

Chardonnay 2017

RANGE: SMUGGLERS BOOT - An innovative range that pays tribute to the ingenuity of winemakers past and present.

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 100% Chardonnay made from French clones CY95, CY96, CY76 & CY548.

WINE OF ORIGIN: Western Cape, South Africa

HISTORY: In 2014, The Smuggler's Boot wines were first released. The name derives from the time of trade embargoes in South Africa when growers & winemakers smuggled grapevine material into the country by hiding the cuttings in Wellington boots. The Smuggler's Boot range celebrates that ingenuity.

VINTAGE: Hand-Picking Dates: 21st February – 13th March 2017
Brix at Harvest: 21.60 – 24.20

SEASON: A cool winter in 2017 enabled good vine dormancy but the rainfall was low and followed similar conditions felt in 2015 and 2016. Budbreak took place in ideal warm sunny conditions whilst flowering was a touch earlier than normal; strong blustery winds meant pollination took longer to complete. As a result, berry set was uneven leading to some smaller berries that, despite a lower yield, had good concentration of flavours. Despite expecting an early harvest, an unusually cool December slowed down ripening whilst some January rain during veraison helped nourish the soils and more importantly, helped the vine focus on grape ripening rather than foliage and root growth. Harvest took place under blue skies in February and through to early March. The net result is the wines achieved steady phenolic ripeness, have respectable natural acidity and the drier year has given plenty of intense fruit flavours.

WINEMAKING: The grapes were handpicked and then whole-bunch pressed. Half of the juice was gravity-flowed directly to French oak barrels (20% new) without settling whilst the other half was placed into breathable plastic eggs. The unclarified juice has neither enzymes nor yeast added. 70% of the juice underwent a natural fermentation until dry whilst the rest used an innovative wild 'cultured' yeast strain *Saccromyces Paradoxus*. On all batches malolactic fermentation was discouraged by a light sulphuring post fermentation. The wine then matured in the vessels – in 2017 the Smuggler's Boot Chardonnay spent an average of 8 months on its fermentation lees which were periodically stirred to enable yeast autolysis - that creamy, oatmeal mouthfeel component. The batches were then individually tasted and blended together with a light fining and bottled.

ALCOHOL: 13.50% **TOTAL PRODUCTION:** 2400 bottles

TASTING PROFILE: Peach blossom, orange peel, struck flint and a hint of vanilla on the nose. A gorgeous mineral-led approach is followed by nectarine flesh, dried apricot and white peach underscored by a fresh, lively acidity, more linear frame and complexity from oatmeal, peat whisky and green apple skins. Fabulous length of flavour and depth of fruit intensity is further enhanced with a rich texture and spicy oak nuances.

FOOD PAIRING: Richard's personal pairing suggestions would be fish pie, pasta in a clam sauce or pan-seared scallops with a lemon cream. If you can get a fresh piece of tuna then tuna Carpaccio works well rather than seared tuna (which Richard thinks works better with Pinot Noir). A simple roasted free-range chicken stuffed with lemon wedges works a treat or pan-seared chicken breasts in a tarragon and light cream sauce (Richard likes to use crème fraîche as it is more tangy so the final sauce doesn't feel too heavy – you can at a pinch also use sour cream but be careful as it curdles quite easily as its protein content is much higher). A roast loin of pork with garlic and ginger works surprisingly well and for the vegetarian-minded, pasta with a creamy wild mushroom sauce, pumpkin ravioli, or for the weekend, truffle risotto!

