

## Ernie Els Merlot 2012

The medium bodied 2012 Merlot shows the sparkle of the vintage with a fresh acidity and delicate red fruits. Laced with ripe plums, morello cherry, shavings of milky chocolate and a hint of mint, it is dazzlingly complex and yet shows its pedigree of exceptional drinkability and class. Soft, chewy tannins balance the silky, oak-aged structure, whilst the palate eventually ends with whiffs of fine tobacco and earthy spice. Tantalising and delicious in its youth, the 2012 will age well for 5 years or more.

**variety :** Merlot | 100% Merlot

**winery :** Ernie Els Wines

**winemaker :** Louis Strydom

**wine of origin :** Stellenbosch

**analysis :** alc : 14.34 % vol   rs : 2.4 g/l   pH : 3.57   ta : 6.0 g/l

**type :** Red   **style :** Dry   **body :** Medium   **taste :** Fruity

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

**ageing :** Tantalising and delicious in its youth, the 2012 will age well for 5 years or more.

**in the vineyard :** The 2012 vintage

The 2012 harvest is emerging as a particularly good one, both in terms of quality and volume. Although it's still early days, we do foresee that this vintage has the potential to be of a very high standard. After fairly stable climatic conditions throughout the second semester of 2011, a cold and wet spring slowed down activity in the vineyards. We experienced warm weather in late December which led to some vigorous foliage growth. The bunch counts revealed an above average figure so "green harvesting" was needed in January. (Green harvesting is the removal of immature grape bunches for the purpose of decreasing yield and thus maintaining intensity on the remaining fruit.) It's particularly pleasing to report that there was no apparent disease in the vineyards. Moderate to warm temperatures from the second half of February were prevalent as expected, but cool conditions throughout March slowed the ripening of the vines and assisted in improving phenolic ripeness of the grapes. There were some early rains during April but luckily 95% of the crop had already been harvested by this stage. In general, there is much excitement about the 2012 vintage, a specific characteristic being optimal ripeness levels achieved at lower sugars, thus in-turn resulting in lower alcohol levels.

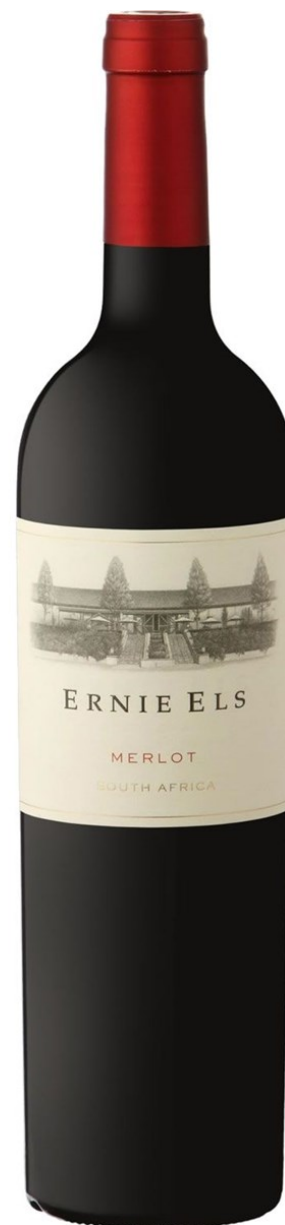
**About the vineyard**

The Merlot vineyards grow on the warm north-facing slopes of the Helderberg region within the Stellenbosch appellation. The Hutton Clovelly soils contain a high gravel content which offers rich middle palate weight giving this wine exceptional depth and fruit purity. With an altitude of approximately 250 metres above sea level together with the cooling influence of the Atlantic Ocean just 15 kilometres away, this extends the ripening period by up to 3 weeks resulting in lovely phenolic ripeness. Grapes from the Devon Valley region were also utilised and ultimately two clones of Merlot (MO.192 and MO.348) were paired to create the final blend.

**about the harvest:** The grapes were hand-picked in the cool of early morning. On the sorting table, all excess stalks and inferior berries were carefully removed.

Dates: March & April, 2012. 25.5° 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.

Cooperage: Aged for 14 months – 300 litre French Oak barrels (20% new)  
Production: 2,216 x 6 x 750ml cases  
Sustainability Initiative: I.P.W. (Integrated Production of Wine) Certified