

## Ernie Els Merlot 2010

The Ernie Els 2010 Merlot delivers a real statement; plush, proud and voluptuous, strewn with red and black fruits rather than earthy and green characters. Morello cherries, a hint of fynbos and shards of dark chocolate complete a complex and inviting wine where the dense fruit is balanced by freshness and purity. The 2010 is already smooth, suave and succulent in its youth with the etched tannins support enormous depth and length. The perfect balance and depth will allow at least medium term enjoyment.

**variety :** Merlot | 100% Merlot

**winery :** Ernie Els Wines

**winemaker :** Louis Strydom

**wine of origin :** Stellenbosch

**analysis :** alc : 14,5 % vol   rs : 2,9 g/l   pH : 3,6   ta : 6,3 g/l

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

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

Decanter World Wine Awards 2012 - Gold Medal

**ageing :** The perfect balance and depth will allow at least medium term enjoyment.br /

**in the vineyard :** The 2010 Vintage

What an intense year! It was extremely difficult to make predictions due to the constant fluctuations in weather conditions, with unrelenting winds prevailing almost throughout. Initially matters were quite advanced, with early bud burst, then cold weather in October and November delayed everything, and subsequently favourable conditions and the small size of the crop tended to move harvest dates forward. Production cost was high from the start and expenses per ton skyrocketed because of the decline in yield.

2009 growing season

Cool, overcast and rainy weather conditions during the induction period in October / November 2008 had an adverse effect on bunch initiation for the 2010 harvest and impacted on this year's crop. Although sufficient winter cold prevailed, the cool, wet spring caused uneven budding on Ernie Els. The season was characterised by unrelenting strong winds during October and November. The summer months were exceptionally dry and windy. Sunburn, wind and heat damage combined with downy mildew resulted in crop losses of up to 40% on certain blocks.

The harvest

The overall cool climate during the first part of ripening was beneficial for flavour retention. February and March experienced the usual sporadic heat waves. The heat wave at the beginning of March 2010 which lasted longer than a week will certainly go down in the annals. Due to the smaller crop most blocks could be picked at optimal ripeness. The decrease in volumes also meant that cellar space was often not a problem, and we could allow prolonged skin contact.

The wines

We at Ernie Els are more than satisfied with the quality of the grapes that were harvested. Grapes were healthy with good flavours and analyses. Bunches were generally looser than normal and berries smaller, with an excellent fruit to skin ratio resulting in intense colour in the red wines.

About the vineyard

The Merlot blend is constructed entirely of Stellenbosch appellation wines. We utilized some fruit from the Helderberg region for middle palate weight, colour and flavor intensity. Two Merlot clones were used namely MO.192 and MO.348.



**about the harvest:** The grapes were hand-picked in the cool of early morning.  
February / March 2009 - 34.7°Brix average sugar at harvest

**in the cellar :** Grape bunches were gently destalked with a Bucher de-stalker and lightly crushed. On the sorting table, all excess stalks and rotten berries were removed carefully by hand. 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.

Cooperage: Aged for 15 months - 300 litre French oak barrels (30% new).  
Production: 20 000 x 6 x 750ml cases