



# DOWNES FAMILY

vineyards

## MERLOT 2019

*Elgin Valley, South Africa*

### Technical Notes

The challenges of growing good quality Merlot are real and require fastidious viticultural management in the vineyard. The uneven ripening of these vines often requires multiple pickings of the same vineyard blocks, in order to ensure consistent ripeness of all bunches, is often overlooked. These particular grapes are picked from a small 3 hectare vineyard. The vineyard is divided up into 5 different parcels each with its own respective clone and these are all picked at optimal ripeness, before being combined for a 5 way clonal co-ferment. The bunches are chilled to 37 degrees F, before being sorted on a conveyor and destemmed. Berries are then hand sorted, before cold maceration ensues, for 3 to 6 days at 46 degrees F. The 5 way clonal ferment is inoculated with a commercial yeast. Fermentation temperatures vary between 78–86 degrees F. After pressing, the wine is racked and left to complete its malolactic fermentation and maturation in old 4 to 5 year old French oak barriques for 9 months. Before bottling, the wine is coarsely filtered and fined with bentonite so it's vegan friendly.

UPC CODE: 858441006118

### About this Wine

If you lived in South Africa and were on the allocation list for Mount Bullet Merlot, then you would have yourself some pretty cool bragging rights. Referred to by members of the international sommelier community as South Africa's "Baby Le Pin" it is made from old vines and no fewer than 5 different Merlot clones (3 Italian and 2 French). It is utterly world class. Merlot continues to get a bad rap (after the movie "Sideways"), but it's important to remind consumers that the most expensive wines from Bordeaux are in fact from the right bank and are Merlot predominant. Merlot is indeed one of the great, Noble grape varieties and deserves to be taken very seriously. Considerable emphasis is placed on maximizing the different French and Italian merlot expressions in this vineyard. Basically what you're dealing with here is the declassified barrels from the Mt Bullet project, at less than half the price, but way more than half the wine. Aromatics and flavors are on point and the wine is impeccably well balanced. A non-interventionist wine-making approach ensures silkiness and elegant structure. This is very classy stuff!



### Wine Analysis

Alcohol: 14%  
Acidity: 5.5 g/l  
pH: 3.53  
Residual sugar: 2.8 g/l

- ✓ VEGAN FRIENDLY
- ✓ SUSTAINABLE
- ✗ ORGANIC
- ✗ BIODYNAMIC

Clones planted: MO 03, 12, 192 and MO 343 and 348  
Rootstock: Richter 110  
Soil types: Mostly Table Mountain Sandstone with a high percentage of quartz silica crystal and a deeper kaolin clay base.  
Aspect of vineyards: East facing slopes.  
Ha planted: 3 ha  
Planting distance: 2.2m x 1.2m  
Vines per hectare: 3787  
Trellis system: Vertical shoot positioning.  
Irrigation: Micro irrigation  
Average Yield: 5 tons per hectare.  
Harvest dates: On average last week of March and first week of April.

### Scores/Reviews

90 pts - The Wine Advocate

The 2019 Downes Family Merlot starts juicy and dusty with delightful layers of dusty plum, sour cherry and soft elements of juicy tobacco, hints of oak and a gentle display of pencil lead. Medium to full-bodied, the wine delivers a balanced structure with lifting tannins and succulent acidity, before flavors of black plum and dark cherry skin sway across the mid-palate. The wine concludes with a persistent tannic edge and lingering flavors of blackberry and spiced plum compote.

