



HAMILTON RUSSELL VINEYARDS

## HEMEL-EN-AARDE VALLEY, SOUTH AFRICA - HAMILTON RUSSELL FAMILY PROPERTIES

**HAMILTON RUSSELL VINEYARDS** - The 2020 harvest was a touch earlier than usual, beginning in the first week of February. Budding was even and complete, helped by a fortuitous two days over 30 Centigrade in mid-September. Overall the year was wetter than the previous few years (with a total annual rainfall of 849mm for the calendar year 2019). A particularly wetter than average October and January created downy mildew pressures, which became odium and later botrytis pressures, not helped by high humidity and early morning dew. These were, however, satisfactorily held at bay with organic treatments. The average maximum temperatures for Dec, Jan, Feb, Mar were exactly equal to our long-term average of 25 Centigrade, so on our measure, the vintage was cooler than 2019 and equal to the celebrated 2009 and 2015 vintages. A standout feature of the 2020 vintage was phenolic ripeness at lower alcohol than usual, combined with low sugar to alcohol conversions for the fermentations—a highly positive situation. Yields were, as always, very low. Pinot noir came in at 3.32 tons/ha (21,5 hl/ha) and Chardonnay came in even lower at 2.68 tons/ha (16.9 hl/ha). The wines have a marked elegance, mineral purity and saline quality—an exciting outcome despite weather challenges.

### Hamilton Russell Vineyards Pinot Noir 2020

True to Hamilton Russell Vineyards' Pinot noir style, our 2020 is a spice-driven wine with a tightly wound structure, rather than soft, opulent, open and sweet fruit-driven. The low alcohol, a standout feature of the vintage, is analogous to some of our great age-worthy wines of the 1980s. Our maiden 1981, the 1986 and 1987, for example. These wines are still drinking beautifully, and we expect our 2020 to be a wine that comes into its own with significant bottle age.

Dark, salted liquorice, cracked black pepper, and wet iron-rich clay combine with subtle wild strawberry and field herb aromas. The palate is tight, restrained and elegant with noticeable but fine-grained tannin and a characteristic Hamilton Russell Vineyards saline quality. Overall, 2020 is a little more Volnay meets Pommard than our more typical Gevrey meets Morey.

### Hamilton Russell Vineyards Chardonnay 2020

Our 2020 is stylistically typical for Hamilton Russell Vineyards, although with a touch lower alcohol, a feature of the vintage. A desirable subtle “eggshell” reduction on the nose combines with pear and lime aromas with a barely noticeable backdrop of wood spice. The wine is tight, bright and pure, with a surprisingly textured and layered palate for the lightness of alcohol. The dry, almost chalky minerality and saline finish mark the wine as quintessential Hamilton Russell Vineyards.

Often placed stylistically in Puligny and often in Chassagne, our 2020 seems to us to be more towards the tight mineral qualities of Puligny.





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**SOUTHERN RIGHT** - Founded by Anthony Hamilton Russell in 1994 to create a separate property for specialising in a more refined style of cooler-climate, clay-grown Pinotage - with the aim of re-defining and energising the then less popular national grape. Another early-ripening grape, Sauvignon blanc, was chosen as the white wine partner, based on its proven affinity for the area. The property is named after the Southern Right Whales, which frequent Walker Bay (at closest just over 2,000 meters from the property), indicating the strongly maritime growing conditions. Their Sauvignon blanc is a best seller for the area with numerous wine-by-the-glass listings internationally. Simultaneously, their highly allocated Pinotage has converted many to the variety and contributed significantly to the current Pinotage renaissance underway. Southern Right is well known for its unusually rigorous focus in a New World context. They are celebrating more than 25 years of a single Pinotage and a single Sauvignon blanc.

With the “Pinotage Renaissance” well underway locally and internationally, Southern Right Pinotage has become their most sought after wine in many markets. They have always produced a more restrained, classically styled expression of the grape, in keeping with their iron and clay-rich soils and cooler climate, best suited to this early ripening grape. They have refined this further over the years using un-toasted larger format barrels and neutral oak. Their work with indigenous vineyard yeasts and organic yeasts has resulted in a greater degree of purity and vinosity in the wine.

