



DE TOREN



EMIL AND SONETTE DEN DULK LEFT THE BUSTLING METROPOLIS OF JOHANNESBURG IN 1991 TO SEEK SOLACE IN THE SERENE CAPE WINELANDS. THEY STUMBLED UPON WHAT EMIL REFERS TO AS “A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN” IN THE POLKADRAAI HILLS, WITH THE MAGNIFICENT STELLENBOSCH MOUNTAINS AS BACKDROP. IT WAS HERE THAT THEY ESTABLISHED DE TOREN PRIVATE CELLAR.

With the help of specialists from the University of Stellenbosch, Emil created a 25 year growth plan for the farm and set out to carve a niche for his boutique estate by creating South Africa’s first five-varietal Bordeaux blend, the now legendary Fusion V.

Situated on southern facing slopes overlooking False Bay at altitudes of 170 to 200 meters, De Toren enjoys the cooling effect of constant ocean breezes. Approximately 22 of the farm’s 26 hectares are under vine, planted to the Bordeaux varietals of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot. 18 different clones are grown on 10 different soil types (the most prevalent being Tukulu/Pinedene, Sterkspruit and Estcourt), with average yields of 8 tons per hectare. Detailed analysis is conducted to determine ideal varietals, clones, and rootstocks for the various soil types.

The farm makes use of extensive Infrared Aerial Imaging in order to monitor ripeness in various vineyard blocks and determine optimal picking times. All harvesting is done by hand in the cool early morning hours, and the grapes are transported to the winery in small batches, where they are hand sorted and gently basket pressed. The winery is operated completely on gravity flow principles; a 4000 liter pressure tank in an elevator shaft (the “Tower” from which the winery takes its name) is cleverly used to exploit gravity in transporting wine between tanks and barrels without the use of mechanical pumps. As a result of De Toren’s innovative, minimal intervention production methods, their wines were among the first South African bottlings to qualify for IP (Integrated Production) certification by the Wine and Spirit Board.

Winemaker Albie Koch has traveled extensively and gained valuable hands-on experience in cellars throughout France and California. The young wunderkind also cut his teeth at several South African wineries – including a stint at Bellingham under the brilliant Charles Hopkins – before signing on as De Toren’s first winemaker. His maiden 1999 vintage of Fusion V took the international wine world by storm, garnering great critical acclaim and instantly becoming one of the Cape’s most iconic and sought-after bottlings. De Toren created a splash once again when they recently introduced “Z,” a Merlot-based “Right Bank” Bordeaux blend to complement the Cabernet-dominant “Left Bank” flagship.

De Toren seems to have found the key to success with their simple winemaking philosophy: gentle handling, no pumps, and minimum manipulation. Armed with this winning formula, the boutique farm has quickly risen to join the ranks of South Africa’s winemaking elite with their dazzling, stylish, and complex five-varietal Bordeaux blends.

