

Ernie Els Merlot 2016

The 2016 Merlot is medium in body and textbook in character. Classically built, it offers a mélange of stewed fruit, chocolate and spice from the nose through to the exotic palate. Notes of dry earth and hints of mint offer complexity, while classy oak notes intertwine with masses of ripe, succulent fruit. A fresh acidity nicely balances the ripe berries and savoury stance, while gutsy tannins offer some good tension and depth. The finish is powerfully textured and dry, offering a platform for 5-8 years cellaring.

variety : Merlot | 100% Merlot

winery : Ernie Els Wines

winemaker : Louis Strydom

wine of origin : Stellenbosch

analysis : alc : 14.88 % vol rs : 3.3 g/l pH : 3.50 ta : 5.9 g/l

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

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

ageing : Offering a platform for 5-8 years cellaring.

in the vineyard : THE 2016 VINTAGE

Challenging conditions led to a reduced wine grape crop for South African producers in 2016, but grapes were healthy and concentrated flavours promise good wines. The weather was very warm, especially from the end of October towards the end of January, which restricted the growth and constituted lower bunch masses and smaller berries. However, the dry conditions led to the vineyards and grapes being very healthy overall. Smaller berries led to more concentrated colour and flavour on the positive side and good wines are expected from the 2016 harvest. Good reserves were accumulated during the post-harvest period (April and May), after which leaf fall occurred mostly at the right time. The winter started off late in most of the regions but the weather conditions were cold enough to break dormancy. Spring came on time and the weather conditions were ideal which led to good, even bud burst. The harvest period started a week early due to the warmer weather and it ended about two weeks earlier. The wines from the 2016 vintage appear astoundingly good, with great structure and good flavours.

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

about the harvest: March & April, 2016. 24.5° Brix average sugar at harvest. The grapes are hand-picked in the cool of early morning.

in the cellar : Whole berries are fermented in open top tanks and barrels with intermittent pump-overs and punch downs to ensure a balance between flavor, colour and tannin extraction from the skins. All ferments are meticulously monitored during fermentation to ensure that all the natural aromas and flavours are preserved and highlighted as required. After primary fermentation some tanks and barrel will undergo extended maceration as required. Each variety is matured separately (micro-vinified) in oak barrels before blending and eventual bottling.

