

Platinum Accolade for Whalehaven Cabernet Franc

Whalehaven winery is the third oldest wine producer in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley. Wholly owned by the Bottega Family since 2003 and under the steer of winemaker, Reino Thiart, since 2007; the portfolio of world-class wines produced by this boutique winery has grown extensively. Whalehaven now produces a broad spectrum of French classic single varietals including Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Perhaps most notable in the portfolio as a stand-out varietal is the Whalehaven Cabernet Franc. Rarely produced as a single varietal, Cabernet Franc is often used as a blending component in Bordeaux blends. Perfect with pork belly, wild game with cranberry sauces, rich duck dishes or with more creamy cheeses like Camembert, due to the acidity profile allowing the wine to hold when paired with rich foods.

Whilst most estates in the Hemel-en-Aarde tend to focus on Pinot Noir & Chardonnay; Cabernet Franc has been part of the portfolio since 1995 when Whalehaven was first established and this has continued as a key wine in the portfolio since then.

“What makes this wine exceptional is the smoothness of the tannin structure whilst maintaining the integrity of the fruit. The dash of American oak that we use, alongside the soft treatment given by 2nd and 3rd fill French Oak, result in an up-front palate sweetness which softens the overall finish on the wine resulting in a more feminine expression of this cultivar. It has turned into a true classic, which is trusted between the vintages to be exceptional year on year. Each year, I am struck by how the quality improves and our average production is 6 tons per hectare currently. The clay and table mountain sandstone mix ensures that the later vintages particularly are showcasing deeper dark red colours which match the enticing flavours of plums and dark forest.”

The last four vintages 2011, 201, 2013, 2014 have shown a consistent pedigree of excellence year on year achieving Gold at the South African *Cabernet Franc Challenge* which is a competition focused on the varietal.

However, perhaps the Bottega Family are most proud of the 2014 vintage which has resulted in one of the highest accolades to date, garnering Platinum at the 2018 Michelangelo International Wine & Spirit Awards.

“It took us by surprise that of all the wines in the portfolio that the Cabernet Franc has stood head above the rest in winning Platinum at Michelangelo. It is usually one of our small volume wines and we make of 2500-3000 bottles. The accolade means a lot to us due to the mix of local and international judges and as such we are really humbled by the accolade.”