

CIRCUMSTANCE

CABERNET FRANC 2019



IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT THE VINEYARDS

Cabernet Franc is the original “Cabernet” grape, being one of the parents of Cabernet Sauvignon (a cross between Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Franc).

This varietal ripens earlier than Cabernet Sauvignon, which makes it ideal for the cool slopes of the Helderberg region.

The vines are grown on south-west facing slopes of the Schapenberg, Somerset West. The farm is a mere 4km from the Atlantic Ocean, with vines planted at a height of between 240 and 260 meters above sea level. The soils are of decomposed granite origin with medium sized stones, helping with both drainage and moisture retention. Strong south-easterly winds occur during the growing season, which helps to control growth and crop size. Production was approximately 4 tons/ha. In other words, packed full of flavour!

At Waterkloof, we do not spray herbicides, fungicides or pesticides in our vineyards. We produce our own compost and biodynamic preparations, which we then disperse into the soil by utilising our horses as opposed to heavy tractors. This ensures soil with more life, where the vine can spread its roots as it pleases, taking up everything it needs from this complex soil. The result is honest, terroir-driven wines – a true re-reflection of our unique vineyard site.

A GENTLE HAND

We harvest according to taste and spend a lot of time in the vineyards to see how the flavours develop. All our grapes are hand-picked, cooled overnight and then processed the following morning. We are always trying ‘new’ or shall we say... old, traditional approaches, that is why, after beginning to work with whole-bunches for our Rhone varietals in 2009, we now do the same with Cabernet Franc. Bunches are hand-sorted so that only the best grapes are then placed into wooden fermenters via our winery’s gravity-flow system. The alcoholic fermentation started spontaneously with the natural yeasts found in our chemical-free vineyards.

A combination of soft punch downs and delistage we used during the fermentation process. First by feet and then at the end of fermentation, with a soft punch-down machine to ensure a moderate extraction of colour and tannin. The wine spent a total of around 30 days on the skins to help integrate the tannins. The skins were separated from the juice via gravity-flow and then gently pressed in a basket press. All the wine went through malolactic fermentation in about 20 % new oak and the rest in 2nd and 3rd fill French barrels and was then aged for 32 months. We make the wine as naturally and untamed as possible, with no additions of acids or enzymes.

AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE: THE 2018/2019 GROWING SEASON

The current harvest is determined by the conditions of the previous years. With this taken into account, we could see that all of our hard work in 2018 certainly paid off in this year’s harvest. The leaves were still green for more than a month after picking the grapes. We welcomed a bit of rain just after the 2018 harvest, which also helped the vine to build up some much-needed reserves.

The 2018 winter was cold and the vines could go into proper dormancy. During this time, we worked hard to build up the nutrients required in the vineyard for the summer growing period. At Waterkloof we are always tweaking the processes. One example, of many, is the deep bed system, where we put plant cuttings and manure into an area that used to be aerated by chickens scratching around. This time round, the chickens were substituted by three beautiful little pigs to dig channels into the compost to turn it. This mixture was especially beneficial during the drought, as it is a rich source of carbon that improves the water retention ability of the soils.

We experienced an even budburst during a cool spring but had a lot of wind during flowering which led to uneven berry set on some of the blocks. To help the vine ripen properly, we only kept the more developed bunches on the vine.

The summer growing season was fairly cool, except for a few warmer days in October. We were also very happy to welcome some rain in January, which accompanied by the wind, led to the soil receiving good moisture without having humidity build-up on the grapes that could cause rot.

The 2019 harvest commenced the last week of January but went into full swing from the first week of February. We picked our last grapes at the end of March. On the younger blocks, the yield was down by about 10%, but the older blocks produced more or less the same.

The whites showed a lot of concentration and vibrant acidity. With the reds, we had lovely small berries with thick skins. During processing, we once again worked gently to avoid over-extracting and let Mother Nature take her course with our natural ferments.

A TASTING FROM THE GLASS OF NADIA LANGENEGGER

This Cabernet Franc is true to the varietal characteristics and shows a slight note of Cape fynbos, complimented by flavors of bright red fruit and hints of plums. It has great structure with a fresh acidity. I enjoy pairing it with a marinated rack of lamb in a variety of different herbs (such as parsley and thyme) and some garlic. Its always nice to decant this wine an hour or so before enjoying it.

THE NUMBERS (4 610 bottles produced)

Alc: 14%

TA: 5 g/l

pH: 3.73

RS: 2.4 g/l