

CIRCUMSTANCE

CHARDONNAY 2019



IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT THE VINEYARDS

Chardonnay is one of the world's most widely planted varieties and can be very diverse in style. Known as the white wine of Burgundy from where it originated from. If we think of the wide spectrum of Chardonnays stemming from the renowned vineyard sites of Burgundy, ranging from very mineral to a more riper style, it is evident that the varietal shows terroir exceptionally well.

As winemakers started to experiment with the varietal over the years, they noticed that when grown in warmer climates the grape showed more tropical notes, whilst those rooted in cooler areas showed fresh flavours of apple and more earthy notes.

The Circumstance Chardonnay block leans more towards the cooler climate style, as it is planted a mere 8kms from the ocean. The block is approximately 15 years in age and planted on sandstone soils on a south-facing slope.

A GENTLE HAND

The winemaking philosophy is the same for all of Waterkloof's premium white wines. We follow a traditional, minimalistic approach which means that we interfere as little as possible with the winemaking process. This allows the flavours prevalent in that specific vineyard to be expressed in the wine. To achieve this, all grapes are harvested on taste, picked by hand, sorted by hand and finally whole-bunch pressed in our modern basket press, so that we extract the purest juice in the gentlest way. The juice is then settled naturally for 24 hours. From there we simply rack the juice to a concrete egg as well as a 600L barrel and wait for the fermentation process to start naturally- without the addition of any yeast. This leads to a longer fermentation process with a slow release of aromas and a more structured palate. The natural fermentation process took 4 months to complete, after which the wine was left on the gross lees for another 3 months. We do not add any acid or enzymes during the winemaking process, with only a light filtration and a small addition of sulphur added as a preservative prior to bottling.

AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE: THE 2018/2019 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 vine 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.

TASTING NOTES

A wine that flaunts its cooler climate origin with flavours of green apple, citrus and interesting flinty notes on the nose. The palate is very elegant, refined and lingers well on the aftertaste. I enjoy this wine with a variety of food partners, ranging from a wedge of Waterkloof's noble Healey's slow matured cheddar to mushroom risotto.

THE NUMBERS (4450)

Alc: 13.5 %

RS: 3.5 g/l

TA: 6.5 g/l

pH: 3.12