



**2011
Luipaardsberg
Merlot**



**DURBANVILLE
HILLS**

Background

Nine leading vineyard owners in the Durbanville district joined forces with Distell to create Durbanville Hills with the aim of promoting the regional individuality of this prime wine-growing area. The striking Durbanville Hills cellar sits on the side of a series of rolling hills with magnificent views of Table Mountain and Table Bay - the very geography that lies at the heart of what makes the wines so unique. The Durbanville ward is considered one of the Cape's coolest wine regions, thanks to the sea breezes that drift inland from False Bay and Table Bay and the late afternoon mists that bathe the slopes. These conditions are ideal for the slow ripening of the grapes, allowing them to develop their full-flavoured, intense character. Grapes are sourced only from the shareholder-growers, all of whom farm within the limited appellation of Durbanville. Meticulous canopy management promotes concentration of varietal flavour and colour. Cellar master Martin Moore uses highly advanced cellar technology to ensure optimal extraction of colour and flavour.

Sustainable practices include maintaining the disciplines imposed by International Environmental Standard ISO 140001 such as in the treatment of waste water back to irrigation quality. In all its vineyards the growing practices prescribed by IPW (Integrated Production of Wine) are followed. These are designed to sustain natural resources. In addition, the members protect on their farms 220 ha of endangered Renosterveld as part of the Biodiversity Wine Initiative (BWI).

The name of this wine derives from the earliest description of the hills of Durbanville. To the 17th century Dutch settlers the indigenous flora with its gold and dark green spots, set against the slopes, recalled the exotic-looking leopard they encountered after arriving at the Cape.

The vineyards (vineyard consultant: Drikus Heyns)

The grapes for this vineyard-specific wine were sourced from trellised vines grown in deep, red soils on the valley floor. The vineyard, established in 1991, produces no more than 6 tons per hectare.

The winemaking

The grapes were harvested by hand at full ripeness, when showing concentrated flavours of mulberry and mint. After 24 hours of cold soaking, the must was fermented on the skins (between 26°C and 28°C) in closed, specially designed auto fermenters until dry. During this period the maximum fruit, colour and tannin extraction from the skins was made possible through very soft, continuous timer-regulated pump-over cycles. To soften the texture, the wine was left on the skins for two weeks after the fermentation period. Controlled malolactic fermentation took place in tank after which the wine was matured for 14 months in tight-grained new French oak, before bottling.

Winemaker

Martin Moore and Wilhelm Coetzee

Colour

Ruby red

Nose

Concentration of ripe fruit, mint chocolate and mocha on the nose with hints of spicy plums, star anise and cinnamon.

Taste

Rich and full-bodied with well integrated tannins, hints of spice, ripe fruit on the mid-palate and a lingering aftertaste.

Food pairing

An ideal partner to rich oxtail, ostrich fillet with a cranberry reduction, and duck breast. Also enjoyable with Cheddar and Stilton cheeses.

Alcohol

14.5 %

Residual sugar

2.9 g/l

Total acidity

5.6 g/l

pH

3.64