



BELLINGHAM
FOUNDED IN 1693

BELLINGHAM 2017 – SQUEEZED HARVEST YET SUPERLATIVE GRAPES

Niel Groenewald reckons that the 2017 vintage is one of the best he's had so far during his 13 years as the Bellingham winemaker. "Everything worked in our favour," he says. "I rate it higher than 2015, possibly even as good as 2009. Certainly the wines are a lot more accessible earlier than we've had for a long time."

Most of the fruit is sourced from the Perdeberg and from Stellenbosch, particularly from Bottelary Hills and the Klapmuts area. "We brought in 74% of the grapes in just two weeks," Groenewald exclaims. "Talk about crazy pressure and crunch time in the cellar! It is such a good vintage that the fermenting wines didn't need a long extraction time on the skins. Everything was ready faster."

"Especially in the dryland areas, there was a bit of extra rain in the vineyards relative to the 2016 vintage," says Groenewald. "Not that much of it reached the big dams such as Theewaterskloof, but farmers in the Swartland weren't crying like they did last year and tonnages were up across the board in the areas that we source from – also including Darling, Durbanville and a little bit from Elgin."



“We buy four times as much as we need of the Bernard Series quality and rely on a filter-down process to benefit the quality of bigger volume wines such as the Homestead series. I am very happy with the Shiraz from Paarl and we’ve also got a very good Shiraz from Durbanville this year – alcohol at around 13, 13-and-a-half, and lots of black pepper in the Northern Rhône style, with some white pepper character adding delicacy.”

The Homestead Pinotage and Chardonnay are very Stellenbosch-specific. The Sauvignon Blanc, from the Durbanville area mainly, is “above average”, and the team has been experimenting with some Cabernet Franc and some old-vine Cinsaut – I’m thinking bigger than under the (experimental) Playpen label,” says Groenewald. “We could well introduce it to the Bernard Series soon.”

“The wines of 2017 have great extraction, concentration. Good analyses – high acid and low pH – promise freshness and longevity.” - Niel Groenewald, Winemaker



According to DGB viticulturist Stephan Joubert: “The Bernard Series Pinotage and Chenin Blanc are both particularly exciting – the old-vine Chenin mostly from Bottelary and Polkadraai Hills in Stellenbosch, some from Durbanville and Agter-Paarl.” “The Chenin and the Pinotage are exceptional,” concurs Groenewald, divulging that the group’s successful relationship with the many suppliers is ongoing. The wines of 2017 have great extraction, concentration. Good analyses – high acid and low pH – promise freshness and longevity. And investment in the cellar makes for exciting times: Bellingham now has the use of some large foudre barrels, egg-shaped Apollo tanks and clay amphorae expected to support objectives that include giving texture and adding freshness to what goes in the bottle.



Yearly Harvest Summary:

VINTAGE	GENERAL RATING	OTHER COMMENT
2017	Very, very good	Short vintage, no heat waves, cool nights and a very cool January
2016	Fair to good	Short, dry, hot vintage
2015	Very, very good	Round, rich wines with concentrated flavours
2014	Fair to good	Wet; some elegant whites, good medium-bodied
2013	Fair to good	Hot vintage; big, solid wines, good concentration
2012	Fair to good	Cool vintage; some of the reds surprisingly
2011	Average to good	Hot, short vintage
2010	Average to good	Rich, ripe styles
2009	Very, very good	Big wines
2008	Average to good	Elegant, fresh
2007	Fair to good	Structure, elegance