

Alto Estate 1998

Vintage after vintage, the Alto wines reveal a praiseworthy continuity of character. The 1998 can be immediately identified as the famous Alto blend. Bright brick-red with a carmine rim. Aniseed, vanilla and fennel on the nose, with some warm, riper plum notes. The oak is very much in the background. Red fruit flavours - cherries and fresh plums - continue on the palate, supported by soft tannins. Medium-bodied, with an extremely nice touch of bottle maturity. Lovely, warm and sweet-tempered fruit. Drink with baby beef, beef olives, casserole beef with potatoes and carrots, roast duck, chicken dishes, creamy sauce pastas, and firm-fleshed fish. The Alto Estate is always the ideal aperitif. Enjoy, very slightly chilled, on its own.

variety : Merlot | 47% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Shiraz, 12% Cabernet Franc

winery : Alto Estate

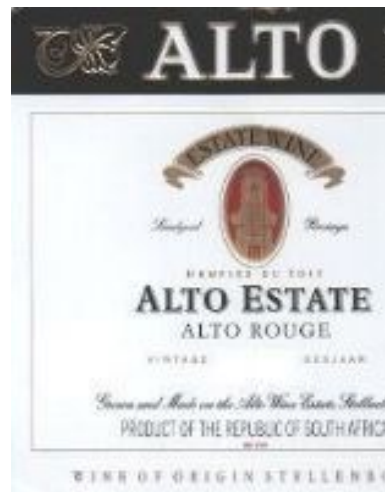
winemaker : Schalk van der Westhuizen

wine of origin : Coastal

analysis : alc : 13.67 % vol rs : 2.9 g/l pH : 3.50 ta : 5.7 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 1998 perform? Judging from previous vintages (with the "middle-flight" 1995 as example), the consensus is that although the Alto Estate is perfectly drinkable already, it will, without a doubt, enjoy the improved integration and the emergence of more complex, tertiary flavours with some bottle age.

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

The shiraz vines were planted 23 years ago, producing highly-concentrated grapes which add the firmness and the intriguing spiciness to the other grape varieties in the Alto blend. The merlot and cabernet sauvignon are both 16 years old, while the 12-year-old cabernet franc is the youngest vineyard of the four.

After the very hot and dry Cape vintages which started in 1998, some irrigation has been introduced at Alto where dryland conditions were the order of the day in the past. During the growing season prior to the 98 vintage, the estate only received 440 mm rain, for example. The low yields of 6-8 tonnes per hectare, however, remained unchanged.

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

in the cellar : Fermentation in stainless-steel tanks (using the N96 yeast strain) at 28 degrees Celsius, lasted 7 days. After malolactic fermentation, the components were matured for 18 months in first- (25%), second- (50%) and third-fill (25%) barriques. Only French oak was chosen for the wooding.

After an egg-white fining and the assemblage, the wine was ready to be bottled in April 2000. 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. Matured wines are almost never available from South African producers.

Alto Estate

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