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Raats Family Wines Tasting

University of Toronto Faculty Club

Wednesday, September 16, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

Discovering Raats Family Wines

South Africa's Stellenbosch region has become one of the world's most exciting wine-producing areas, and few wineries have done more to put its distinctive character on the map than Raats Family Wines.

Founded in 2000 by Bruwer Raats, the winery has pursued an unusually focused mission: to explore the full potential of Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc. Based in the Polkadraai Hills of Stellenbosch, Raats has become internationally recognized for wines that combine meticulous winemaking with a strong sense of place. The winery describes its philosophy simply: specialization, quality and an obsessive attention to the relationship between grape variety and soil.

Our September tasting offers a wonderful opportunity to experience that philosophy firsthand. We will begin with the Raats Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2023, followed by B Vintners Haarlem to Hope, a Chenin Blanc–Semillon blend that demonstrates a more exploratory side of the Raats family's winemaking. We then turn to Pinotage before exploring Cabernet Franc in several forms, including the remarkably mature 2014 Raats Dolomite Cabernet Franc and the 2020 Raats Family Cabernet Franc. The tasting concludes with two ambitious red blends: the Raats Jasper Red Blend and Mvemve Raats MR de Compostella.

There is also a fascinating family story behind these wines. Bruwer Raats was joined by his cousin Gavin Bruwer Slabbert in 2010, and together they have continued to explore both the heritage and the possibilities of the Cape Winelands. Their B Vintners project deliberately looks beyond the boundaries of a single estate, sourcing grapes from different locations to explore how variety, vineyard and terroir interact.

And, of course, great wine deserves great food. The evening will pair the wines with caramelized onion and roasted peppers, toasted sourdough, whipped goat cheese and basil microgreens, followed by braised beef short rib with celery-root purée, shiitake mushrooms, pickled mustard seeds and crispy shallots.

Join us for an evening of discovery as we explore the wines of one of South Africa's most distinctive and highly regarded wine families.

Raats Family Wines:

Established in 2000 and located in the Polkadraai Hills of the striking Stellenbosch winelands, the Raats Family winery was originally a partnership between brothers Bruwer and Jasper Raats (who stepped away from the business after some time). Bruwer and Jasper's father, Jasper Senior, acted as viticulturist during the foundational stages of the winery, but sadly passed away in 2009, leaving Bruwer Raats to continue on the family legacy. Determined to succeed and keeping it in the family, Bruwer appointed cousin Gavin Bruwer as Winemaker and Viticulturist in 2010, ensuring the rise of the winery continued from strength to strength.

Over the decades, Raats Family Wines have been instrumental in discovering areas where Chenin Blanc and Cabernet Franc are best suited, endeavouring to identify specific soil types that influence the variety and nurture vineyards, both old and young, with the utmost attention to detail, to produce outstanding wines.

This has earned the winery a rather stellar reputation internationally as a New World leader in the production of these focused varietals, regularly receiving glowing write-ups by esteemed wine reviewers such as Olly Smith, Matthew Jukes, Tim Atkin, James Molesworth, Neil Martin and Jancis Robinson in definitive publications such as Decanter, Wine Spectator, Wine Advocate, Wine Enthusiast, The Observer, Daily Mail and New York Times.

In 2017, Bruwer and Gavin muscled their way into the history books when an unprecedented eight wines from the Raats stable received the coveted 5-star rating in the Platter Guide. No other winemaker has ever managed this accomplishment in one year, since South Africa's most definitive wine reference guide was first published in 1980. In addition, Raats Family Wines also walked away with the title of Winery of the Year.

"The difference for us is that everything we do we try to resonate the quality in our wine and that eventually becomes our marketing angle. We do it small, we do it fantastically and we do it so differently to anybody else. The end result is wine that is rare, unique, small and different to anyone else," shares Bruwer Raats.

B Vintners Vine Exploration Co:

For Stellenbosch-based cousins Gavin Bruwer and Bruwer Raats, their minds are always focused on the future. So much so, that in 2014, they combined their youth and experience to create B Vintners Vine Exploration Co. – a wine range that grants them an opportunity to explore the vines together within the Cape Winelands.

Yet, this is not just your standard partnership. Instead of owning their own vineyards, the B's (Bruwer & Bruwer) source grapes from different locations best suited to each variety, opting to create working relationships with similar minded people in the industry who believe in their avant-garde winemaking approach.

"We're storytellers, always eager to honour our Cape heritage and historically linked varieties. However, there are learnings to be taken from the past too, and it is important to incorporate these lessons today in order to produce finer wine for tomorrow's wine drinkers," explains Gavin.

The result is a range that carefully balances two realms of the winemaking spectrum. By honouring the heritage of the Cape and incorporating innovative and minimal intervention winemaking techniques, B Vintners allows the vineyard to tell the tale, expertly crafting the most honest expression of the fruit of the vine.

Today, B Vintners is an award-winning, terroir-driven range that blends a bit of the past and present to bring you a taste of the future.

The Wines

Reception Wine:

Graham Beck Brut Rose NV

Beautiful silver pink in colour, with tiny, consistent bubbles creating a fine collar on the surface. The nose shows concentrated aromas of red apple, cherry, cranberry and hints of pomegranate and grapefruit. On the palate the wine is elegant and soft, with plenty of red berry fruit flavours and a delightful prickle of the small bubbles. Fresh, fruit-forward and long lasting.

