

GSM 2019

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 51% Grenache; 40% Syrah; 9% Mourvèdre

WINE OF ORIGIN: Western Cape (but all sourced from the Swartland region)

HISTORY: In 2014, The Smuggler's Boot wines were first released. The name derives from the time of trade embargoes in South Africa when growers & winemakers smuggled grapevine material into the country by hiding the cuttings in Wellington boots. The Smuggler's Boot range celebrates that ingenuity.

SEASON: Post-harvest 2018, the Swartland was warm, and the soils were arid – adverse conditions for root growth. Fortunately, April had sufficient rain to enable cover crops to be sown. May and June were also reasonably wet and notably cold, and water reserves started to build up nicely in early winter. Rainfall was still below average but better than the previous three years, and warmer winter temperatures lead to earlier budburst. September brought far more unpredictable weather with plenty of cold fronts that led to a deceleration of shoot growth. October was pleasant and sunny but strong winds during the flowering period led to poor berry set in the majority of the cultivars which lowered eventual production. Going into summer, December and January were very moderate in temperature and a little bit of rain in mid-December did cause some minor mildew but nothing serious. The first heatwave only hit in February, and we started picking Syrah in mid-February, and the Mourvèdre and Grenache towards the end of the month. Thankfully, despite the uneven ripeness, yields were much better than the meagre returns in 2018 (although still under average) especially the Syrah. What set 2019 apart was that the canopies during the harvesting season were in much better shape than the preceding 3 years and the grapes in remarkably healthy conditions. The red grapes had good acidity, and the colour was also deep.

WINEMAKING: When putting this wine together, Richard was interested in sourcing fruit from areas that, although warm, get coolish nights to produce a wine that has fullness and structure but has that elegant perfumed overlay with some freshness of acidity. At the same time, he looked at areas that can have a savoury nuance which adds intrigue. The result is a blend sourced from the famous Paardeberg in the Swartland, an area receiving extensive critical acclaim. Once in the cellar, the main issue was to capture these elements and not try any winemaking tricks. To this end, the wine is essentially unwooded, and the softness is achieved through using breathable plastic eggs and in the future, cubs! The little amount of wood used is much older and thus able to imbue complexity without spicy oak.

ALCOHOL: 13.73% **TOTAL PRODUCTION:** 6480 bottles

TASTING PROFILE: The 2019 GSM has almost equal parts Grenache and Syrah with the Mourvèdre playing a supportive role. Bright ruby crimson, this unwooded GSM blend has lifted aromas of violets, cranberry and Bing cherry. Accessible to drink right now, there is a soft, silky texture upon entry, delicate structure, with that typical raspberry coulis sprinkled with the pepper of Grenache but also the fleshy nature of Syrah and Mourvèdre giving the wine more breadth and depth of flavour. Well balanced, there are fine, pillow-soft tannins with a cleansing and refreshing finish.

FOOD PAIRING: Richard's suggestions include Roast leg of lamb; Braised lamb shanks with gremolata and polenta; Moroccan tagine, spicy stews or casseroles or even a mild Lamb korma (not overly creamy though – Richard prefers Rogan Josh better); rosemary and peppercorn spiced lamb chops. Steak with mushroom sauce, chasseur or pepper sauce (all without cream) works a treat or some of those fabulous sausage dishes such as Cumberland-esque spicy ones or classic British toad-in-the-hole; Calf's liver with bacon, caramelised onions and sherry; BBQ meats. For those with a decent butcher, game birds like pheasant work well. On the cheese front, Jarlsberg; Cacio di Bosco; Chèvre or a decent aged Gouda cheese (again not too soft). Even French onion soup is a winner.

