

2019 Valley Ridge Gravel over Clay PN777

RANGE: Deconstructed

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 100% Pinot Noir made from the French clone PN777.

WINE OF ORIGIN: Valley Ridge, Elgin, Western Cape, South Africa.

SOIL: Gravel over Clay

TOTAL VINEYARD PRODUCTION: 790 kg selected from a registered single vineyard site.

OVERVIEW: The inspiration for the Deconstructed Range stems from my belief that the Elgin region boasts credentials that make it world-class. In bolstering these regional credentials, my mandate has been to prove Elgin has both a signature grape that is synonymous with the region as well as particular 'terroirs' (mesoclimates) within its demarcated boundary that reflect regional distinctions. To fully comprehend this, it is necessary to dig deeper into the DNA that makes up our region.

To facilitate this, I have decided to make these two Pinot Noir wines that I select from a sub-region of Elgin from a specific vineyard and an individual clone. Importantly, this is an ongoing story that will unfold over the coming years.

VINTAGE: Hand-Picking Dates: 22nd February 2019
Brix at Harvest: 23.7

SEASON: As a vintage 2019 started well with a return to average winter rainfall that continued well into spring. In tandem, cold units to allow much needed respite for the vines to sleep were the best for five years. The cooler spring did result in a late bud break for Pinot, and although there were some unusually warm conditions at the end of October, spring was milder than average with quite a high amount of liberally sprinkled rainfall - 200mm - between October and December. The wind surged on several days damaging some of the young shoots and flowers but was sporadic, leaving us with lower yields on some parcels and average on others. The cooler November weather also meant some flowers failed to pollinate correctly resulting in millerandage in which fewer berries appear on the eventual bunches.

As New Year came and went, summer was cooler than average and maximums during the hottest months never got more than 34°C. The cooler weather did help the vines accumulate flavour more gradually. As harvest approached, whilst there were some pleasant sunny days in February, nights started to cool early in March.

We started picking Pinot Noir in the last week of February about a week after the warmer weather had subsided. The malic acids are higher, giving more bite and freshness to the wine. Equally, the colder conditions allowed synchronous ripening of sugar and secondary metabolites alongside fantastic colour, elegant structure and more finesse to the tannins

WINEMAKING: The grapes were handpicked into small lug baskets and manually sorted on a conveyor before the stems are removed. The destemmed berries fell onto a vibrating table to remove jacks and substandard berries before dropping uncrushed into small 500kg open-topped fermenters. The grapes underwent a 3-day maceration before spontaneous fermentation began. A gentle *delestage* program was charted, and the grapes remained on skins for up to 15 days. The wine was then racked to barrel under gravity and the remaining pomace basket pressed. Malolactic proceeded in barrel followed by a light sulphuring after which the wine was racked off malolactic lees and returned to clean barrels for an 11-month maturation. No fining is usually necessary, and the wine was racked and lightly filtered before bottling.

BARREL SELECTION: A small number of artisanal coopers originating in Burgundy were preferred. Only French oak was selected and 228 litres *a pièce* used (barriques are 225 litres). For the Deconstructed Pinot we used around 33% new oak with the remainder split equally into 2nd and 3rd fill *a pièce*.

ALCOHOL: 13.92%

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 663 bottles.

TASTING PROFILE: The Valley Ridge Gravel over Clay exhibits attractive aromas of raspberry and black cherry emphasised by its vivid fruit and penetrating depth of flavour. The mid-palate should offer a rich, succulent texture with elegance and freshness. There is density and concentration to the structure alongside a seamless, chalky tannin and brightness to the acidity. Flavours include, black plum, morello cherry, a hint of pepper, shortbread and raspberry compote



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