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Tasting Wines:

Raats Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2023

The wine offers a complex nose showing quince, white peach and yellow apple, with fenugreek spices give more dimension alongside the mineral intensity of the wine. The stone fruit character follows through onto an exceptionally balanced, very delicate and fine textured palate showing a peach-melba character with an exquisite length and freshness. The wine lingers with hints of ripe nectarine and apricot, zesty lemon and wet chalk.

B Vintners Harlem To Hope 2022

81% Chenin Blanc and 19% Semillon

Aromas of fruit, spice and a touch of the granitic soil's minerality, which follows through onto the palate, creates tension and excitement all at once. Nectarine, quince and melon are given depth by touches of spice, lemongrass and ginger, while hints of florals provide a further dimension. Time in older oak and concrete egg, with close lees contact, gives the wine breadth and depth on the palate and keeps the focus with a saline and savoury linger.

B Vintners Liberte Pinotage 2022

Freshness, finesse and elegance are key, yet still allowing for concentration and structure. Red and dark cherries, flowers, spice and earth give layered complexity. The palate follows with fruit concentration, fine yet structured tannin, with wonderful fresh acidity.

Raats Dolomite Cabernet Franc 2014

Red fruit and cinnamon spice are leading the nose of this wine, with added herb and subtle floral complexity. The nose follows through to the lovely fresh and vibrant palate of the wine, which is well balanced with fine structure.

Raats Family Cabernet Franc 2020

The nose entices with its perfume and a garrigue character of Cape fynbos, rosemary, lavender and thyme with spicy notes of nutmeg, cloves and star anise. A palate of intense brooding blackberry fruit, graphite and a streak of minerality add to the complexity of the nose.

Raats Jasper Red Blend 2022

49% Cabernet Franc; 35% Malbec, 9% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3.5% Merlot and 3.5% Petit Verdot

Exceptionally intense and complex on the nose with blackberry, black cherry and bramble in abundance and subtle hints of forest floor, dark chocolate, aniseed and spicy tobacco. The walk in the Black Forest continues with blue and blackberry dancing on a tight rope with focus and concentration, following through onto a perfectly balanced, fine-grained, velvety palate. The finish lingers with hints of fresh mint, cinnamon and perfume. Complex and structured.

Mvemve Raats MR De Compostella 2020 Red Blend

30% Cabernet Franc; 28% Cabernet Sauvignon; 21% Malbec; 16% Merlot; 5% Petit Verdot

Deep, dark and intense ruby colour. Blackcurrant and black cherry fruit with hints of violets, cedar and cinnamon. Rich and complex with mineral, blackberry fruit and dark chocolate on the finish. Harmoniously composed of the five Bordeaux varieties to ensure none dominate. This wine shows a consistent, linear flavour profile with a polished and well-defined finish.

Tasting Menu

First Plate:

- Caramelized onion and roasted peppers
- Toasted sourdough, whipped goat cheese, basil micro greens

Second Plate:

- Braised beef short rib
- Celery root puree, sauteed shiitake mushrooms, pickled mustard seeds crispy shallots

We will make every effort to accommodate your food allergies or special dietary needs if requested.

Save The Date

- Wednesday, October 28, 2026: Varietal Tasting @ Faculty Club
- Friday, December 11, 2026: Yuletide Dinner @ Faculty Club

When & Where

When: Wednesday, September 16 @ 6:30 p.m.

Where: University of Toronto Faculty Club, 41 Willcocks Street, Toronto, ON M5S 1C7
(The Spadina streetcar stops at the corner of Willcocks and Spadina.)

Price:

- Members. \$115
- Guests. \$130

Closing date: Your booking or cancellation **MUST** be received by **Wednesday, September 9**. Your E transfer confirmation from your bank will be your **only** confirmation. If we are unable to accommodate your registration due to our **capacity limit**, you will be notified and a full refund will be offered.

Your cheque payable to ***South African Wine Society*** or **Interac E-transfer-payment** payable to winessainfo@gmail.com will reserve your place at the event.

Note: If you will be paying by cheque, please advise us in advance by sending an email to SAWS (winessainfo@gmail.com) such that we can reserve your place(s).

As a courtesy to other members, please refrain from wearing any scented products, including perfumes, colognes, after shaves or hand lotions.

Event Registration if paying by cheque

Raats Family Wines Tasting University of Toronto Faculty Club Wednesday, September 16, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

When registering by mail, it is imperative that you email us at winessainfo@gmail.com to let us confirm your booking promptly.

Send cheque payable to:

South African Wine Society.
8 Paul Street
Thornhill, ON L3T 2H4

_____ member/s @ \$115

_____ guests/s @ \$130

Name(s) _____

Phone _____

WAIVER, RELEASE AND INDEMNITY

I am participating in South African Wine Society (SAWS) events voluntarily and at my own risk. In consideration of my participation, I, for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, hereby waive, release and forever discharge and indemnify SAWS, its organizers, volunteers, members, and the Executive Committee from any and all damages, claims and actions for any loss, liability, claim, action, costs, expenses, physical or emotional injury or death to me arising out of my participation in SAWS functions or on society grounds, howsoever caused. I am aware that SAWS does not carry any liability insurance.

This waiver applies to all guests who I may bring and for whom I accept complete responsibility.

I also certify that I, and my guests are 19 years of age or older.

I also consent to the use of my/our name(s) and/or likeness through photographs or other images which SAWS may post on its website or other media.

We/I have read and understand and agree to this waiver.