

DE WETSHOF ESTATE LIMESTONE HILL CHARDONNAY 2017

AN INTRODUCTION TO DE WETSHOF ESTATE

De Wetshof is a third generation wine estate in South Africa's Robertson Valley, where wine has been made for over 150 years. Here Danie de Wet, proprietor and cellar master, is assisted by sons and co-owners Johann (viticulture and marketing) and Peter (winemaker). De Wetshof Estate is a pioneer of noble white wines in South Africa and has also introduced superior red cultivars to the Robertson Wine Valley. On De Wetshof a firm belief prevails, namely that one cannot know where you are going unless you know where you have come from. This is why the history of De Wetshof's vineyards plays a profound role in determining present and future wine quality. Since the early 1970's meticulous records have been kept on each vineyard as to the plants' reaction to soil-types, irrigation and the vagaries of climate, as well as their development and progress over the years. Each vineyard is thus vinified separately during the wine-making process, the wine-makers having a clear understanding of what the fruit of each vineyard's labour is going to deliver during a specific year.

This commitment to site-specific vineyard management and wine-making has been an integral part of the De Wetshof ethos from the outset and remains a vital and non-negotiable aspect of all the Estate's wines.

VINIFICATION

The grapes are picked in the coolness of morning, with the emphasis on capturing the natural complexities of the Chardonnay grape immediately for the making of this un-wooded wine. Once de-stemming, pressing and overnight settling are complete, the juice is racked-off from the sediment and pumped into stainless steel tanks for the alcohol fermentation. After fermentation, the wine is left on the lees under controlled temperatures. Weekly stirring of the lees ensures maximum flavours are released into the wine until the wines are ready for bottling.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Millennia ago the Robertson Valley teamed with termite colonies who built magnificent nests from the soil. Over time these structures and their contents were calcified leading to the region having an exceptionally high limestone content. One of De Wetshof's vineyards is planted on a hill where the limestone is so abundant it shimmers in low light, and this is where the grapes of the Limestone Hill originate from.

Heavy clay soils rich in limestone allow this Chardonnay to emit optimum varietal expression in a cloak of rich complexity. An un-wooded wine, Limestone Hill has notes of grapefruit and nuts, with the complexity balanced by a nuanced elegance ending with a delicate ripeness.

The American critic Robert Parker describes this wine as such: "The De Wetshof Estate Limestone Hill Chardonnay never sees oak, and offers impeccably pure, refreshing apple, peach and lemon fruit, a lovely leesy richness of texture, and a nutty, chalky, fruit-filled finish of imposing length. Understated and less tropical than some of the better un-oaked Chardonnays, this wine possesses far better balance and sheer drinkability – not to mention more finesse – than 99% of the world's Chardonnay I have experienced."

As a culinary companion, Limestone Hill is superb with oysters, cream-based pasta dishes and light curries, as well as roast pork and veal dishes.

ORIGIN

Vineyards block numbers 9, 42, 43 & 41. Wine of Origin De Wetshof Estate.

CLIMATE

The Robertson Valley is characterised by cold winters and sunny summers, with an average annual rainfall of 350 - 400mm. In summer a fresh southerly breeze has a cooling effect on the vineyards, allowing the grapes to ripen evenly and in perfect balance. The dry climate and the bracing breeze keep pests to a minimum, resulting in sparse spraying programmes.

IRRIGATION

Controlled computerised irrigation systems including the monitoring of soil moisture content ensure the vines are given exactly the right amount of water at the right time to produce grapes of optimum ripeness and developed flavours.

SOILS

An abundance of free limestone is complemented by a heavy clay component ensuring excellent water-retention and adding structure and fullness to the wines. These soils have the highest free lime content and the highest pH of all the soils on De Wetshof. This adds complexity and structure to the wines, allowing optimum varietal expression with classic Chardonnay flavours of soft grapefruit and nuts.

VINEYARD INFORMATION

Age of the vines	7 - 21 years
Vines per hectare	4000 and 4500
Rootstock	Richter 99 and Richter 110
Planting row	2,4m x 1m and 1,83m X 1,2m
Soil pH	7,8 – 8,5
Trellising style	6 wire fence system cordon with spur pruning.
Yield	5 – 8 tons per hectare
Tank maturation on thin lees	4 months
Maturation potential	3-5 years



CHEMICAL ANALYSIS

Cultivar	100% Chardonnay
Vintage	2017
Alcohol	12,71%
Total Acidity	7.60 g/l
pH	3.30
Sugar	6.0 g/l
SO ₂	37/99

