

ALMENKERK WINE ESTATE

CHARDONNAY 2020

Estate Wine & Single vineyard wine



The grapes used to make this wine are all from the same block, called *Annabelle* after our eldest daughter. This sandy loam block is located on the coldest site of the farm; assuring us of winter frost every winter and thus providing the Chardonnay vines with the required cold units to bud uniformly year after year. The vines are not irrigated throughout the ripening season, forcing them to dig their roots deeper in search of water.

The oldest portion (clone 3) was planted in 2005 and forms the backbone of our Chardonnay. The newer planting (clone 95) was only planted in 2011 and adds complexity.

Through the use of NDVI photography and satellite images, we have split the block into 4 units that are picked on different days in order to get full ripeness for the respective vigour zones. These zones are managed individually and will be subjected to varying degrees and methods of leaf plucking, tipping, topping and green harvesting.

Through our sustainable practices of enhancing soil health (e.g. packing the pruning canes under the vines, use of cover crops & introducing microbial life) we are able to farm without herbicides or inorganic fertilisers. This results in healthier vines, fully ripe grapes at lower sugar levels and wines with less residues and lower alcohol levels.

Harvest Notes

Picking decisions at Almenkerk are made by tasting the grapes daily during the harvest season. With Chardonnay, we look for phenolic ripeness while retaining the natural acidity our cool climate offers us.

Prior to harvest we get a small team to walk the 13 rows of each zone and drop any bunches that are not perfectly healthy or fully ripe.

Harvesting takes place early in the morning only to keep the temperature of the grapes low. All grapes are hand-picked into small lug boxes to prevent compaction. Since we do not use sulfur in the early stages of the winemaking process, selection of only the healthiest grapes is crucial. We do a double sorting in the vineyard and a last meticulous sorting at the cellar to ensure clean fruit flavours.

The various vigour-zones are picked & vinified separately to allow the blending decision to be postponed until just before bottling.

Winemaking

After gentle pressing and cold settling, the wine is gravity-fed into small French oak barrels (228 -300L) of which 26.5% is new barrels and left to start natural (wild yeast) fermentation. Barrel selection is based on 10 years of experience working the same grapes from the same block.

Completing fermentation can take from 3 weeks to 3 months for individual barrels.

After fermentation, the wine undergoes lees contact for an average of 10 months on the gross lees without bâtonnage. Newer barrels are left longer (11 months) to achieve full integration while older barrels are emptied at 8-9 months to retain freshness.

All batches & barrel treatments are kept separately. Each barrel gets assessed individually for its suitability in our Almenkerk range.

Tasting Notes

The complex nose leads with pomelo, lemon-tree flower, pineapple, oatmeal, fresh coconut and vanilla pods underbuilt by a floral tone that underscores its minerality. Judiciously but unapologetically wooded, the blond toast characters complement the fruit. The zesty palate is softened by the lees contact, leading to a lingering finish. Typical Elgin cool-climate elegance.

This wine will complement fattier and rich fish dishes such as sashimi or prepared, as well as cooked shellfish. It works well with seared foie grass, complex salads and most cheeses.

Will drink youthfully for the next 2-5 years and can be cellared up to 10 years.

Limited Production

Only 4'837 bottles were made of this vintage, a limited number of magnums are available. All bottles are numbered.

Awards & Accolades

Wine Analysis

pH: 3.34
TA: 6.50 g/L
Alc: 13.72%
RS: 2.7 g/L

Vineyard

Aspect	South facing lower slope
Elevation	189-201m ASL
Soil type	lighter textured clayey-loam soils (Tukulu, Escourt)
Clone	CY3 & CY95
Rootstock	101-14 Mgt.
Planting year	2005 & 2011
Ha planted	1.2 ha
Average tons	9 tons p/ha
Irrigation	Drip irrigation, post-harvest exclusively
Vines per ha	2424 vines (1.5m spacing, 2.75m rows)
Trellis system	5-wire moveable VSP (Vertical Shoot Positioning)
Harvest dates	24 February – 13 March 2020