

Middelvlei Pinotage/Merlot 1997

variety : Pinotage | Pinotage, Merlot
winery : Middelvlei Wines
winemaker : Tinnie Momberg
wine of origin : Devon Valley
analysis : alc : 12,62 % vol pH : 3,8 ta : 5,6 g/l
pack : Bottle **closure** : Cork

in the cellar : The Pinotage grape is unique to South Africa and is derived from the noble Pinot Noir and Cinsaut (formerly call Hermitage) varieties. The Mombergs are one of the foremost producers of Pinotage wines.

At Middelvlei, 17 ha are devoted to Pinotage, planted at 3 704 vines per ha. The vines, grafted onto Richter 99 rootstock, were on average 28 years old in the vintage year. The vineyards face west and are situated at an altitude of 160 m above sea-level. The vines, grown as bush vines, are severely pruned to inhibit their prolific growth.

The Pinotage grapes used in this superior blend were harvested between 5 and 18 March 1997, with the grapes at an average sugar level of 23,5°Balling. They were picked by hand between 06:00 and 18:00 and placed in small baskets to prevent bruising.

The Merlot vines on Middelvlei are planted in a 19,1 ha block, at 3 704 vines per hectare. Planted in 1987, these trillised vines were 10 years old in the vintage year. They were grafted on rootstock Richter 99 and are situated at an altitude of 160m above sea-level, facing southwest.

The entire 1996-97 season was very wet with an average rainfall of 809mm. The Merlot grapes were harvested by hand on 26 March 1997, when the sugar level was 25°Balling.

In the cellar, the juice of both varieties was fermented on the skins for 4 days in open cement tanks at 23°C. The yeast type used for inoculation was WE 372. The wines also underwent a secondary malolactic fermentation. After wood maturation the wine was blended in a ratio of 50% Pinotage to 50% Merlot. The wine was in wood for a total of 12 months of which 33% was in new, small French oak and the remaining 67% was in second-fill barrels.

