



THELEMA

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER WITH PULIGNY-MONTRACHET IN THE MID 1970S CONVINCED GYLES WEBB TO ABANDON HIS ACCOUNTING CAREER IN DURBAN TO PURSUE A DEGREE IN VITICULTURE AND OENOLOGY AT STELLENBOSCH. AFTER COMPLETING HIS STUDIES IN 1979, WEBB WORKED STINTS AT SEVERAL WINERIES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ABROAD BEFORE HE AND HIS WIFE'S FAMILY PURCHASED THE BREATHTAKING 157 HECTARE SITE THAT WOULD SOON BECOME THE HERALDED THELEMA MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS.

In July 1983, the McLean Family Trust bought a run-down old fruit farm situated at the top of the Helshoogte Pass, about 6 kilometers outside of Stellenbosch. The purchase marked the culmination of Gyles and Barbara Webb's long search for that rare location where exceptional wines could be crafted. Thelema is situated on the slopes of the Simonsberg, with mainly south-facing aspects that afford spectacular views of the Simonsberg, Drakenstein and Jonkershoek mountains. Elevations ranging from 370 to 640 meters above sea level make the estate one of the coolest and highest wine farms in the Stellenbosch area. The vineyard soils are composed predominantly of red Hutton and Tukulu, both forms of decomposed granite.

Although wine had been produced on the property in the early part of the century and table grapes were grown until the late 1960s, there were no vines on the farm at the time of purchase. Gyles Webb immediately set about clearing the land and planting the farm to noble grape varieties. In October 1987, building started on the winery, and in 1988, Thelema produced its first vintage release, consisting of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Today the winery's range extends to also include world class examples of Riesling, Merlot, and Syrah, and Thelema has gained international acclaim as one of South Africa's elite wine producers.

In 2000, Gyles "Mr. Precision" Webb moved into the role of cellar master and handed over the winemaking reins to the talented Rudi Schultz. Thelema has continued its steady ascent under Rudi's keen hand, as evidenced by *Wine Spectator's* recent declaration that the estate's wines are **"among the few South African bottlings that can boast a solid track record of both quality and ageability."** The prestigious publication has also hailed Thelema's Cabernet Sauvignon as "one of the Cape's most consistently outstanding bottlings."

In 2002, Gyles and Barbara Webb purchased a second property in Elgin, a cool-climate coastal region that is quickly gaining a reputation for intense, aromatic whites. Wines from this property, bottled under the Sutherland label and packaged in screwcap, are vinified and bottled at the Stellenbosch estate. After just a few vintage releases, the Sutherland Sauvignon Blanc is already making quite a splash with US consumers and critics alike!

