Le Riche

STELLENBOSCH | SOUTH AFRICA

HARVEST REPORT 2016

After an early 2015 vintage the vines had an extended period to build up reserves before their winter dormancy. Although the winter weather was cold, very low rainfall occurred and we were forced into a state of emergency with severe water restrictions being applied throughout the Western Cape.

Spring arrived early with warm weather and continued low rainfall, providing us with good budding and shoot growth conditions that lasted throughout flowering and berry set. These dry, warm conditions placed pressure on the vines, who in turned produced less berries per bunch.

Yet despite the dry conditions, the canopies were well balanced. The early ripening phase through December was ideal with some rainfall that helped to alleviate the water stress on the vines. With an early onset of veraison, we were optimistic about the quality potential, but a rigorous green harvest, where we remove unripe bunches, was necessary to bring balance to the ripening.

January was hot and windy. Careful management of the last of our water was essential to carry the vines through to harvest. These conditions, along with the dry growing season, helped to produce very small intense berries with good flavour development. We picked our Cabernets over a rather long 5-week period due to greater variation between wards than usual.

The wines generally had a lower alcohol, good ripeness and a fresh savoury finish. Blending and batch selection was key to ensuring our quality standards were met. Overall the final quality was very good, and we are excited to see how the wines develop over time. The impact of the drought, although severe, helped to concentrate flavours a produce wines with great elegance and age-ability.

Christo le Riche

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Cellarmaster