### Pinotage 2020

Lifted wild herbs, spice, fresh-turned earth and dry-aged beef aromas with clove and pink peppercorn complement fruit aromas of mulberries, blueberries and black plum. The palate is bright, dry and tight, with a chalky mineral finish. This is an exquisite and classic expression of South Africa’s unique addition to the world of fine red wine.

Southern Right is once again contributing to South Africa’s Pinotage renaissance with a classically styled, medium-bodied grape expression that remains hard to place. While being quintessential Walker Bay Pinotage, the aesthetic seems to be somewhere between the Northern Rhone and Northern Italy.

### Sauvignon Blanc 2020

Prominent yellow apple, nectarine and lemon zest aromas with a particularly saline, mineral, chalky dry palate and lemon and quince flavours. The wine has a layered and textured coating to its dry mineral core and finishes bright, pure and long.

True to Southern Right, this wine is a less varietal expression of this potentially excessive grape. The focus is on Sauvignon Blanc as a fine wine expression of site and soil ahead of the variety. Layered complexity, minerality and length at moderate alcohol remain a signature.





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**ASHBOURNE** - Anthony Hamilton Russell founded Ashbourne in 1996 to create a single, extraordinary Pinotage from a cool, privileged clay and iron-rich site in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley appellation. This was the first Pinotage from the appellation. Research into the best possible white wine expression of the sandstone-derived soils on the property led to the creation of the amphora fermented and aged Ashbourne Sandstone blend as a white wine partner - the first amphora fermented and aged wine in South Africa. These are rare, small production wines by design and are made exclusively from Ashbourne's vineyards. Ashbourne is a family name and symbolises the close links to the Hamilton Russell family, both in terms of geographic proximity and quality ethic.

### Ashbourne Sandstone 2020

This is one of their great vintages. This amphora fermented and aged wine (the first in South Africa) is their best expression of the higher altitude sandstone-derived soils on the Ashbourne property. It could be regarded as a perfect example of a cool, maritime white blend, from lighter structured sandstone soils should express, versus the fuller, plumper, softer, sweeter, warmer climate (often Chenin Blanc based) white blends from South Africa. The focus is on non-varietal vinosity and layered complexity using a mix of early ripening grapes, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and Semillon.

Lemon zest, Yuzu (limes), yellow apples and grapefruit with subtle wet stone and eggshell on the nose, combined with warm bread and white flowers. Lemon and lemon rind follow through on the palate with hints of blood orange and bergamot. The wine is bright and pure with vibrant and persistent acidity beautifully balanced by a generous viscous glycerol coating, a hard mineral core and a long saline finish.

### Ashbourne Pinotage 2018

Ashbourne Pinotage is a particularly classic, cool climate "Old World" expression of the variety. From the maiden release in 2001, this benchmark wine has redefined South Africa's own red grape variety, Pinotage, with its classic, refined styling and unique complex character. This is a wine unlike anything else, intense, rich, yet elegant and savoury, with a beautiful underlying minerality. Very small production makes this a discovery wine and a highly allocated one. This is the 18th vintage (not all released) of this unique expression of South Africa's "national" grape Pinotage. Ashbourne has gained a reputation for confounding people in blind tastings. It is always regarded as a classically styled fine-wine; it is only very rarely placed as South African and extremely seldom as Pinotage. With the 2018, Ashbourne continues the leading role this wine plays in the South African Pinotage renaissance.

Black plum, cranberry and pomegranate combine with hints of clove, cedar, iron, dry-aged beef and turned earth on the nose. The palate is tight, bright and pure, with flavours of cranberry and pomegranate. There is a marked minerality behind vibrant fine-grained, dry tannins. This is an elegant, tensile wine that is built to last a very long time. Structurally (and aesthetically), it seems to be somewhere between young Bordeaux and Barolo.

