

PLAISIR DE MERLE MALBEC 2011

Winemaker: Niel Bester

Appellation: Paarl

Grape Varietal: Malbec

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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. Cellarmaster 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 vineyard

The diversity of the soils, slopes and elevations is closely linked with the quality of Plaisir de Merle wines. The Malbec vineyard is situated on the south-eastern slopes of the Simonsberg, about 250m above sea-level. It is planted on well-drained, weathered granite soils (predominantly Tukulu and Hutton) with good water retention; therefore no supplementary irrigation is required.

Viticulturist: Freddie le Roux

The winemaking:

The grapes were harvested from a single, 13 year old vineyard situated about 270 m above sea at 24.5° Baling. The grapes were destalked and crushed into a small stainless steel fermenter. The juice was pumped over the skins at regular intervals to extract colour, flavour and tannins. Malolactic fermentation took place in 300-litre new and second-fill French oak barrels. After racking the wine off the lees it was returned to the barrels for a total period of 16 months.

Winemaker's comments

Colour: Vibrant red.

Bouquet: Red berry fruit, with a sweet hint of oak.

Taste: Cherries, red fruit on the palate with a creamy oak finish. Soft tannins ensure drinkability.

Ageing process and potential:

Although very drinkable, this wine will benefit from further ageing for another three to five years

Food pairing: This wine is adaptable enough to stand up to spicy Mexican, Cajun, Indian or Italian fare (especially with tomato-based sauces). Also goes well with semi-hard cheeses and should work well with barbecue foods, chilli and sausage.

Chemical analysis:

Residual sugar: 2.4 g/l

Alcohol: 14.6 % by volume

Total acid: 5.4 g/l

pH: 3.68

Extract: 31.6 g/l

Total production of this vintage: 700 x 6 bottle cases

