

CIRCUMSTANCE

MERLOT 2012



A TASTING NOTE FROM THE GLASS OF NADIA BARNARD

LIGHT CASSIS, SOUR PLUMS AND SOME DARK FRUIT FLAVOURS GREET AND ENTICE THE NOSE. ELEGANT, BRIGHT ACIDITY WITH JUICY FRUIT ON THE PALATE. GREAT LENGTH WITH FINE TANNINS ON THE FINISH. PAIRS WELL WITH DUCK AND LAMB DISHES.

IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT THE VINEYARDS

Once regarded as Cabernet Sauvignon's lesser sidekick, Merlot is now considered its equal by many. Little is known about the origin of the varietal but it has been cultivated in Bordeaux since the 18th century.

The block used for our Circumstance Merlot is on the south-west facing slopes of The Schapenberg, at an altitude of about 240 and 260 meters above sea level and a mere 5 km from The Atlantic Ocean. Strong south-easterly winds help control growth and crop yield. Soils are of sandstone origin with medium size stones, helping with both drainage and moisture retention. Production was approximately 6 tons/ha.

At Waterkloof we pride ourselves in not spraying chemical herbicides or pesticides in our vineyards. We produce our own compost and biodynamic preparations, which we then distribute using our Percheron 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 biodynamic farming helps lead to terroir-driven wines, which are truly made in the vineyard.

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. Grapes were destemmed, hand sorted and placed into our open-top wooden fermenters via gravity. The natural fermentation started spontaneously by utilising the wild yeasts present on the fruit. Punch downs (twice a day) were used during fermentation to ensure a soft, slow colour and tannin extraction. The wines spent 30 days on the skins to help integrate the tannins and stabilise the colour. The skins were separated from the juice through a gentle basket pressing. The wine went through malolactic fermentation in barrel and was then aged in new (20%), second and third fills (80%) French barrels for 20 months. The wine received no fining to help ensure that the grape was purely expressed in the wine. Only sulphur was added and no other additions, such as tartaric acid or enzymes were allowed.

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AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE - 2011/12 GROWING SEASON

Winter sets up a strong foundation for the rest of the seasons to follow. It prepares the vines for the coming growing season and its effects can be felt throughout. Cold weather conditions during the early part of winter allowed for even bud break during spring. We did however experience an earlier than normal bud burst due to rising winter temperatures at the end of the season. Rainfall was very low during the winter period, which is always a challenge in areas where we rely on winter rains to replenish our dam and groundwater levels.

The dry conditions followed through into summer which contributed to a smaller crop. Bouts of extreme hot weather early in January caused sunburn in dryland areas and had a negative effect on the size of the crop. Fortunately the warm spell was followed by cooler temperatures for the rest of the ripening period. Grapes could ripen evenly and properly and harvest started about two weeks

THE NUMBERS (9 615 BOTTLES PRODUCED)

Alc 14.55% RS 1.6g/l TA 5.1 g/l pH 3.5 VA 0.61