



DOWNES FAMILY

vineyards

MOUNT BULLET MERLOT 2020

Elgin Valley, South Africa

Technical Notes

The grapes for this wine are picked from a small 3 hectare vineyard that is divided up into 5 different parcels, each with its own respective clone. (3 Italian clones and 2 French). The soil, trellising and canopy management is consistent throughout the vineyard, so it is the actual clonal characteristics that determine the different dates of harvest. To add to this, there is the predictable uneven ripening of the Merlot vine, dictating that each plant must be picked multiple times, as and when the individual bunches are optimally ripe. Over the years we 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 37°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°F. We try to naturally ferment 100% of the different parcels of grapes making up the Mount Bullet. It's a complicated endeavor as there are many micro ferments and each gets its own special care and attention. Fermentation temperatures vary between 78 - 86°F. After pressing, the wine is racked and left to complete its malolactic fermentation and maturation in tight grained French barriques for about 20 months, before the assemblage and then the bottling.



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. Stylistically it can probably be said that South African Merlot straddles the fence between between the old world and new world. Close your eyes, and see where this one takes you and then smile, knowing that it cost you a mere fraction of the price of those others.

Wine Analysis

Alcohol: 14.42%
Acidity: 5.3 g/l
pH: 3.43
Residual Sugar: 2.5 g/l

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

Terroir

Clones planted: MO 03, 12, 192, 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.
Ha planted: 3 ha
Planting distance: 2.2m x 1m
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

Tasting Notes

The wine has a fragrance of ripe red fruits such as plums and dark cherries, with earthy complexity and yet still expressing minerality. Maintaining a good acidity lends to out-standing freshness with a well-integrated ripe and seductive tannin structure. The wine finishes with a refined, silky elegance.

Press/Reviews

94pts Wine Advocate
"The 2020 Mount Bullet Merlot, as always, is one of the best Merlots in the country and is not to be missed. This beauty begs me back for another sip. Bravo!"
- Anthony Mueller
92pts Tim Atkin

