

# KLEIN CONSTANTIA

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## HARVEST REPORT 2008

### **Numbers:**

Total Muscat de Frontignan crushed: 52,240 kg

### **Winter 2007**

One of the wettest in recent times. Over 2000mm of rainfall compared to a recent yearly average of 1200mm. Two separate events where 140mm fell in a 48hr period. Biblical stuff.

### **Spring**

Due to the cold, water saturated soils root growth was delayed by a few weeks, and therefore budburst. Excessive plant vigor was a major feature of the early growing season due to the amazing reserves of soil water and the long period of dormancy the plants enjoyed during winter. Their growth required strict canopy management application, with lots of suckering and above all leaf removal in certain zones of the canopy in order to allow light and wind penetration to prevent the development of fungal disease.

### **Summer**

Generally a very cool summer by our standards, with only one day recorded above 30°C. We had a few days in the high 20's during February, but escaped the scorching heat waves thanks to our cool position on the peninsula. Some rain fell during summer fuelling fungal outbreaks and berry splitting in some vineyards. Once again, had it not been for the timely and well-managed leaf breaking the vineyard teams performed, we would have lost a far higher percentage of our crop this year.

### **Harvest**

Muscat de Frontignan was harvested over a period of one month from the 7th of March up to the second week in April. Over two tons were harvested as single raisins, and the rest carefully selected 'tries' as done in Tokaji and Sauternes. The resultant musts are still fermenting in barrel, and showing good levels of acidity with flavors of dried mangoes and pineapples at this stage.





## ***Vin de Constance: The Making of a Legend***



This year we made some important changes to the way in which the Muscat de Frontignan grapes are harvested in order to make the Vin de Constance. Teams of harvesters started going through the vineyard from the end of February to harvest raisin by individual raisin those that were perfectly ripe. Not only is this a very time consuming exercise (it took two weeks to harvest two tons, which amounts to approximately 10 kg per person per day) but it requires an enormous level of concentration and considerable skill.

Once the raisins came in, they were left to macerate under their own weight in specially designed bins with sieves to allow for the recovery of their golden nectar. This will be used at a later stage to adjust the sugar level of some of the Vin de Constance fermentations that are currently underway in 500L barrels.



Although we only managed to harvest two tons in this way this year, the blueprint has been set, and we will continue to increase the number of tons of raisins harvested in this way with each new vintage.



### ***Harvest anecdote***

I am not superstitious, but when fish start falling from the sky I reassess my position. It was about 06.30 in the morning, and I was finishing the last few strokes of my shave when I heard the phone ring. I knew it would be Flo, probably asking where the hell I was. We were harvesting the Perdeblokke and the picking team had come in early. The stakes were high.

'Ad, you'll never guess what just happened to me' said the excited voice on the other side.

'You saw the Rooikat take an Egyptian Goose in mid-flight?' I said wishfully.

'A Fish Eagle dropped a trout almost on my head! I was driving through the vineyard when this thing sommer fell out of the sky! I thought it was a falling branch at first then I saw it lying there on the ground about six meters ahead of me. The eagle made a few turns and flew off.'

'A sign from above?' I chuckled.

'Jussie man, we're blessed' he said, 'This is going to be a special day.'



It is only a 15 minute drive to work from where I live, so by the time I arrived Flo had had time to recompose himself. We were all pretty jittery inspecting the kissies of grapes as they came out of the vine rows. Not an ounce of rot and super flavors, was the general consensus.

Flo presented the doubly unlucky fish from his bakkie. It looked like something Jamie Oliver had prepared with a full-body rub, only it wasn't coriander and black pepper but granules of decomposed Table Mountain granite that had adhered on impact. 'We're going to have to wash that off before we braai it' said Lowell. Then he was off to the local bakery to get the croissants.

We keep dry vine cuttings handy for moments like this, so with not too much effort we managed to produce a nice bed of coals on which to braai the butterflied trout, drizzled in lemon juice and a bit of salt. Now I wonder which wine would go really well with that?

-Adam Mason

### ***Harvest Lunch***

The 22 April marked the real end of harvest for the farm as we all sat around a stretch-limo-like table in the cellar to share a celebratory harvest lunch. Well known chef Pete-Goffe Wood and his team catered for 90 covers and wheeled out his enormous braai (he calls it the SPUTNIK) to do the deed.

