to be sniffed at rather than sniffed. So what was I doing giving it three to



four stars? The secret, I believe, lies in that word "quaffer"

which means uncomplicated, smooth, low acid, low tannin, low sulphur and drink within two years of bottling.

Like most of us, I enjoy

the complexities of a well-constructed wine, but if I am also a quaffer lover, so be it. The problem with many SA reds, I believe, is that they are being made for aging but for commercial reasons are being pushed for early drinking. Hence the reputation among some of

our wines for being top heavy with tannins and high in acid and even sulphur.

The Chapel Red has none of those problems, being a drink-now special. So try it for yourself and I'll warrant that any host or hostess serving this non-vintage mystery

blend with red meat, stews or pasta will have nothing to endure but the compliments. If concerned about the supermarket image, decant into an empty Chateau Neuf de Pap bottle and watch the reaction.

Robertson Winery's Chapel range is so named for the old chapel in the middle of the winery which still serves as a working cellar.

If the Chapel Red was a discovery of the obvious, I suppose the 2010 Boland Cellar Five Climates chenin blanc was equally so. It has been a public favourite for years, but the 2010 I found to be particularly delicious – as Platter puts it, "fruit salad in a glass".

I downed my half share with a plate of ribs and calamari at the pub up the road and found the combo delicious. And at R23.99 from Ultra I can understand why it receives a four-star accolade in the latest best value wine guide.

