



HAMILTON RUSSELL VINEYARDS

HEMEL-EN-AARDE VALLEY, SOUTH AFRICA - HAMILTON RUSSELL FAMILY PROPERTIES

HAMILTON RUSSELL VINEYARDS - 2019 will go down as the year of “the fire”. A massive fire burned around Hamilton Russell vineyards on January 11th, damaging 10% of our Pinot noir and causing concerns over smoke taint. Careful advance measurements, and separate extremely gentle vinifications, have however enabled us to produce a fine, complex and beautiful 2019, albeit in a much smaller quantity. A great pity about the low production as the year looks to be a truly great one for Pinot noir. Fortunately the fire passed through very rapidly reducing smoke exposure. Fire was not the only challenge. An unusually warm May, June and July effected Chardonnay dormancy and as a result bud break was extremely uneven and in some cases incomplete. Our Chardonnay crop was 44% down, but the quality is excellent, with unusually slow ferments resulting in a generous texture with our typical bright minerality, stylistically somewhere between 2015 and 2018.

Overall the vintage was a cooler than 2017 and even 2018, with an average maximum temperature for Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar of 24.5 Centigrade (versus an equivalent long term average for Burgundy of 24.8 Centigrade). Rainfall was lower than average for Spring and during harvest, but occurred in frequent small amounts causing sustained high humidity. Fortunately our organic treatments proved highly effective against the resulting downey and powdery mildew threat. And the day after harvest finished, the serious rains began - some luck at least! We had the highest March rainfall in 21 years. Record low production and several challenges, but the 2019's have a pure, refined beauty.

SOUTHERN RIGHT - Exceptional quality and record low yields characterise 2019, our 25th vintage of a single Pinotage and a single Sauvignon blanc. Sauvignon blanc yields were 52% down and Pinotage yields were 65% down. And the Sauvignon blanc ripened a little unevenly and unusually early. The Pinotage was particularly concentrated without being too dense or heavy. The Sauvignon blanc has a beautiful vinosity and saline minerality and true to Southern Right is not too fruit-driven.

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ASHBOURNE - Exceptional quality and record low yields characterise 2019. Sauvignon blanc yields were 52% down and Pinotage yields were 65% down. And the Sauvignon blanc ripened a little unevenly and unusually early. The Pinotage was particularly concentrated without being too dense or heavy. The Sauvignon blanc has a beautiful vinosity and saline minerality and true to Ashbourne is not too fruit-driven. Our Semillon performed unusually well with yields up 36%. Once again it shows a tight mineral centre with viscous edges.

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