

2017 Klein River Syrah

RANGE: GPS Series

VARIETAL INFORMATION: 100% Syrah made from clone SH1.

WINE OF ORIGIN: Klein River, Western Cape, South Africa.

TOTAL VINEYARD PRODUCTION: 1.94 tons from a single vineyard block of Syrah.

OVERVIEW: During the year, I have the opportunity to visit a number of areas outside of Elgin. Occasionally, I come across something so fascinating that it deserves a closer look. Almost 20 years ago, the 1st Syrah vines were planted in what is now one of the smallest wine wards in South Africa, Klein River. Traditionally used for sheep and wheat, 3 ha of virgin shale-derived Glenrosa soil was set aside for Syrah. These soils are normally the hallmark of warmer areas, but these vines nestle up against the Klein River Mountain range. The nearby Akkedis Valley provides a portal through which the cool sea breezes from the nearby Walker Bay penetrate, creating a mild meso-climate in summer. Wines made from these vines have consistently won acclaim and awards, so I did not think twice when the opportunity to make wine from these 20-year-old vines came my way. The GPS Series is testament to these special places and celebrates them.

VINTAGE: Hand-Picking Dates: 10th March 2017 Brix at Harvest: 25.1

SEASON: Whilst 2017 experienced a cool winter to enable good vine dormancy, the rainfall was low and followed similar conditions felt in 2015 and 2016. Budbreak took place in ideal warm sunny conditions whilst flowering was a touch earlier than normal; strong blustery winds meant pollination took longer to complete. As a result, berry set was uneven leading to some smaller berries that despite a lower yield did have good concentration of flavours. Despite expecting an early harvest an unusually cool December slowed down ripening whilst some January rain during veraison helped nourish the soils and more importantly, helped the vine focus on grape ripening rather than foliage & root growth. Harvest took place in the second week of March. Importantly, night time temperatures were cooler than usual enabling better colour and flavour formation, retention of acidity and steady phenolic ripeness. The net result is wines with fabulous natural acidity, pure and penetrating fruit flavours and fine powdery tannins.

WINEMAKING: Grapes were handpicked under autumnal skies into small lug baskets and then manually sorted on a conveyor before the stems were removed. The destemmed berries fell onto a vibrating table in order to remove jacks and substandard berries before dropping uncrushed into a small 500kg conical hopper and being forklifted into open-topped fermenters. The grapes underwent a 3-day maceration before spontaneous fermentation began. A gentle *pigeage* program was charted and the grapes remained on skins for 19 days. The wine was then racked to barrel under gravity and the remaining pomace basket-pressed. Malolactic then proceeded in barrel followed by a light sulphuring and 16-month maturation. No finings were necessary, and the wine was simply racked and bottled unfiltered.

BARREL SELECTION: A small number of artisanal coopers were selected from Burgundy and Rhone, with only French oak chosen. Importantly, this wine was micro vinified as a separate batch. Over the years we have developed an algorithm to ascertain which coopers work best and how many new and used barrels are utilised. In 2017 38.4% was new oak; 76.0% using 500 litre barrels and 24% in breathable eggs.

ALCOHOL: 13.92%

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 1765 bottles were produced.

TASTING PROFILE: Restrained, yet with intent and subtle power, this vineyard exhibits high levels of rotundone producing piercing black pepper, powdery tannins complete with rich textures and a prodigious breadth of black-orientated fruit. The 2017 shows a mid-ruby colour, a nose heady with aromas of black pepper, cinnamon stick, star anise and black cherry panna cotta. Succulent in texture, this medium bodied Syrah is voluminous with a core of juicy Morello cherries, liquorice and molasses complexed with gorse bush, baked plums, bay leaf and angostura bitters underpinned with fine grippy tannins and a long lush finish.



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