



PLAISIR DE MERLE

PLAISIR DE MERLE CABERNET FRANC 2008

Winemaker: Niel Bester

Appellation: Paarl

Grape Varietal: Cabernet Franc

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Background

Established by the French Huguenots in 1693 on the slopes of the Simonsberg Mountains between Paarl and Franschoek, Plaisir de Merle is a rare gem.

A Distell showpiece, this 974 hectare estate in Simondium, Paarl, has earned international acclaim for its white and red wines. About 400 hectares are planted with a variety of noble grape cultivars such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc, Shiraz and Malbec. An area of only about 80 hectares of prime vineyards has been set aside for the Plaisir de Merle cellar. Winemaker Niel Bester attributes the success of his wines to being able to work with great fruit coming from a very unique terrain and the invaluable input from his viticulture team.

The vineyards

The diversity of the soils, slopes and elevations is closely linked with the quality of Plaisir de Merle wines. Well-drained weathered granite soils (predominantly Tukulú and Hutton) with good water retention allow minimal irrigation with most vineyards dry land situated on the south-eastern slopes of the Simonsberg.

The farm is situated on the east and north-east facing slopes of the Simonsberg Mountain, and is bordered by the towns of Stellenbosch, Franschoek and Paarl. The grapes were harvested on March 8, 2008 from a single, nine-year-old vineyard, situated about 230m above sea level where high mountain peaks shade the vineyards from the hot, late afternoon sun. This slows down ripening, resulting in wines with a rich fruit complexity.

Viticulturist: Freddie le Roux

The winemaking

The grapes were crushed at 24.8 degrees balling. The juice was fermented at 25°C and pumped over the skins daily to extract colour, tannins and flavour. Upon completion of fermentation the wine was left on the skins for a further four days. The wine was racked off, transferred to 300-litre new French oak barrels where malolactic fermentation was completed. After another racking the wine stayed in the barrels for a total of 16 months.

Winemaker's comments

Colour: Deep ruby.

Bouquet: Rich nose with fragrant spice and floral notes.

Taste: Full-bodied with red berry fruit on palate followed by sweet vanilla oak flavours.

Ageing process and potential: Ready to drink now but will gain in complexity with further cellaring for 5 - 8 years.

Food pairing

Very versatile, this wine would complement all red meat dishes from peppered fillet to a hearty ragoût.

Chemical analysis:

Residual sugar: 2.1 g/l

Alcohol: 14.4% by volume

Total acid: 5.3 g/l

pH: 3.66

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 330 cases

