

# MERLOT



*Wine critics and snobs can be as rude as they like about Merlot but the variety remains one of the world's favourites and the go-to wine for beginners and all lovers of soft, juicy fruit. It doesn't actually have a great track record in SA to date but increased fussiness about where its planted, how its grown and how it's made into wine is making huge improvements and today's Merlots combine fruity juiciness with a supply and supportive structure and great mouthfeel. Modern Merlot – what's not to love?*

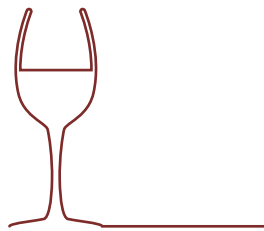
## WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Merlot is almost too flexible for its own good, growing quite happily on a wide range of soils and in a wide range of climates in SA. In the past, it has been allowed to gather too much sugar and become over-ripe and jammy so focus nowadays is more on cool climates, with Durbanville in particular being touted as a great region for Merlot. Newer areas such as Elim are proving to be of interest and it also thrives alongside all its Bordeaux compatriots in the varied micro-climates of Stellenbosch and its surrounds.

### OPTIMAL SERVING TEMPERATURE:

15-20°C

\* according to wine.co.za



## WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

Merlot is quite a big grape when compared to Cabernet Sauvignon which means that it has a much lower grapeskin to juice ratio. This gives Merlot wines a bit less colour and tannin and a bit more fatter, fleshier black fruit flavours such as those from blackberries, plums and cherries – you can find hints of red fruits in there too. It's often described as being juicy and soft and this makes it a great drink for new red wine drinkers who are worried about harsh, dry tannins. As it gets older, it gives wonderful flavours of fruit cake and dark chocolate and even older still, lots of savoury spice.



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## WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

It's not just SA which is embracing Merlot – it seems as if Bordeaux is also going nuts for the variety! It's always been the most important grape on the Right Bank, making expensive wines in both Pomerol and St Emilion, but it's becoming even more popular on the Left Bank as well with many Bordeaux chateaux increasing plantings in a bid to appeal to the American market in particular. Fewer people are willing (or have the facilities) to wait decades before they drink their wines which means that softer, juicier Merlot is more likely to form the basis for modern Bordeaux blends made for early-drinking. Elsewhere around the world, Merlot is popular in Chile, although for many years, much 'Merlot' has actually been another,

more obscure grape variety, Carmenere. The mistake has been cleared up and now Merlot is planted alongside the rest of the Bordeaux Big Five, making excellent wines at every price and quality level.

## WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

Merlot is a really versatile grape offering plenty of scope for food and wine matching. Because it has lower tannins and lots of soft juicy fruit, it's often a good choice for spicier dishes such as a Beef Rendang or Tandoori Lamb, but it will pair equally well with traditional roasts and stews. And if you really want to do for something unusual, try it with a dark chocolate torte.



## How does the flavour develop?

### VINEYARD INFLUENCE:

Beetroot, Roses, Spicy, Plum, Raspberry, Violets, Mulberry, Cinnamon, Black olive

### WINE MAKING INFLUENCE:

Cashew, Nutty, Cedar wood, Toast, Toffee, Vanilla, Smokey, Coconut, Smokey, Burnt

### BOTTLE AGING INFLUENCE:

Bacon, Caramel, Coffe, Tobacco leaf, Leather, Earthy, Chocolate