

WATERKLOOF

SAUVIGNON BLANC 2019



IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT THE VINEYARDS

Waterkloof Sauvignon Blanc was born on the southwest facing, low-yielding and windswept slopes of the Schapenberg (overlooking False Bay). Here the blustery southeaster (and sometimes the northwest wind as well) churns up the vineyards with regularity. This not only allows for a very low yield, but the flavours intensify to a flinty minerality.

We use organic and biodynamic winemaking methods and adhere to Old World, sustainable practices in our vineyards to ensure that the vines are nourished and in balance. Our soils are free of chemicals and are kept healthy by using plant extracts, fungi and bacteria from our own organic compost.

When you drive through the entrance at Waterkloof you are welcomed by working horses, angora goats, sheep, chickens and pigs. These animals form an integrated part of Waterkloof's philosophy to always use natural alternatives to feed our soil and to work the land.

The single-vineyard block which we use, is approximately five kilometers from the sea and is planted at a height of between 270 and 300 metres above sea level. The soils are of sandstone origin with medium-sized stones, helping with drainage and moisture retention. The vines are 23 years old. Production was approximately 3 tons/ha.

A GENTLE HAND

We follow a 'less is more', minimum intervention winemaking philosophy for all our wines and the grapes are tasted at regular intervals to determine optimal ripeness and flavour development.

We pick our grapes early in the morning when they are still cool, which helps to preserve the flavours. Extracting juice from the grape skins is achieved through gentle whole-bunch basket pressing. This is the most delicate way to extract the juice. After settling at a cool temperature for 24 hours, the juice is racked to the fermentation vessels. We rely only on naturally present, wild yeasts to start and complete the fermentation process.

All of the juice was fermented in older 600-liter barrels. After a very slow fermentation process of approximately 6 months, followed by an extra month on the primary lees, the wine was racked off in preparation for bottling. An extended alcoholic fermentation ensures that the juice is continuously in contact with the gross lees, adding more complexity and weight to the palate.

In keeping with our philosophy of minimum intervention, Waterkloof Sauvignon Blanc was not protein stabilized and only a coarse filtration was allowed prior to bottling. It may form tartrate crystals if left under cold conditions for a prolonged time. This has no negative effect on the quality or taste of our flagship wine; the wine can simply be decanted if any appear.

AND A FEW PRAYERS TO MOTHER NATURE: THE 2018/2019 GROWING SEASON

The current harvest is determined by the conditions of the previous years. With this taken into account, we could see that all of our hard work in 2018 certainly paid off in this year's harvest. The leaves were still green for more than a month after picking the grapes. We welcomed a bit of rain just after the 2018 harvest, which also helped the vine to build up some much-needed reserves.

The 2018 winter was cold and the vines could go into proper dormancy. During this time, we worked hard to build up the nutrients required in the vineyard for the summer growing period. At Waterkloof we are always tweaking the processes. One example, of many, is the deep bed system, where we put plant cuttings and manure into an area that used to be aerated by chickens scratching around. This time round, the chickens were substituted by three beautiful little pigs to dig channels into the compost to turn it. This mixture was especially beneficial during the drought, as it is a rich source of carbon that improves the water retention ability of the soils.

We experienced an even budburst during a cool spring but had a lot of wind during flowering which led to uneven berry set on some of the blocks. To help the vine ripen properly, we only kept the more developed bunches on the vine.

The summer growing season was fairly cool, except for a few warmer days in October. We were also very happy to welcome some rain in January, which accompanied by the wind, led to the soil receiving good moisture without having humidity build-up on the grapes that could cause rot.

The 2019 harvest commenced the last week of January but went into full swing from the first week of February. We picked our last grapes at the end of March. On the younger blocks, the yield was down by about 10%, but the older blocks produced more or less the same.

The whites showed a lot of concentration and vibrant acidity. With the reds, we had lovely small berries with thick skins. During processing, we once again worked gently to avoid over-extracting and let Mother Nature takes her course with our natural ferments.

TASTING NOTES FROM THE GLASS OF NADIA BARNARD

The Waterkloof Sauvignon Blanc is a wine which I enjoy drinking with seafood dishes like crayfish or crab. I look forward to seeing it develop in the bottle over the next 10 years as it's a wine that will age well because of the fresh acid and in the way that it was made- from low cropped vines to whole-bunch press and natural fermentation in barrel.

For the aromatics the wine shows minerality, hints of lime and also gooseberries. The acidity is well balanced by the roundness on the mouthfeel and contributes to the extra length.

THE NUMBERS (7200 bottles produced)

Alc 14 %
RS 3.9
TA 7.3
VA 0.7
pH 3.01