



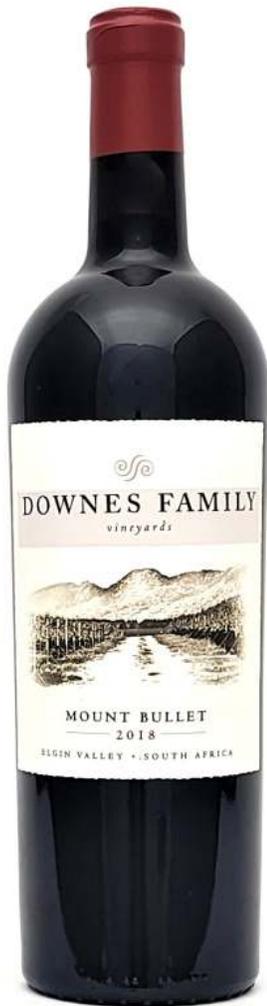
DOWNES FAMILY

vineyards

MERLOT

MOUNT BULLET 2018

Elgin Valley, South Africa



Technical Notes

The grapes are picked from a small 3 hectare vineyard. The vineyard is divided up into 5 different parcels each with its own respective clone. The soil, trellising and canopy management is constant throughout the vineyard so it is the actual clonal characteristics that determine the different dates of harvest. Over the years they have learnt that there is as much as 11 – 14 days difference between picking the first clone to picking the last clone. The bunches are chilled to 3°C before being sorted on a conveyor and destemmed. Berries are then hand sorted, before cold maceration ensues for 3 to 6 days at 8°C. They try to naturally ferment 100% of the different parcels of grapes making up this wine. Fermentation temperatures vary between 26 – 30°C. After pressing, the wine is racked and left to complete its malolactic fermentation and maturation in oak barriques. Considerable emphasis is placed on maximizing the different clone expressions and therefore each parcel is vinified and matured separately before final blending. Incorporating a minimal winemaking intervention approach, such as natural ferment and only two “punch downs” daily, retains silkiness and elegance. 100% matured in barriques (225L) for approximately 20 months using a blend of 3 Bordeaux cooperages. New oak - 25%, 2nd fill - 50% and 3rd fill - 25%. The oak used is of a tighter grain and medium toasted.

About this Wine

To grow and produce great Merlot, is not easy – perhaps that’s why so few even bother. That begs the question, “What would you pay for truly GREAT Merlot?” The most expensive wines in Bordeaux come from the “Right Bank” of the Garonne River and are predominantly Merlot driven, the most expensive of which is Chateau Le Pin, which now sells for \$4,000/btl (yes – you read that right!) Petrus is not far behind. Once you get outside France, there’s Italy with wines like Ornellaia’s Masseto, which sells for \$800/btl. There are other great Italian Merlot predominant wines in the \$200 – \$300 range, but not that many. The rest of the “new world” has little to offer, when it comes to great Merlot – except for this wine. Mt Bullet has been iconic, almost since its debut, a few years ago. 5 different clones (2 French and 3 Italian) planted in brutally challenging terrain, yielding incredible fruit. And that’s only a small part of the story. Close your eyes, and stylistically, this is like drinking top flight, right bank Bordeaux, which would easily sell for \$400/btl. It is our opinion that this IS the arguably best Merlot in the new world, and 2018 is just an extra special vintage for these folks.

Wine Analysis

Alcohol: 14.5%
Acidity: 6.6 g/l
pH: 3.23
Residual sugar: 3.0 g/l

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

Terroir

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 vines
Trellis system: Vertical shoot positioning.
Irrigation: Micro irrigation.
Average Production: 5 tons per hectare.
Harvest dates: On average last week of March and first week of April.

Scores/Reviews

Tim Atkin 94 Pts
Elgin suffered less from the heat in 2018, according to James Downes, so this is a correspondingly focused, dense, compact Mount Bullet with inky color, chewy tannins, chocolate, damson and blueberry flavors, bright acidity and the structure to age further in bottle. 2023-30

Assemblage

MO 343: 20%
MO 348: 20%
MO 192: 20%
MO 12: 20%
MO 03: 20%

