

Alto Estate 1999

Ruby colour with a slightly paler rim. Inviting crushed berry fruit with mulberry, the signature note, backed by cinnamon and cloves of good, small oak. The palate is in complete harmony: The warm fruit, fleshy and ripe, has juicy, mouthwatering berry flavours. Beautifully balanced, so it appears deceptively easy to drink, until the tannins come back on the finish with an attractively dry closure. A wine with elegant claret intensity.

Schalk van der Westhuizen, the new winemaker at Alto, recommends partnering the 1999 vintage with simply cooked, top quality red meat: fillet with a few wild mushrooms on the side, and kudu or springbuck steak with crushed pink peppercorns. It is also delightful with grilled lamb chops and informal dishes like hamburger patties and beef sausages. Serve at 16–18°C.

variety : Cabernet Sauvignon | 61% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc

winery : Alto Estate

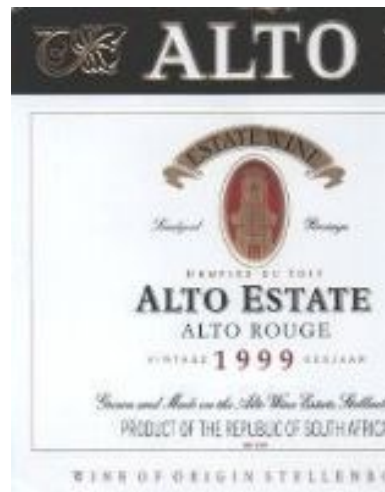
winemaker : Schalk van der Westhuizen

wine of origin : Coastal

analysis : alc : 13.13 % vol rs : 2.9 g/l pH : 3.58 ta : 6.0 g/l

type : Red **style :** Dry **wooded**

pack : Bottle **closure :** Cork



ageing : For decades now, consumers have been impressed by Alto's evidence of ageability. How will the 1999 perform? Judging from previous vintages (with the "middle-flight" 1995 as example), the consensus is that although the Alto Estate, scheduled for release in 2002, is ready for the impatient, but it will, without a doubt, enjoy the improved integration and the emergence of more complex, tertiary flavours with further bottle-ageing.

in the vineyard : All three grape varieties, grafted onto Richter 99 and Richter 110 rootstocks, are trellised onto four-wire fences and are grown in Hutton and Glenrosa soils. The vineyards face north, north-west and north-east, situated against the slopes of the Helderberg Mountain at 150 to 360 metres above sea level.

The Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot vines are both 17 years old, while the Cabernet Franc, planted 12 years ago, is the youngest of the three.

After the very hot and dry Cape vintages which started in 1998, some irrigation has recently been introduced on the estate where dryland conditions were the order of the day in the past. During the growing season prior to the 99 vintage, the estate only received an average of 500mm rain, for example.

The Merlot yielded 7 tonnes per hectare, but the Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc were even lower, at 5 tonnes and 4 tonnes respectively.

about the harvest: The three varieties which ripened at different times, were all hand-picked and brought to the cellar at an average Balling of 23 to 23.5 degrees.

in the cellar : Fermentation on the skins, in stainless-steel tanks (using the N96 yeast strain) at 28°C, lasted 7 days. After malolactic fermentation, the components were matured in first- (25%), second- (35%) and third-fill (40%) barriques. Only French oak was chosen for the wooding. The assemblage was completed shortly before the wine was bottled. As is customary, the Alto Estate is first bottle-matured before its release – a practice that has become rather unique as most producers nowadays seek as quick a turnover as possible by not stocking older wines. At Alto, however, matured wines will always be on offer.

Alto Estate

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