



# PLAISIR DE MERLE

WINE OF SOUTH AFRICA

*Charles Marais*

2013

PLAISIR DE MERLE, SIMONDIUM ROAD, PAARL



## CHARLES MARAIS 2013

### 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, and 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

**Viticulturist:** Freddie le Roux

The vineyards selected were observed over several vintages to ensure the best building blocks for the final blend. Located on the slopes of the Simonsberg Mountain where well-drained, weathered granite soils nourish the vines.

The growing season was characterised by a wet winter and cold temperatures that lasted until mid-spring. This cold spring resulted in uniform ripening of the grapes and delayed the harvest by about 10 days. The longer hanging and ripening period on the vine culminated in exceptional quality grapes with concentrated colour and flavour.

### THE WINEMAKING

**Cellar Master:** Niel Bester

**Appellation:** Paarl

**Grape Varietal:** 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Petit Verdot, 25% Cabernet Franc, 20% Merlot

The grapes were hand-harvested in the early morning when the fruit was at its most flavourful and hand-sorted before being destalked and crushed separately. The different varieties were immediately cooled to approximately 13°C and fermented separately in small 5 000 litre stainless steel tanks at 24–26°C. After alcoholic fermentation was completed, a period of maceration followed when the skins and wine remained in contact for up to two weeks. The wines underwent malolactic fermentation in 3rd fill 300 litre French oak barrels, racked off the sediment and returned to new 300 litre French oak barrels for 16 months. Only the barrels showing the purest varietal character were selected for the final blend which spent a further six month maturation period in 3rd fill French oak barrels before being bottled without any prior filtration. The wine spent almost two years in the bottle to develop further complexity and structure.

### WINEMAKER'S COMMENTS

**Colour:** Dense, inky plum.

**Bouquet:** Aromatic dark fruit and savoury notes on the nose.

**Taste:** Red berries, dark fruit and juicy tannins blend seamlessly with pencil shavings, sweet vanilla and spice to deliver a multi-layered, full-bodied wine.

**Ageing Potential:** This wine will mature well for ten years and more.

**Food pairing:** A superbly food-friendly wine, the Charles Marais will pair well with many dishes, especially a roasted rack of lamb.

### CHEMICAL ANALYSIS

**Residual sugar:** 2.4g/l      **Total acidity:** 5.7 g/l

**Alcohol:** 14.5% by volume      **pH:** 3.6