



RUSTENBERG WINES

Stellenbosch Merlot 2023

Introduction

Merlot has been a mainstay red grape variety on Rustenberg since the late 1970's where its lead role has been to complement Cabernet Sauvignon in blends. Rustenberg's Merlots tend to be bigger and bolder in body and are structured to have excellent aging potential, pairing well with red meat-based dishes and rewarding decanting before being served.

Vintage

The 2023 vintage marked another vintage influenced by the La Niña weather phenomenon. The Autumn of 2022 was dry with below average and variable rainfall throughout the Winter. Spring too was dry, but cool, however, a massive cold front in December brought much needed rain, but increased disease pressure. This lead up to harvest set the scene for a challenging vintage and lower crop sizes. The early heatwaves experienced in January, as opposed to usually occurring in February, brought the red cultivars into line with their recent average picking dates. Early ripening red cultivars such as Merlot and Malbec were largely in the winery by the time torrential rains arrived in late February. These rains continued through March, causing the wettest March since 1987 on the estate. The result of these rains was the loss of a large amount of the Cabernet Sauvignon fruit to disease. A mixed result for the vintage with good early reds and much lighter styles of wine produced from later ripening cultivars. Rigorous blending and barrel selection of only the best parcels of wine ensured that top quality wines were bottled under the Rustenberg label despite this challenging vintage.

Vineyard

Wine of Origin	Stellenbosch
Varietal Blended	100% Merlot
Soil Types	Decomposed Granite, Hutton and Tukulu
Trellising/Pruning System	VSP (Vertical Shoot Positioned), 2 Node Spur Pruned
Irrigation Type	Minimal Drip Irrigation
Picking Method & Date	Hand Picked, March 2023

Winemaking

Extraction Method	Mechanically Destemmed & Sorted Followed by Hand Sorting. Whole-Berry Fermentation, Pumped Over During Ferment.
Fermentation Vessel	Stainless Steel
Yeast	Cultured Active Dry Wine Yeast
Extended Maceration	7 days
Oak Aging	15 Months
Age and Type of Oak	10% new and 90% 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th fill French 225L barrels
Fining Agents Used	Egg Whites (Albumen)
Final Analysis	Alc v/v: 13.94% TA 5.5g/L pH 3.56 RS 1.4g/L
Bottling Date	July 2024

Wine

Tasting Note	Rich aromas of blackberries, cassis, and dark chocolate follow through to a smooth palate that is both balanced and well-rounded with fine grained tannins.
Aging Potential	8 – 10+ years from vintage under ideal cellaring conditions.

Accolades

Award:	Competition/Publication:	Year/Edition:
	New Release – Not Yet Rated / Judged	

