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Born and schooled in Germany, I studied in Paris and Bordeaux, France, where I obtained my PhD at the University of Bordeaux in 1992. I am currently a Distinguished Professor at the South African Grape and Wine Research Institute, Department of Viticulture and Oenology, Stellenbosch University, and holder of the NRF/DTI South African Research Chair in Integrated Wine Science. I was also the co-director of the African Microbiome Institute at this university.

My research has focused on the cellular and molecular biology of the yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* focusing on fundamental and on biotechnologically relevant aspects of the regulation of complex phenotypes in this eukaryotic model yeast. More recently, I have become interested in yeast biodiversity and in understanding the ecological and molecular drivers that govern the evolution and interactions between microorganisms within wine fermentation ecosystems. Besides more than 120 peer-reviewed journal publications, several book chapters and full-length conference proceedings, I have supervised more than 30 Ph.D. and 50 M.Sc. students and am member of several editorial boards and scientific organisations.