

Circumstance Merlot 2007

A smooth, textured wine with fine tannins, but with enough backbone to last at least a decade or more. Layered complexity that exhibits lush fruitiness, spice and exuberance with a long finish and fine tannins. Deep layered ripe black berry fruit, also featuring a hint of sweet liquorice.

variety : Merlot | 100% Merlot

winery : Waterkloof

winemaker : Werner Engelbrecht

wine of origin : Western Cape

analysis : **alc** : 14.29 % vol **rs** : 1.8 g/l

type : Red **style** : Dry **wooded**

pack : Bottle **closure** : Cork

in the vineyard : The south-west facing vineyards producing the Circumstance Merlot are cultivated on the farm Waterkloof. Waterkloof is on Schaapenberg Hill in Somerset West, part of the Stellenbosch appellation. The farm is about four kilometres from the sea, and the Merlot vineyards are planted at a height of between 240 and 260 metres above sea level. The soils are of sandstone origin with medium-sized stones, helping with drainage, but also a very good ability to retain moisture.

The 2006 vintage was cultivated under dry land conditions and the vineyards are trellised to handle the canopy effectively. Strong south-easterly winds occurred during the growing season, which helped to control growth and crop. The vineyards are an average age of between 9 and 11 years. Production was approximately 7 tons/ha.

2006 GROWING SEASON

The 2006 vintage was characterised by a cold, wet winter, followed by a relatively dry early growing season, with the wind up on the Schaapenberg Hill blowing almost non-stop. This resulted in even smaller than normal bunches and berries, giving more concentration and flavour. Intensive vineyard practices were followed, including a lot of attention to bearer spacing during pruning. Excess shoots were suckered three to four times during the growing season. This ensured that no green harvesting was needed, except for the removal of weak shoots. Due to the small crop, the vineyards easily managed the dry conditions later in the growing season. The grapes had a very good natural acidity.

in the cellar : The Merlot vineyards were harvested towards the end of February. The grapes were de-stemmed and fermented with naturally occurring yeasts in open-top wooden tanks. Manual punch-downs (twice a day) were used during fermentation to maximise colour and tannin extraction. The wines spend an additional 20 days on the skins after fermentation to help integrate the tannins and stabilise the colour. The skins were separated from the juice by a gentle pressing. All the wine went through malolactic fermentation in barrel. Wine was aged in new (60%) and second-fill (40%) French barrels for 20 months.