

2020 Klein River Syrah

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 100% Syrah made from clone SH1.

WINE OF ORIGIN: Klein River, Western Cape, South Africa.

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 3,345 tons from 2 vineyard blocks of Syrah - 1 trellised and 1 bush vine.

OVERVIEW: During the year, I have the opportunity to visit a number of areas outside of Elgin. Occasionally, I come across something so fascinating that it deserves a closer look. Twenty years ago, the first Syrah vines were planted in what is now one of the smallest wine wards in South Africa, Klein River. Traditionally used for sheep and wheat, 3 ha of virgin shale-derived Glenrosa soil was set aside for Syrah. These soils are normally the hallmark of warmer areas, but these vines nestle up against the Klein River Mountain range. The nearby Akkedis Valley provides a portal through which the cool sea breezes from the nearby Walker Bay penetrate, creating a mild meso-climate in summer. Wines made from these vines have consistently won acclaim and awards, so I did not think twice when the opportunity to make wine from these 20-year-old vines came my way. The GPS Series is a testament to these special places and celebrates them.

VINTAGE: Hand-Picking Dates: 2nd and 4th March 2020.

Brix at Harvest: 21.8 to 23.

SEASON: In July and August 2019, mild conditions led to bud burst up to 14 days earlier in some blocks. As November turned to December, there were constant blustery conditions, with steady drizzle, showers, and cool weather. In January, the Cape South Coast region received more than 140 mm of rain over two days. The rain certainly helped replenish soil reserves, and runoff water contributed to adequate irrigation water reserves. High soil moisture and regular light rain showers - coupled with relatively cool day and night temperatures during January and February - delayed the ripening process significantly, despite the initially expected earlier harvest dates.

In summary, 2020 produced good sugar and good acidity with intense flavour profiles. The natural fermentation was among the best I have experienced.

WINEMAKING: Grapes were handpicked under autumnal skies into small lug baskets and then manually sorted on a conveyor before the stems were removed. The destemmed berries fell onto a vibrating table in order to remove jacks and substandard berries before dropping uncrushed into a small 500kg conical hopper and being forklifted into open-topped fermenters. The grapes underwent a 3-day maceration before spontaneous fermentation began. A gentle pigeage program was charted and the grapes remained on skins for 20 days. The wine was then racked to barrel under gravity and the remaining pomace basket-pressed. Malolactic then proceeded in barrel followed by a light sulphuring and 16-month maturation. No finings were necessary, and the wine was simply racked and bottled unfiltered.

BARREL SELECTION: A small number of artisanal coopers were selected from Burgundy and Rhone, with only French oak chosen. Importantly, this wine was microvinified as a separate batch. Over the years we have developed an algorithm to ascertain which coopers work best and how many new and used barrels are utilised. In 2020 33% was new oak; 89% using 500 litre barrels and 11% in breathable eggs.

ALCOHOL: 13.43% | **RS:** 2.9 g/l | **TA:** 6.5 g/l | **pH:** 3.37

TASTING PROFILE: Delicate in aroma with raspberry, redcurrant, light Chinese Five spice, ground green peppercorns, and a smear of vanilla slowly coaxed out of the glass. A fresh, vibrant entry, with pockets of flavours all adding complexity to the mid-palate and extended finish. A dense, medium-bodied, elegant wine, the tannins are compact and fine-grained.



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