

Ernie Els Merlot 2011

The 2011 Merlot is a tempered, finely tuned beauty that shows great balance between seriousness and drinkability. Baked plums, smoked beef and chocolate on the nose lead to a juicy black currant strewn palate. A hint of soy sauce adds savouriness and complexity to the powerful, plush fruity core. The tannins have grip but yet are finely etched into a medium body, leading to a long fruity finish.

variety : Merlot | 100% Merlot

winery : Ernie Els Wines

winemaker : Louis Strydom

wine of origin : Stellenbosch

analysis : alc : 14.99 % vol rs : 2.4 g/l pH : 3.67 ta : 5.8 g/l

type : Red **style :** Dry **body :** Medium **taste :** Fruity

pack : Bottle **size :** 0 **closure :** Cork

Veritas Wine Awards 2013 - Gold

Decanter World Wine Awards 2013 - Bronze Medal

Veritas Wine Awards 2012 - Silver Medal

ageing : Sumptuous now, it will become even silkier with a few years aging.br /

in the vineyard : The 2011 vintage

The build-up to the harvest was fairly normal - a cold and wet winter, followed by a spring which saw nice, even budding of the grape varieties in the vineyard. November was fairly wet and December was the windiest month recorded in Stellenbosch since 1968. This resulted in dry conditions in the vineyards, which persisted throughout January and February. This was however helpful as it resulted in smaller berries which in-turn improved the intensity of the wines. These dry conditions and the heat wave experienced in early March hastened the harvesting of grapes by several weeks in order to limit the alcohol levels that would result from the fermented grapes. Supplementary irrigation on the properties maintained conditions for the later ripening varieties. Grapes harvested at the beginning of the season showed good analysis, especially on the pH front. During the latter half of the harvest season high temperatures caused sugars to shoot up while pH remained low. Further analysis also revealed low acids. Cellar space was under constant pressure as the heat ripened many varieties simultaneously. It was a good year in terms of yield and quality, especially on the early and mid-season cultivars.

About the vineyard

The Merlot blend is constructed entirely of Stellenbosch appellation fruit. We utilised grapes from the Devon Valley region for middle palate weight and Helderberg Merlot for colour and flavor intensity. Two Merlot clones were used; MO.192 and MO.348.

about the harvest: The grapes were hand-picked in the cool of early morning.

Harvest: February & March, 2011. 25.2° Brix average sugar at harvest

in the cellar : On the sorting table, all excess stalks and rotten berries were removed carefully by hand. Grape bunches were gently destalked with a Bucher de-stalker and lightly crushed. Fermentation took place in 7-ton, open-top stainless steel tanks with yeast WE 372 being added to the juice. The wines were pumped-over and punched-down manually 5 times per day ensuring maximum colour extraction from the skins. After primary fermentation the maceration period was 10 - 16 days before pressing. Each variety is matured separately (micro-vinified) in oak barrels before blending and eventual bottling.

Cooperage: Aged for 14 months - 300 litre French oak barrels (30% new)

Production: 5,000 x 6 x 750ml cases

