

DAMASCENE

DAMASCENE SWARTLAND SYRAH 2023

WINEMAKER

ORIGIN

VARIETALS

Jean Smit

Swartland

100% Syrah



TASTING NOTES

A slightly moodier expression than the rest of the Damascene Syrahs. The vanguard carries blackberry fruit, aniseed, mineral hints of iron, and herbal oreganum.

The palate is pleasantly muscled, and forms arguably the most savoury of the three Damascene Syrahs. The wine possesses a solid core of wild blackberry and maraschino cherry, along with savoury notes of roasted plum skins, and olives. All of this is then peppered with herbal accents of fennel, and rocket leaf, framed by firm suede-like tannins. The finish forms a dovetail of red currants, black cherry, black pepper, and aniseed spice.

NOTES ON THE SWARTLAND 2023 VINTAGE

The 2023 harvest was marked by hot, dry weather. As was the case with most regions, rains in February and March triggered a boost in powdery mildew pressure, and we had to be on our toes to manage the canopies correctly. That said, having an elevated vineyard site, that is exposed to slightly more wind, helps to give any viticultural team the upper hand in situations like these.

When all was said and done, harvest dates were slightly earlier than last year, especially for our granitic Syrah parcels. Overall yields were considerably down from 2022.

VINEYARD

There are three vineyards supplying the fruit for this wine. The first bush vine block is situated on the foothills of the Paardeberg, on Jakkalsfontein farm; deeply rooted in ancient free-draining decomposed granite soils. This parcel makes up 25% of the blend, bringing perfume, spice and purity.

The second vineyard is an echalas vineyard planted at high altitude on the schist-covered western slopes of the Kasteelberg.

The final vineyard, which makes up the largest portion of the wine, is also from the western foothills of the Kasteelberg at an altitude of 340m ASL. This slope consists of an outcrop of schist that faces southeast, and shows plenty of structure and depth of fruit. The Damascene team planted another 2ha of vines on this site in 2023.

WINEMAKING

This Swartland Syrah has a concentration that is typical of low-yielding vineyards planted in Mediterranean climatic conditions. In light of this, we used whole berry-fermentation to make sure we lost none of the natural elegance promised by the site. Roughly 75% of the fruit was fermented as whole clusters, and fermentation took place in a combination of tulip-shaped concrete fermenters and 1000-litre conical oak vats. Pump-overs occurred no more than twice a day during peak fermentation, and we employed submerged cap fermentation on all fruit that came from vines rooted in schist soils. This technique helps to ensure a broader mouthfeel and better tannin integration. Both primary fermentation and malolactic conversion took place spontaneously, and the wine was then matured on its gross lees in 2000-litre Austrian oak vats for 11 months. No racking took place during this time. The wine was bottled without fining to ensure a more complex and authentic expression of Syrah.

MATURATION

This wine will be at its most expressive between 3 and 5 years.

TOTAL PRODUCTION

4,050 x 750ml and 110 x 1.5L

BOTTLING DATE

12 January 2024

Alc: 12.93% Vol | pH: 3.76 | TA: 5.1 g/L | RS: 1.3 g/L

It's that transformative moment. A singular experience of shifting perspective. DAMASCENE is about seeking out memorable vineyards and sites that showcase the incredible diversity of character in the various terroirs around the Western Cape.