

Pinot Noir 2020

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 100% Pinot Noir made from French clones PN777 and PNI15

WINE OF ORIGIN: Western Cape, South Africa

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.

VINTAGE: Hand-Picking Dates: 06th– 25th February 2020
Brix at Harvest: 22.4 – 24.6

SEASON: 2020 finally saw the back of the 4-5 year drought as dams filled to acceptable levels. Whilst the winter was cool it was just below average but enough to give the Pinot Noir vines some proper dormancy. The rainfall was just above average enabling proper accumulation of nutrient reserves. We had milder weather at the beginning of August that led to early budburst yet milder weather into spring meant flowering proceeded a little later. Wind was a bit of a problem reducing the amount of fertilisation, so bunch sizes were destined to be smaller – no bad thing for quality. Summer was blustery and drizzly leading to better vegetative growth but more challenges for downy mildew pressure especially on the young bunches and leaves. This meant extra canopy management was required to open up the canopy. In early January we experienced a sizeable down-pour in Elgin of 90mm whilst our other blocks further east had 140-150mm. Whilst this rain helped replenish soil reserves further it also mitigated the need for any irrigation during the season. The summer rain saw a considerable slowdown of ripening leading to a potentially later harvest. The net result has been a fabulous long hang time from earlier than normal budbreak to later than expected harvesting. The flavour concentration is phenomenal and some of the best we have ever experienced. In addition, the Pinot Noir shows better colour and tannins than in 2019, with an exquisite flavour spectrum and extraction.

WINEMAKING: Handpicked grapes were first bunch sorted on a conveyor before the stems were removed and the destemmed berries sorted to remove jacks and substandard berries. After a 3-day maceration in open-topped fermenters, the uncrushed grapes began a spontaneous fermentation. A gentle delastage program was charted and the grapes remained on skins for 10-12 days. The free-run wine was racked to a combination of 50% used French oak barrels and 50% breathable plastic eggs with the remaining pomace basket-pressed. Malolactic then proceeded followed by a light sulphuring after which the wine was racked off Malolactic lees and returned to cleaned barrels for an 11-month maturation. No fining was necessary and the wine was simply racked and lightly filtered prior to bottling.

ALCOHOL: 13.68% **TOTAL PRODUCTION:** 2670 bottles

TASTING PROFILE: Light crimson to orange red. There are delicate aromas of strawberry, warm choux buns, raspberry jelly powder and blackberry coulis. A very attractive entry with a soft succulent texture, deft acidity and an extended finish. There is a presence in the mouth that has a lightness of touch; a very pure, focussed wine with a real depth of flavour. The tannins are gentle adding a soft underbelly, and the flavours unfold to yield sliced strawberries on toast, blackberry and oak spice. A well-balanced wine, the 2020 has the structure to age for a further 4-6 years.

FOOD PAIRING: Richard's personal suggestions for dishes include charcuterie, its salt and fat being complemented by the delicate spicy notes and fruit; pork loin with honey, pepper, and lemon-zest glaze; carpaccio; duck cassoulet; oven-roasted monkfish with garlic mashed potatoes; seared tuna; wild mushroom risotto; a simple beet salad with some hazelnuts and ricotta cheese; a slice of Brie or Gorgonzola dolce.

