



ALTO CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2003

Background

Alto, situated on the slopes of the Helderberg Mountain in the Stellenbosch district, dates back to 1693 when it was part of a much larger farm called *Groenriver* (Green River), granted to a free burgher by Governor Simon van der Stel. In 1919 the owner of the farm, Hennie Malan, sold off half the land to his brother-in-law and set about planting vines on his remaining portion, focusing exclusively on red varieties. He named the smaller farm Alto, a reference to its altitude (some slopes rise as high as 500m above sea level) and his striving for excellence. By 1922, he was shipping his Alto Rouge to London.

In 1959 the farm was sold to the Du Toit family, and in 1999, Alto was brought into the LUSAN Holdings operation, a joint venture of Distell and international financier Hans Schreiber.

Alto has 93 hectares under vines. The trellised vineyards cling to the high granite slopes that are ideal for the cultivation of red wine varieties.

This wine is made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.

The vineyards (viticulturist: Eben Archer)

The wine is made from grapes growing on north-facing vineyards aged between 8 and 19 years. Growing in decomposed granite soils with a clay subsoil, the altitudes of these vines varies between 135m and 475m above sea level. The higher vineyards are cooled by the False Bay breezes, lengthening the ripening. A five-wire fence was used to trellis the vines which yielded a low four to five tons the hectare.

The winemaking (winemaker: Schalk van der Westhuizen)

The grapes were harvested by hand at the end of March at between 24° and 25° Balling. After destalking and crushing, the mash was fermented in stainless steel tanks at between 25° and 27°C, using the selected NT112 yeast culture. The juice was separated from the skins after 10 days. After malolactic fermentation, the wine was racked into first-, second- and third-fill French-oak barrels and matured for 18 months. After a light sterile sheet-filtering, an egg-white fining was used to “polish” the wine before being bottled in March 2003.

Winemaker's comments

- Colour : Dark ruby.
- Bouquet : Cigar box, ripe cherries and plum. Hint of mint.
- Taste : Lovely youthful red/black fruit with cherry and plum upfront. Austere tannins, the oak and fruit are well integrated. Poised to evolve with distinction over the next ten years. Subtle vanilla and dusty spices lift the mid-palate.

Maturation potential : Stylistically slow maturing, this Alto Cab can be enjoyed now with good promise to improve in the next 8 to 10 years.

Food pairing

Not a block buster and expressing Cabernet fruit, this wine will go extremely well with steaks, lamb, stews and casseroles.

Chemical analysis

Alcohol	14,10% by volume
Residual sugar	3,1 g/l
Total acidity	5,71g/l
pH	3,56