

Newton Johnson Sauvignon Blanc 2011

variety : Sauvignon Blanc | 92% Sauvignon Blanc, 8% Semillon

winery :

winemaker : Gordon & Nadia Newton Johnson

wine of origin : Elgin/Walker Bay

analysis : alc : 13.9 % vol rs : 3.5 g/l pH : 3.34 ta : 5.39 g/l

type : White **style :** Dry

pack : Bottle **closure :** Screwcap

in the vineyard : Background

This wine is a blend of two appellations, Elgin and the Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, both cooler climates and well known for producing some of South Africa's most intriguing Sauvignon Blanc. Their climates differ in character (semi-continental vs. maritime), but it is the combination of soil types from these appellations that produces the contrasts and complexity of flavour in this wine. Ever since we planted our first Sauvignon Blanc vineyards back in 1997 we recognized the intense, mineral, and flinty flavours that originated from white quartz and sandstone soils higher up the slopes. These fine flavours were well complimented with Sauvignon from clay-based soils further down. Clay in contrast produces wines that may initially seem quite indistinct on the nose, slowly producing aromatics of white flowers and riper fruits, and it is the luxurious texture in the mouth that is its greatest asset. The 8% blended Semillon is an extension of this character, combining a slightly creamy sensation (from lees contact) with the length of the natural acidity. Our Sauvignon's age beautifully, further integrating its flavours after a year in bottle and maintaining up to five.

Location and Climate

The **Hemel-en-Aarde Valley** ranges in its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean from 2 to 8 km. Its climate is more 'temperate' in style, where parallel mountain ranges channel the southerly maritime winds through the appellation during the summer. These winds in turn bring regular sea mists and overcast conditions to the valley and with it more even temperatures. The average mean temperature is 19.8°C and rainfall per year is approximately 750mm. The 'Upper' appellation has some finer, more gravelly soils than the lower ward.

The **Elgin** appellation is situated on a plateau between Somerset West and Bot River and is cocooned by mountain ranges, giving the valley a kind of a bowl shape. It has lesser influence from the ocean and slightly more extreme minimum and maximum temperatures than the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, giving it a semi-continental type of climate. Its cool climate can be attributed to its altitude (300 - 800m) and southern proximity, with an average mean temperature of 19.5°C. It also has an abundant rainfall of 1000mm per year.

Appellation

3% Hemel-en-Aarde Valley

43% Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley

54% Elgin (certified as Cape South Coast)

Soils

Sandstone and coarse fragments of quartz above a layer of red granitic clay subsoil. The 'clay' Sauvignon is grown on Bokkeveld shale soil comprising of heavy clay and gravel.

Aspect

North-West (Hemel-en-Aarde Valley)
South-East (Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley)
South-East (Elgin)

Trellising System

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

Age of Vines

9 - 15 years

Vines per hectare

4,545

Average Yield

6 - 9 tons/Ha (40 - 61 hl/Ha)

Growing Season and Harvesting

A dry winter led us into spring. Very little rain during the growing season resulted in modest canopies with healthy bunches. The regular South East winds prevailed, but did not result in the damage we experienced in 2010. Warm and dry conditions during January and February resulted in quickened ripening of the fruit without spiking sugar accumulation. The timing of picking dates was of the essence in 2011, with small window periods for the earlier varieties. Flavours in general are bright, vibrant and ripe.

about the harvest: All the fruit is harvested by hand and picked in to large-surface area crates of 13kg in volume.

in the cellar: The morning's harvest is cooled down overnight to 8°C in the winery's grape refrigeration room. The grape bunches are hand-sorted on a conveyor, destemmed and crushed in to stainless steel tanks where, after a variable amount of hours, the juice is allowed to drain in to a settling tank. All transfers of grape must and juice are attained with the use of gravity, except where the juice is pressed off the skins and until final blending of the wine before bottling. We believe the mechanical action of a pump at this stage may damage the structure and integrity of the wine. The juice is then left to settle clear for 72 hours at 2°C. The clear juice is then racked and a 16 to 20 day fermentation is induced, then maintained at a temperature of about 12°C until the wine is dry. 7% of the blend includes Semillon that has been fermented by natural yeasts and matured for 3 months in new Burgundy oak barriques (228 litre barrels). Bâtonnage (lees stirring) is fortnightly applied to the wine during maturation.