

## 2018 Klein River Syrah

RANGE: GPS Series

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 100% Syrah made from clone SH1.

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

TOTAL VINEYARD PRODUCTION: 3.345 tons from a 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 testament to these special places and celebrates them.

VINTAGE: Hand-Picking Dates: 1st and 5th March 2018 Brix at Harvest: 21.4 & 23.7

SEASON: The 2017 winter experienced an earlier leaf fall in the post-harvest period due to a shortage of irrigation water. The dry soils made it challenging to seed and grow a cover crop. The initial winter was reasonably warm, but by mid-May into June and July the temperatures dropped dramatically, and there was an increase in the year's cold units helping with winter dormancy. The stand out challenge though was the lack of rainfall. Only 80% of the expected winter rainfall fell, and it was recorded as the driest winter on record. Spring warmed up quickly, and budburst was fast and even. However, the weather did fluctuate and thus shoot growth varied. Flowering at the end of October was slightly affected by above-average rainfall though the Syrah was only marginally affected. What was peculiar about this precipitation is that it was accompanied by high temperatures and thunder in the middle of the growing season. This led to fast shoot growth and in the cellar to high nitrogen levels that helped natural fermentation. Thus a lot of extra canopy management was required. During the ripening period, the night temperatures were cooler than average, giving good colour and flavour development. Harvest also was surprisingly late as the maturation was delayed by the colder weather. Warmer February temperatures allowed for ripeness to speed up and the Syrah was picked in early March.

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 micro vinified 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 2018 45% was new oak; 89% using 500 litre barrels and 11% in breathable eggs.

ALCOHOL: 13.4%

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 3167 bottles were produced.

TASTING PROFILE: Restrained, yet with intent and subtle power, this vineyard exhibits high levels of rotundone producing piercing black pepper, powdery tannins complete with rich textures and a prodigious breadth of black-orientated fruit. The 2018 is deep magenta red, the nose evokes garrigue elements: wild lavender, citrus, and crushed black peppercorns. Enchantingly supple and sinuous palate with succulent, mouth-watering acidity the wine is already integrated with a delicate balance of bitter chocolate, powdery tannins, and juicy fruit: cinnamon, black raspberry, Chinese 5 spice, orange peel and hung game. Excellent long-lasting finish, this already polished wine promises much for the future.



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