

Ernie Els Signature 2011

Perhaps the most serious Ernie Els Signature yet, the 2011 is a brooding, powerful Bordeaux-style blend produced from prime vineyards in the Helderberg appellation of Stellenbosch. Predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, the purple edge and pitch black core immediately points to its unwavering nature and shadowing depth. Time in the glass uncovers notes of candied orange, cardamom, clove and dark olives, leading to an intense palate that shines with graphite and cassis. It has a towering structure built on a foundation of crunchy tannins and pure fruit, all solidified by fine yet spicy oak. Long and rewarding, the tail finally ends with a touch of salted liquorice. This is best cellared for 5 to 10 years as the heady tannins integrate further.

variety : Cabernet Sauvignon | 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot, 5% Malbec, 5% Cabernet Franc

winery : Ernie Els Wines

winemaker : Louis Strydom

wine of origin : Stellenbosch

analysis : alc : 14.74 % vol rs : 2.9 g/l pH : 3.53 ta : 5.9 g/l

type : Red **style :** Dry **body :** Full **taste :** Fruity **wooded**

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

2014 International Wine and Spirit Competition - Silver

ageing : This is best cellared for 5 to 10 years as the heady tannins integrate further.

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

All fruit was sourced from the Ernie Els Wines property whose 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. Each variety is separately managed to create unique and varied flavour profiles for this classic, 'Medoc-style', Bordeaux blend. 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.

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, 2011. 25.2° Brix average sugar at harvest

in the cellar : 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 20 months - 300 litre French Oak barrels (70% new)

Production: 2 139 x 6 x 750ml cases