

CIRCLE OF LIFE

RED 2017

IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT THE VINEYARDS



Circle of Life tells the story of Waterkloof: A once conventionally farmed vineyard with great potential, that - since Paul Boutinot took over the property - has been transformed into a living, breathing organic and biodynamic vineyard by Farm Manager Christiaan Loots and his team.

At Waterkloof we strive to produce balanced, characterful wines by adhering to traditional organic and biodynamic methods. Chickens, sheep and work-horses all play their own unique role in the vineyards. Our soils are free of chemicals and are kept healthy by using plant extracts, fungi and bacteria from our own organic compost. We do not fight nature, we harness it.

Our focus has always been to get a better understanding of Waterkloof and the individual characters of its vineyard blocks. The Circumstance range allows these individual blocks and varieties to be expressed. Conversely, our objective with Circle of Life has been to produce two blends that encapsulate all the varying terroir characteristics and grape varieties found on Waterkloof. Thus, rather than being constrained by a traditional blending style, for example a Bordeaux or Rhône blend, we have instead produced two wines that are not driven by varietal, nor a specific parcel of the vineyard. Instead, they are a true reflection of the totality, philosophy and specificity of Waterkloof.

A GENTLE HAND

We harvest according to taste and find it essential to spend a lot of time in the vineyards to see how the flavours develop. All grapes were hand-picked, sorted in the vineyards and brought to the cellar by our horses. To ensure that only the best berries are used, we sorted all grapes by hand in the winery as well. These were then placed into our wooden fermenters via our gravity system. The Rhône varieties were whole-bunch fermented and the Bordeaux varieties were de-stemmed. The fermentation started naturally with yeast present on the grapes to enhance the flavours prevailing in the vineyards. We also don't add any sulphur at this point. Just pure grapes in our wooden fermenters.

Throughout the fermentation process, we did soft punch downs twice a day to gently and slowly extract the tannins. The wines spent around 30 days on the skins, during which time the tannins were able to soften. This duration is dependent on taste.

After the maceration time on the skins, we ran the wine down via gravity - still no pumping. The grape skins also fell through into the basket press and were softly pressed to gently extract the last bit of wine, aroma and colour from the skins.

The varieties were aged separately in French oak. 600L Barrels for the Rhône varieties and 225L barrels for the Bordeaux varieties. Only 11 % were new barrels, to avoid dominance of wood aromatics in our wines.

After 18 months in barrel, we blended the Syrah (26%), Merlot (24%), Petit Verdot (26%) and Cabernet Franc (24%) together and kept it for another 9 months in our wooden fermenters. This wine is unfiltered and gently filtered.

AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE: THE 2016/2017 GROWING SEASON

What looked set to be an average harvest due to the winter drought, turned out well - much to our surprise. This also attested yet again that Mother Nature will always keep us on our toes.

The 2016 Cape winter did not see a lot of rainfall - about half the average - and it was also not exceptionally cold. We barely saw any snow on the mountains.

Spring arrived early, which resulted in early bud burst and flowering. Thankfully, we did not experience strong winds during this period, which helped with an even berry set. Seeing that we had already experienced drought conditions during the berry formation stage, cell formation was also impacted to produce small cells from the start.

In January, we received some rain which changed the outlook and assisted the vines to grow without being too stressed. During the rest of the season, we had beautiful cool evenings and mild day temperatures, and this ensured a proper, even ripening process.

We started picking at the end of January and were very happy to see little to no rot, small berries with a lot of concentration, and great acids.

TASTING NOTE FROM THE GLASS OF NADIA LANGENEGGER

A perfectly integrated blend with great length, combining the spiciness of the Syrah, the fresh fruits of the Petit Verdot and the juiciness from the Merlot. The introduction is fresh and fruity with good acidity, evolving into riper flavours and herbaceous notes, and with elegant tannins and light acids on the finish. It is very versatile and will complement numerous dishes, but I like to enjoy it with a hearty lamb shank.

THE NUMBERS: (17 400 bottles produced)

Alc: 13.5% RS: 2.3 TA: 5.2g/l pH: 3.52 VA: 0.7