

CIRCUMSTANCE

CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2020



IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT THE VINEYARDS

A cross between Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon is the most famous red wine grape in the world and is celebrated as the king of the reds because of its great structure. With its small, thick-skinned berries, it is rich in colour and tannins.

The block used for our Circumstance Cabernet Sauvignon is on the north-west facing slopes of the Schapenberg, at an altitude of about 270 and 300m above sea level and a mere 5 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean. Strong south-easterly winds help control growth and crop yield. Soils are of decomposed granite origin with fine sand/loam topsoil and medium-size stones, helping with both drainage and moisture retention. Production was approximately 4 tons/ha.

At Waterkloof we pride ourselves in not spraying any chemical herbicides or pesticides in our vineyards. We produce our own compost and preparations, which we then distribute by utilising our draught horses, as opposed to heavy tractors. These practices ensure loose soil with more life, where the vines can spread their roots as they please; taking up everything they need from our rich and complex earth. We believe that regenerative farming helps to produce honest, terroir-driven wines that are truly made in the vineyard.

A GENTLE HAND

We harvest according to taste and spend a lot of our time in the vineyards to see how the flavours develop. Grapes were destemmed, hand sorted and placed into our open-top wooden fermenters via gravity. The natural fermentation started spontaneously- utilising the wild yeasts present on the fruit.

A combination of soft punch downs and delistages were used during fermentation to ensure a soft and slow colour and tannin extraction. The wines spent about 30 days on the skins to help integrate the tannins and stabilise the colour. The skins were separated from the juice via gravity flow and gently pressed in a basket press. The wine went through malolactic fermentation in barrel and was then aged in new (10%), second and third fill (90%) French barrels for 27 months. We never fine any of our reds so that the grapes are honestly and purely expressed in the wine. Only sulphur was added and no other additions, such as tartaric acid or enzymes, were allowed.

AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE: THE 2019/20 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 takes her course with our natural ferments

A TASTING FROM THE GLASS OF NADIA LANGENEGGER

I enjoy the finesse of this cooler climate Cabernet Sauvignon with soft notes of dark fruit, herbs (I pick up notes of thyme)and even some dark chocolate. The palate shows good structure with superbly refined tannins and great length that is carries well by the balanced acidity in the wine. Our Circumstance Cabernet Sauvignon is a perfect companion for a variety of dishes such as T-bone steak on the braai (barbeque) or slow-cooked lamb shanks.

THE NUMBERS (8 500 bottles produced)

Alc: 14 %

TA: 5.2 g/l

pH: 3.69

RS: 1.5 g /l