

Newton Johnson Chardonnay 2009

variety : Chardonnay | 100% Chardonnay

winery :

winemaker : Gordon & Nadia Newton Johnson

wine of origin : Overberg

analysis : alc : 13.3 % vol rs : 1.85 g/l pH : 3.45 ta : 6.05 g/l

type : White **style :** Dry **wooded**

pack : Bottle **closure :** Cork

in the vineyard : Background

This single vineyard wine, first produced by NJV in 1999, hails from a farm called 'Kaaimansgat'. This secluded little valley, about 80km inland, is one of the highest vineyard sites in the Cape and owing to its altitude is sufficiently cool to produce a minerally and focused style that retains its natural acidity. The vineyard is not irrigated and shows superbly consistent fruit quality. Our winemaking over the years has moved progressively away from 'interventionist' methods, with the 2007 vintage being our first with 100% natural primary and malolactic fermentation. Our earliest vintages are still full of life and show maturation potential of 8 years and more.

Location and Climate

'Kaaimansgat', roughly translates to 'Crocodile's Den' or 'Sanctuary'. It is nestled in a secluded, basin-like shaped valley, high in the mountains behind the town of Villiersdorp. The high altitude of 700m ensures that this vineyard reaches the snowline during the winter, and coupled with its stony soils, delivers a truly distinctive expression and style of Chardonnay. Kaaimansgat experiences cooler summers with temperatures ranging between 22 and 28°C. The winters are cold as a result of the snow and are essential to Chardonnay vines in their dormancy. The rainfall per annum is approximately 600mm per year.

Appellation

100% Overberg

Soils

Predominantly Avalon type (medium deep red clay soil with some stone content)

Aspect

North-East

Trellising System

3-wire Vertical Shoot Positioning (VSP) with movable wires

Pruning

Cordon

Age of Vines

24 years

Vines per hectare

4166

Average Yield

6 tons/Ha (43 hl/Ha)

Growing Season & Harvesting

The growing season temperatures for Kaaimansgat were fairly moderate for this continental-type climate, where cold nights and warm afternoons are the norm. Sugar accumulation was incredibly slow and the grapes were harvested very late at the end of March (24th - 26th). The grape yield was back to its average after a small harvest in '08. Bunches were more numerous but incredibly small, sometimes only ten to fifteen berries to a cluster.

about the harvest: All the fruit is harvested by hand and picked in to large surface area, low volume (13kg) crates.

in the cellar : The day's harvest is cooled down overnight to 8°C in the winery's grape refrigeration room. The grape bunches are sorted on a conveyor, destemmed and crushed directly in to a tank where the juice is allowed to drain in to a settling tank. All transfers of grape must are done through gravity; pumps are totally avoided, except where the juice is pressed off the skins and until final blending of the wine before bottling. The juice is then left to settle and clear for 72 hours at 2°C. It is transferred to Burgundy oak barriques (barrels) and left to complete fermentation. 100% of the fermentations are natural, i.e. no cultured yeast was added. Malolactic fermentation in this vintage is 80% complete. The wine has a tight, mineral palate showing only natural acids (absolutely no acid is added). Bâtonnage (lees stirring) is applied for texture and a slight creaminess.

Maturation

100% maturation in French oak barriques (228 litre) for 10 months using a blend of various Burgundy coopers. Tighter grained oak is preferred, with longer seasoning and toasting. We mostly use top selection barrels following discussions and tasting with individual coopers. New oak comprises 25%, 2nd fill 30%, 3rd fill 25% and 4th fill 20%.

Bottled: December 2010