

CIRCUMSTANCE

MERLOT 2022



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 planted on the south-west facing slopes of the Schapenberg, at an altitude of 240 to 260 meters above sea level, and a mere 4 kms 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 5 tons/ha.

At Waterkloof, we pride ourselves on not spraying any chemical herbicides, fungicides or pesticides in our vineyards. We produce our own compost and natural preparations. 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 leads to terroir-driven wines, which are truly made in the vineyard.

A GENTLE HAND

We harvest according to taste, spending extensive time in the vineyards tracking flavour development. Grapes are hand-picked into small crates to preserve quality, then hand-sorted, destemmed, and transferred by gravity into open-top wooden fermenters. Fermentation occurs naturally with wild yeasts from the vineyard, with twice-daily punch-downs allowing for gentle extraction of colour and tannin. The wine remains on the skins for 25 days before being basket pressed.

Malolactic fermentation takes place in barrel, followed by ageing in 15% new French oak, with the balance in second- and third-fill barrels for 20 months, and a further nine months in 600 L French oak barrels to enhance elegance and texture.

The wine is unfinned, with only sulphur added, allowing for a pure expression of the grape and site.

AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE: THE 2020 / 2021 GROWING SEASON

The 2022 season was defined by moderate conditions, allowing the vines to achieve full phenolic ripeness and develop complex flavours. A cold winter ensured good dormancy, although rainfall remained below ideal..

On the farm, a minimum tilling approach was adopted to build soil carbon and improve water retention. Organic matter, in the form of chipped plant material and cover crops, was returned to the soils, supporting long-term vineyard health and balance.

A cool spring delayed budbreak by around two weeks, but the vines quickly caught up, with even flowering and berry set under calm conditions. Warmer weather from December accelerated ripening, with a few heat peaks through mid-summer.

Harvest was long and steady, running from mid-February to late March. Fruit was healthy, with minimal rot, and achieved excellent phenolic ripeness at lower sugar levels, resulting in fresh, balanced wines with moderate alcohol.

TASTING NOTES FROM THE GLASS OF NADIA LANGENEGGER

The 2022 vintage offers an expressive nose of ripe plums, sour cherries, and tomato leaf, with a subtle earthy undertone. The palate is structured yet refined, showing fine tannins and a long, lingering finish. A lifted natural acidity brings freshness and balance, carrying the aromatics with ease.

This Merlot pairs beautifully with lamb chops on the braai. For optimal enjoyment, decant and serve slightly chilled at around 16 °C.

THE NUMBERS (3,000 bottles produced)

Alc: 13 %

TA: 5.4 g / l

pH: 3.47

RS: 1.3 g / l