

Ernie Els Big Easy [RED] 2011

The Big Easy is rich and emphatic in 2011 and yet, as the name suggests, still holds an amazingly easy silkiness on the palate. The dominant Shiraz offers complex notes of rosemary and cured meat whilst the Cabernet Sauvignon adds a beguiling structure and sweet cherry fruit core. A playful tempo is created by dashes of Grenache, Viognier, Mourvèdre and Cinsault giving a fynbos and spicy edge along with a fragrant, almost honeycomb-like finish.

variety : Shiraz | 61% Shiraz, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Grenache, 4% Cinsaut, 4% Mourvèdre, 4% Viognier

winery : Ernie Els Wines

winemaker : Louis Strydom

wine of origin : Stellenbosch

analysis : alc : 14.68 % vol rs : 3.7 g/l pH : 3.68 ta : 6.2 g/l

type : Red **style :** Dry **body :** Light **wooded**

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

Veritas Wine Awards 2013 - Gold

Top 100 SA Wine Challenge

Veritas Wine Awards 2012 - Bronze Medal

ageing : Delicious now, it will age well for 5 years or more.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

Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon was sourced from the Helderberg region within the Stellenbosch appellation. Grenache and Cinsaut were picked from rare, 40 year-old vines from Piekenierskloof on the West Coast. Mourvèdre and Viognier were delivered from neighbouring Stellenbosch vineyards. The diversity of the various sites shows beautiful balance on the palate.

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.

