



— Blue Lady 2015 —

Varietal information

Norma and Stan Ratcliffe purchased Warwick Estate in 1964. Then, Warwick was a fruit farm with a few vineyards, which were predominantly planted with Cabernet Sauvignon. At the time the grapes were being sold to the highly regarded neighbouring cellars.

In 1985 Norma set about experimenting on making her own Cabernet Sauvignon on the estate, and launched her first wine in 1986 calling it La Femme Bleu, 'The Blue Lady'.

Although, Norma hadn't followed the administrative rules to the tee and was unfortunately banned from selling the wine.

We have always believed in the potential of the Cabernet Sauvignon variety on the Simonsberg Mountain and have been invested in a lengthy planting plan on the estate since 1994. All of the Cabernet Sauvignon is planted on our South East and South West facing slopes, set in granite soils supported by Cape Hutton and clay. The average age of these vines are approximately 23-years-old.

2014/15 Growing Season

Leaf fall occurred early in May after good April rains which boosted the vineyards' reserves for initial growth after bud break. The farm experienced an above-average wet winter and significantly colder June and July supplying sufficient cold units to stimulate dormancy.

August was warmer and dryer than normal and continued until the end of the spring months. Bud break occurred one week earlier than usual, but was extremely even. Cool and wet weather conditions during bud break caused slow initial shoot growth. The first warm sunny days in mid October, however, accelerated shoot growth. November was warm with more rainfall than normal, which created slightly uneven berry set of the Cabernet Sauvignon. December and January days were warm but the evenings cool, resulting in great flavour and tannin development. One of the earliest harvests in Warwick's history.

Overall this was one of the driest growing seasons on record, but with no real spikes in temperature.

Winemaking

The single vineyard was hand-harvested over a period of four days. Harvest began in the early morning and stopped before the temperatures reached 28 °C. In the cellar the bunches were destemmed, gently crushed, and hand-sorted on a vibrating sorting table. A seven-day cold-soak was done to extract colour before fermentation commenced. An isolated yeast culture from Bordeaux was added and a warm short fermentation was done with daily pump-overs and two

rack-and-returns. Following fermentation the wine was left on the skins for a week for the tannins to polymerise. A light pressing was done after which the wine underwent malolactic fermentation in stainless steel tanks. The wine was gravity-fed to 225-litre tight grain, medium and light toast French oak barrels for ageing. The wine was racked twice during this period. The wine was bottled with a light filtration and kept in bottle for 12 months before release.

Barrel Selection

A selection of barrels was chosen from coopers, Demptos, Taransaud, Sylvain and Boutes, in order to add more complexity to the wine. Tight grain French oak barrels in 225-litres were used for 24 months; 38% of which was new oak. The oak for the barrels hailed from the Allier and Vosges forests in France.

Tasting profile

The wine is opaque in the centre with a translucent licorice rim. It offers blackberries and crème de cassis with hints of graphite and tobacco leaf on the nose, all combining to promise a mouthful of power. The full-bodied palate has an opulent texture and a wealth of fruit—that will leave you clambering to pinpoint each one. Complex layers peel off as you sip; expect savoury notes of roasted meats and fynbos to fresh violets, coffee as well as a mineral element. The Blue Lady 2015 offers intensity and purity; with a balanced symmetry that is pure poetry.

Ageing potential

The Blue Lady reveals all the hallmarks of a top Simonsberg Cabernet with the strength and longevity of a thoroughbred. It will age gracefully for 30 years, but perhaps it is in its prime if left in the bottle for 10. If drunk young, as many people do, please do decant it to allow the aromas to develop in the glass as the wine takes a deep breath and will then show you its true character.

Food match

A classic wine loves a classic dish. Serve with roasted beef rib-eye with Porcini salt and hand-cut fries. Or for a smoky pork loin served with Parmesan mash.

Technical Analysis

Alcohol: 14% | RS: 3.2g/l | pH: 3.60 | TA: 5.9g/l

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