



— White Lady Chardonnay 2015 —

History

Block 17 was planted in 1990 by the late Stan Ratcliffe (hence in its 25th year of production now) and is three hectares in size, while block 18 was planted in 1991 (in its 24th year of production) and is 2.32 hectares in size.

Chardonnay was not widely planted in 1990 but Stan Ratcliffe, the patriarch of Warwick had his heart set on the Burgundian varietal and the Hutton soils of these particular blocks were ideally suited. Hutton soil is a type of decomposed granite and is very well drained which the rootstock Richter 110 needed. "We need a white wine that goes well with food!" were his words. Stan, ever the gourmet, felt that the South African Chenin Blancs being produced at the time were not necessarily food wines. "If the French can do it - so can we."

Both blocks are the same rootstock and clones. Block 17 and 18 are both Richter 110 rootstock which is a rootstock that is suited to dry-land farming (these two vineyards are unirrigated), and this rootstock was first developed in France by Franz Richter in 1889.

It is a combination of *Vitis Berlandieri* and *Vitis Rupestris* and was first imported into South Africa in 1927. Richter 110 is particularly well suited to the soils of the Simonsberg with Hutton soil being ideal

These two Chardonnay blocks have different aspects with block 17 facing SSW, therefore being a slightly cooler slope and block 18 facing NW being a warmer slope.

Vintage

The 2015 growing season was similar to the 2014 season, good reserves were accumulated during the post-harvest period in April and May, after which leaf-fall generally occurred at the right time.

There was a cold wet winter which led to the accumulation of sufficient cold units for the full breaking of dormancy - which contributed to even bud break. There was 467mm of rain recorded during the period June to August and warm weather in August resulted in early bud break.

A warm, dry and windy summer followed keeping vineyard growth under control and accelerating ripening by about two weeks. The Chardonnay budded between 23 and 29 August with good even bud break with strong shoot growth.

Flowering took place between 7 October and 20 October with an average of 13 days from start to full bloom.

The grapes were harvested on the 12th and 13th of February 2015, from 6am to 11am to allow the grapes to be brought into the winery while still cool and retaining their aromatics.

Winemaking

The parcels are handpicked in the early morning and crushed and destemmed without sulphur or any enzyme. Only free run and soft press juice is used. A very small amount of sulfur is added in the tanks once pressing is done. The juice is cold settled for two days and then racked with a small amount of sediment. The slightly turbid juice is transferred to 228L French oak barrels for wild yeast fermentation. The fermentation takes 6 months to complete in barrel and Malolactic fermentation is inhibited. The fermentation slows down in the winter months and completes in the Spring time. During the later stages of fermentation the barrels are battonaged on a bi-weekly basis. After fermentation the barrels are sulphured and rolled on a weekly basis to stir up the lees. A light fining and filtration is done just before bottling

Barrel selection

A selection of tight grain 228 liter French oak barrel are used for fermentation and ageing. Burgundian light toast barrels are used to give a mineral element to the wine while medium toast Allier barrels are used to accentuate the citrus aromas in the wine. The majority of the barrels come from the Demptos Cooperage. Every year a few barrels from other cooperages are trialed to find the ultimate wood portfolio for this wine.

Tasting profile

If you like classy oaked Chardonnay you'll be delighted by this wine. The colour is crystal clear and icicle sharp with a pale lemon centre and citrine rim. The nose is evocative with freshly pressed limes with some full ripe pear and drizzled honey, all wrapped around a citrus peel and vanilla core. The palate shows the grape's ability to do its magic and produce a fabulous combination of aroma, texture and flavour that is supremely competent when matching to food. The White Lady has a succulent peach mid-palate which is followed by the refreshing acidity of a freshly peeled orange.

Ageing potential

The Warwick White Lady can be drunk young if you like the primary flavours of fresh lime and orange zest. With time, the flavours will develop to crème brûlée, praline and toasted Macadamia nuts. Optimal ageing is four to five years but the wine will last happily in a cellar for well over ten years.

Food match

Coronation chicken on a hot summer's day or goat's cheese soufflé with a fresh salad. This Chardonnay is very versatile when it comes to food. Try it with a ripe Camembert, or roasted chicken with fresh truffles. Beef carpaccio or a fresh game-fish cooked over the coals with a squeeze of lemon and a dollop of homemade mayonnaise.

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