

TASTING AND TECHNICAL NOTES

CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ 2002

A NEAR PERFECT VINTAGE MARRED ONLY BY A SLIGHT DROP IN YIELD ★★★★★

TASTING NOTES	Lush ripe plum-prunes; densely packed with loads of fruit laced with spice. Lucious palate, supple and harmonious structure with a complex flavour range from sweet to savory.
VINEYARD	Grapes are predominantly sourced from the estate's Wallcliffe and Trinders vineyards grown on gravel laterite soils derived from weathered granite over clay sub-soils, and planted 26 and 13 years ago respectively. The vines are vertically trained and cane pruned. A portion of the vineyard is trained by both the Scott Henry and TK2 method to help control vigorous growth. Shoot and leaf removal is employed during the course of the season on all vines. The Karri Park vineyard, located on coastal sands in the southern part of the cape, is a new addition to the blend and offers fruit exhibiting intense peppery flavours.
THE SEASON	Budburst got off to an early start after a relatively warm and dry winter. However September and October were quite wet, windy and cold which slowed down shoot growth and had a detrimental effect on flowering. Warmer weather in November saw the vines regain vigour and by December, supplementary irrigation was applied to keep the vines from stress. Another fine vintage seemed assured, assisted by judicious shoot removal and canopy management during December to February. Harvest commenced a week or so later than usual. Grape flavours were highly aromatic this year with higher than normal acid levels. This was due to an unusually mild December to March period and lower than average yields.
HARVEST	Harvested over a ten day period from the 4th April to the 15th April in excellent weather and just before the first autumn rains. Sugar levels ranged from 23.5 brix to 25.9 brix and acids levels ranged between 5.6 and 7.2 grams per litre. The mild conditions resulted in vibrant fruit flavours and more spice characters than seen in warmer years. Yields were quite moderate ranging between 5.2 and 7.3 tonnes per hectare, enhancing flavour concentration.
VINIFICATION	About 20 per cent of the fruit was hand-picked and conveyed to the fermenters as whole bunches with the balance machine-harvested and crushed on top of the bunches. Fermentation proceeded rapidly with the ferment warmed to 32C to achieve a fast initial maceration. On the 7th day, the wine was drained off and the skins gently pressed with hard pressings kept separate. Malolactic fermentation followed quickly in large vats after which the wine underwent a series of rackings. Most of the wine was aged in a combination of French and American oak barrels, 30 per cent of which were new; the rest was aged in large oak vats. Oak plays a subservient role to fruit flavours. Blending and bottling took place in October 2002 Analysis: 14.8% alcohol; pH 3.54; acidity 6.2g/l.