

02 May 2018

HARVEST REPORT 2018

Richard Duckitt, Chief Winemaker at Bellingham, is enjoying a moment of reprieve: harvest 2018 is concluded.

***“Some of the most delicate wines I’ve seen”
Bellingham’s Chief Winemaker reflects on Harvest 2018***

The Cape’s devastating drought played a dominant role in this year’s harvest: the Winelands were declared a disaster area and the outlook at the start of the vintage wasn’t a positive one. A plunge in yields was to be expected, but this fear was compounded with the effect the drought would have on quality – as lack of water during the critical veraison period can affect berry composition, and in particular sugar accumulation and concentration.

These fears did not come to fruition at Bellingham: “At the onset of harvest, people were expecting a below average vintage, however, going on what we are tasting and seeing in the cellar, vintage 2018 was an above average vintage,” says Richard. “Our yields are down a little, but the quality is definitely not.”

This is attributed mainly to water stress resulting in smaller berries and more concentrated flavours, something that is seen across the spectrum of white and red wines. In some instances, winemakers were forced to pick earlier, at lower sugar levels. “We see lower alcohol levels but beautiful intensity. The wines are delicate and balanced,” Richard reveals.

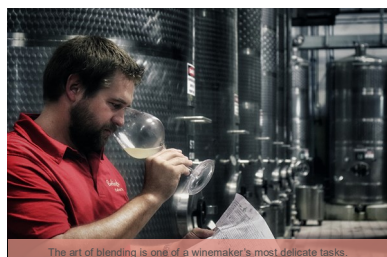
Vintage 2018 also equally favoured standout varieties on the white and red wine front: “Sauvignon Blanc is extremely expressive this year, they have the most beautiful nose and acidity, and currently show a lot of yellow fruit. Chenin Blanc is similarly beautiful and concentrated, aided by the fact that we only picked from 2 out of 10 blocks that are younger than 35-years old.”

“The red wines really surprised me,” says Richard, “they have some of the smoothest, roundest tannins I’ve tasted. Pinotage is the best I’ve seen in a long time. Our Shiraz is also showing phenomenal structure and intensity.”

Overall, consumers can expect well-structured, but understated and classy wines when buying Bellingham Wines’ with ‘vintage 2018’ on the label – “and with the beautiful acidities we are seeing, they are definitely build to age, too,” concludes Richard.



Richard sampling Bernard Series Old Vine Chenin Blanc out of the barrel



The art of blending is one of a winemaker’s most delicate tasks.



Mario tasting Chenin Blanc out of the barrels



Shiraz from Agter-Paarl

“At the onset of harvest, people were expecting a below average vintage, however, going on what we are tasting and seeing in the cellar, vintage 2018 was an above average vintage,” says Richard.



Bellingham Harvest 2018 in full swing