

# Lourensford 2017 grape harvest promising despite drought, fires

Despite the impact of the ongoing drought in the Western Cape and fires that swept through the Helderberg Mountains in January 2017, Lourensford Estate delivered a 2017 grape harvest of good quality. According to Hannes Nel, Lourensford Estate cellar master, the vines are healthy, the crop levels normal and the quality very promising.



Lourensford harvest 2017

“The harvest dates are within the normal range, compared to the very early and short harvest period of 2016. In fact, it is a cool vintage without any major heat spells so far. We experienced cool nights and moderate temperatures with the grapes maturing at a slower rate. This will enable us to produce wines with higher natural acidity, healthy pH levels, and lower alcohol levels,” explains Nel.

“We lost Fynbos and plantations on the estate, but no vineyards were destroyed by the fires. The combination of high winds and the unique weather conditions in the Helderberg basin mean the smoke did not linger in the vines.”

## So how do wine producers cope with drought, fires and other challenges nature throws at them?

“As a winegrower, you need to be something of a weather expert and constantly look at various weather forecasts,” says Nel. “We irrigate the vines a little bit to protect them ahead of time if we expect extreme heat conditions. We also allow for enough leaf cover in case of extreme heat spells, to ensure the bunches are protected. If we expect rain and prolonged wet conditions, we reduce the leaf cover. This encourages air flow in the vineyards, preventing rot especially in our delicate Sauvignon blanc vineyards.”

Lourensford harvests Chardonnay, Viognier, Sauvignon blanc, Merlot, Pinot noir, Shiraz, Mourvedre and Cabernet Sauvignon, with Chardonnay for the MCC Brut blanc first up on 18 January 2017 and Cabernet Sauvignon the final grapes picked in March 2017.

“We expect the Chardonnay, Viognier, and Merlot to be the stars of the 2017 vintage,” says Nel.

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