

# KLEIN CONSTANTIA

— 1685 —

## CONSTANTIA, SOUTH AFRICA - KLEIN CONSTANTIA

Often when reporting back on our harvest, we brush over the year leading up to the season - this year, we felt it necessary to start at the beginning. After all the magic happens in the vineyards.

Post the 2016 harvest, the autumn months were hot and dry resulting in early leaf fall and a moderate accumulation of reserves in the vine. Winter arrived late and was mild, with better rainfall than 2015 however still below our average. Spring brought warm conditions which initiated budburst, however the cold September resulted in the budburst being uneven. The summer months brought about near perfect conditions for flowering and berry set with cool nights and warmer days. This time of year, is a crucial part of the season as your flavour and acid precursors are developed during the nights. The cooler temperatures ensure a longer and more concentrated berry to develop. The growing season was characterised again by cold nights, warm days, wind and very little rainfall. This further aided the berry development and due to the dry conditions leading up to harvest we had exceptionally healthy fruit. A textbook growth season leading up to harvest! There was a lot of banter between the winemaking and vineyard teams during harvest, with one comment summing it up: 'This is the season only the winemakers can mess up because the grapes were exceptional this year!'

Ripening happened at a rapid rate – we harvested the Chardonnay for the Brut MCC extremely early in the season. Anticipating the harvest to take off in a flurry, the vines slowed down giving us some time to breathe before we began to pick the Sauvignon Blanc. This was quite a significant characteristic of this vintage, it was slow and steady allowing us to pick everything at the perfect time. There was also no lull between picking the white, red and even the Muscat for Vin de Constance as they all came in right after each other. Another textbook scenario.

Instead of telling you about the wines like previous years' reports, we thought we would bring all the new and exciting ventures we experienced this year to your attention.

- We started 'No Sulphur Fridays', a fun exercise where we did not add sulphur to any of the Sauvignon Blancs during crush on Fridays. This proved to be very successful and the quality was remarkable with little to no oxidation happening that the name changed to 'No Sulphur Everyday', with more than 50% of all our Sauvignon Blancs not receiving any sulphur, enzymes or other additives at crush. In addition to this, 50% of our Sauvignon Blancs have been fermented using wild fermentation or native yeast from the vineyards. Going forward, our plan is to convert to 100% wild fermentation for all of our white wines.
- It is the first year that we have supplemented the use of inorganic Nitrogen as a fermentation aid, we are now only using organic nitrogen sources that come in the form of amino acids, vitamins and trace elements. This has helped us to eliminate the use of DAP, which has completely changed the dynamics of fermentation.
- This is our third vintage using all of our 'new toys' in the cellar and we have a much better understanding of its dynamic. As a result, we have a more focused and driven approach towards winemaking.



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- In order to best express our unique terroir, we have taken a step further in our Sauvignon Blanc single vineyard project by breaking up each block into sections to create 11 different single vineyard batches. Every batch is 100% free run juice, with no sulphur added at crush with wild fermentation followed by maceration in neutral French oak and acacia.
- We have the first ever Ovum 400L barrel to leave France. The idea is to benefit from all the positive attributes of a foudre just in smaller format.
- A quality that stands out across the varieties in 2017 vintage, is the high natural acidity as well as pH balance. This has given us complex aromas across our varieties – from thiol driven Sauvignon Blancs complemented by a slightly wild element, to tannin driven explosive reds. Due to the high degree of raisining resulting from the warm conditions, the grapes for Vin de Constance have beautiful concentration and sugar levels.
- We are proud to announce that 2017 sees the first crop from our Chenin Blanc vineyard. In the old days of making the Sweet Wine of Constantia a number of varieties were used to create the legendary wine. In our efforts to constantly improve Vin de Constance, we will be experimenting in ways to preserve freshness & aromatics during the aging process. Watch this space as we are exploring a few more varieties to play with, all with the intention of making the greatest sweet wine in the world.

We have great aspirations here at Klein Constantia and there is lot to come. Our goal is simple – to push the boundaries and make wines that are truly unique to the Klein Constantia style. We have lots to do and every year we try to better ourselves.

In conclusion, every vintage is different and each has its own challenge but it makes life interesting. The 2017 vintage was amazing and promises some very special wines to come. All of this is thanks to our wonderful team, what we like to think of as the Klein Constantia family.

