

Alto Estate 2000

Colour: Clear, bright ruby red with a slightly paler rim.

Bouquet: A lovely, welcoming nose of wild berries and ripe plums, with mulberry as the signature note, backed by crushed herbs with attractive, dusty touches and an overlay of vanilla-scented oak.

Taste: The palate is in complete harmony, with juicy berry quality; warm and rich. 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.

variety : Merlot | 61% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Shiraz

winery : Alto Estate

winemaker : Schalk van der Westhuizen

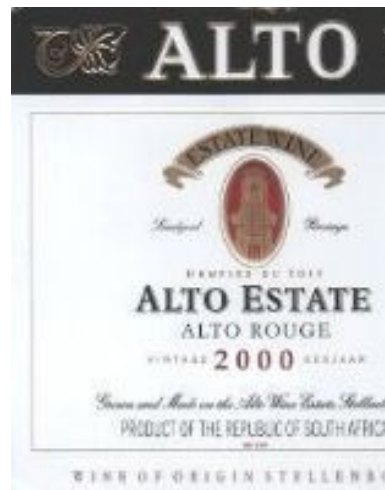
wine of origin : Coastal

analysis : alc : 13.66 % vol rs : 2.4 g/l pH : 3.42 ta : 5.4 g/l va : 0.80 g/l so2 : 80 mg/l fso2 : 36 mg/l

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

pack : Bottle

Veritas 2003 - Silver



ageing : For decades now, consumers have been impressed by Alto's evidence of ageability. How will the 2000 perform? Judging from previous vintages (with the "middle-flight" 1995 as example), the consensus is that although the 2000 Alto Estate, scheduled for release in 2003, 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.

PARTNERSHIP WITH FOOD

Serve the 2000 Alto Estate at 16 – 18°C with main courses: with grilled or roasted red meats like a leg of lamb (but go slow on the garlick), rare roast beef, entrecôte or beef fillet with a few wild mushrooms on the side, and kudu or springbuck steak (or any other venison) with crushed pink peppercorns. Do not over-marinate the venison though, as the strong flavours of allspice, cloves and bayleaves could interfere with the wine.

The wine will go well with meat dishes prepared with rosemary and thyme, as long as these flavours are not too dominating. Also try the Alto Estate with Irish Stew, Gulash, roasted duck (but not with a fruit stuffing) and quail.

Reduced sauces that are concentrated will go well, but take care if a sauce has been much thickened with flour, or prepared with cream as one of its ingredients.

Side dishes like potatoes are ideal, but also red cabbage, Chinese cabbage, snow peas and carrots. Mushrooms in every shape and form like the Alto Estate very much indeed.

If you want to serve this wine with cheese, avoid all matured, hard, yellow and pungent cheeses. Try a camembert instead.

in the vineyard : Alto's signature blend is never blended according to formula, but only according to the best quality wines the farm has to offer: usually varying percentages of merlot, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and shiraz – the four grape varieties which are cultivated at Alto. Unlike the previous 1999 vintage, the Alto Estate 2000 again contains shiraz (as tradition would have it) and the cabernet sauvignon proportion is much smaller than its previous 61%. This vintage is, in fact, Merlot-driven as so often in the past:

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 with a clay subsoil. The vineyards, situated against slopes which are 50 to 360 metres above sea level, face north and north-east.

The merlot blocks are 18 years old. Some of the cabernet vines were more recently planted so that they range between 6 and 18 years. After 13 years on Alto, the shiraz vines are well established.

Irrigation has recently been introduced on the estate where dryland conditions were the order of the day in the past. However, not all three varieties were irrigated during the growing season: the cabernet grapes were still produced under dryland conditions while only a part of the merlot has been watered by an overhead sprinkler. The estate received an average of 500 mm rain prior to the 2000 vintage.

The merlot yielded between 5 and 7 tonnes per hectare, the cabernet sauvignon a bit less (between 4 and 5), while the shiraz produced an all-time low of between 2 and 4.

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 24 degrees.

in the cellar : Fermentation on the skins, in closed stainless-steel tanks (using the N96 yeast strain) at 26 - 28 degrees Celsius, lasted 7 days. During this time, the winemaker pumped the fermenting mash over four times per day. The wines were left on their lees for two months. After malolactic fermentation, the components were matured in first- second- and third-fill barriques for 24 months. Mostly French oak was chosen for the wooding, but 2% American oak has been judiciously included.

The assemblage was completed shortly before the wine was bottled in August 2002. As is customary, the Alto Estate has first been 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

Stellenbosch

021 881 3884

www.alto.co.za