

HILL & DALE

MERLOT 2018

Winemaker: Guy Webber

Appellation: Stellenbosch

Viticulturist: Hannes van Zyl

Grape varietal: Merlot

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Background

The Hill&Dale label offers a range of accessibly-styled wines with a New World character for international appeal, created by award-winning winemaker, Guy Webber.

Grapes for the Hill&Dale wines are selected from vineyards within the Stellenbosch region. Extensive vineyard management programmes are in place for each of the vineyards from which the fruit is selected. All aspects of the process are strictly governed so as to comply with the standards set for the Integrated Production of Wine (IPW) system as well as for the ethical standards set out by the WIETA programme.

Vineyards

Grapes were sourced from trellised, grafted vineyards established in soils of mostly granitic origin. Merlot is a mid-season variety which thrives on full sunlight and moderate temperatures.

With rainfall figures well below the average and overall temperatures well above the average, 2018 can best be described as having been another hot and very dry vintage.

Yields reached a mere 10,4 tonnes per hectare for the vintage – the second-lowest in the past decade.

Winemaking

The grapes were harvested by hand between 23 and 28 February 2018 and at an average sugar content of 23,5° Balling. After destalking and crushing, most of the free-run juice was bled off the skins in order to produce Rosé. The remaining juice was left on the skins and, due to the dramatically-increased juice : skin ratio, the fermentation temperatures were kept relatively low in order not to over extract tannins from the skins.

Pressing took place after around 48 hours (once sufficient colour had been extracted) and the ferment completed under cool conditions (around 20°C) in stainless steel tanks.

After the completion of the ferments, just less than half of the volume was transferred to a combination of old French, American and Easter-European oak barrels where it matured for an average of eleven months before being racked and, blended with the unoaked volume and readied for bottling.

The wine was bottled on 26 September 2019 with the total production being 13 500 cases (6 x 750ml).

Winemaker's Comments

Colour: Bright ruby.

Bouquet: Fresh red cherries and cranberries round off sweetish plummy notes. Mild and enticing rather than upfront and obvious.

Taste: Medium-bodied, the wine displays the gentler side of the variety with its fresh, clean fruit-flavours, supple tannin structure and elegant length. Almost no noticeable oak influences assist in showing the pure fruit qualities.

Ageing potential: Extremely friendly in its youth the wine should gain in complexity to an age of three to five years.

Food pairing

Goes really well with middle-eastern and north-african flavours. Basics like sourdough dipped in olive oil and dukkha as well as falafel balls, Easy charcuterie platters and vegetarian pizzas.

Chemical analysis

Alcohol: 14.0 %vol

Residual sugar: 3.3 g/l

Total acidity: 6.0 g/l

pH: 3,48

Total extract: 33.3 g/l

Volatile acidity: 0,61 g/l

Total SO₂: 86 ppm (at release)

