

Asara Vineyard Collection Petit Verdot 2009

Inky garnet in colour, the wine offers bright black fruit on the nose, with a meaty note, underpinned by liquorice and aromatic whiffs. Gentle mouth filling acidity on entry, supported by dense black fruit through the linear palate, finishing with lingering savouriness. The tannins are complex, and rounded with a pleasing gripiness. A complex, persistent, thought provoking wine, it drinks well now, but will benefit from up to 5 years in bottle, which will aid tighter integration.

variety : Petit Verdot | 100% Petit Verdot

winery : Asara Wine Estate and Hotel

winemaker : Francois Joubert

wine of origin : Stellenbosch

analysis : alc : 14.0 % vol rs : 2.2 g/l pH : 3.39 ta : 6.4 g/l

type : Red

pack : Bottle **size :** 750ml **closure :** Cork

in the vineyard : One of the classic Bordeaux varietals, Petit Verdot usually finds its way into a red blend, unless the fruit in a particular vintage shows great promise, specifically when the tannin structure is just right: soft, supple and rounded. At Asara, that happened in 2006, and again in 2009. A prolific bearer, at up to 20 tons/ha, Petit Verdot needs to be managed to obtain optimal yield of 8 to 9 tons/ha, rendering a wine that is neither too big, nor insipid. Fruit is knocked down three times during the growing season: at veraison, two weeks after veraison, and finally about two months later. This results in small berries and loose bunches, which make for greater purity and concentration of fruit, the perfect building blocks for a great Petit Verdot. Asara's Vineyard range stays true to vineyard of origin by means of minimal cellar handling. The property is located in the Polkadraai, whose primary vineyard influence is granite based soils and undulating hills.

The highest vineyard block on the farm at 200 m above sea level, it is a tiny 1.03ha in extent, planted on the only patch of Vilafontes soil on the property. One of the oldest soil types in the world at 750 000 to 1.5 million years old, it is impoverished, stripped of its inherent capacity, which encourages small vines, lower yields, and great concentration of fruit. The soil holds moisture well which means the vines are not stressed. The 14 year old vines are attuned to the site, a south west facing, well-drained slope with north-west south-east row orientation, enjoying both morning and afternoon sun. Viticulture is aimed at achieving full phenolic ripeness without sacrificing freshness and fruit purity, while keeping alcohol levels down.

about the harvest: The grapes are harvested in the cool of early morning into small lugs, for rapid transfer to cellar.

in the cellar : After cooling overnight, whole bunches are sorted then de-stemmed, and the juice is cold-soaked for six to seven days. The juice is inoculated with a carefully selected yeast strain, and the fermentation temperature is allowed to rise gradually, to aid soft tannin extraction. The temperature is then reduced for an extended cold ferment on skins with punch-downs only four times a day to avoid harsh tannin extraction. After six weeks, the juice is pressed off to 300 litre tight-grain Alliers barrels (only 10% new), malolactic fermentation is induced, after which the wine matures in barrel for three years. The wine is finally bottled a year before the anticipated release date.

