



Newsletter June 2008

"Handcrafted" , natural winemaking and all that stuff... what does it mean at de Trafford?

It is such a pity how words which perfectly communicate a positive concept, get overused for marketing purposes and end up losing their integrity. I' ve seen "Handcrafted Wines" boldly printed across massive co-operative sheds! After a long and difficult harvest (and after sticking on thousands of wine labels, by hand, for this release), we owe it to our staff to highlight a few aspects of "handcrafted" at De Trafford:

Firstly the things we don' t add!!

NO YEAST. We have never added any yeast to any of our wines since we started in 1992.

NO WATER. Unlike the U.S. and Australia where it is widely used (even for high end wines), it is illegal in S.A.

NO ACID. Since the very hot 1998 vintage we have not made any acid additions of any kind to any of our wines.

NO SUGAR. This is illegal in South Africa. It amazes me how the French go on about their terroir and then dump bags of sugar in their wine.

NO ENZYMES ETC. There are a surprising number of products on the market that supposedly improve some aspect of the winemaking process. Although legal and harmless, we try and keep things as natural as possible. We do occasionally use malolactic culture to encourage some of our problem barrels.

NO CHIPS, STAVES ETC. Every wine we produce spends most of its "elevation" in traditional oak barrels, mostly 225l French oak.

NO ALCOHOL REDUCTION. The use via reverse osmosis or spinning cones is widely practiced in many New World countries including South Africa.

NO CONCENTRATION MACHINES. Widely practiced in many of the famous European regions, including some of the First Growths.

NO FILTRATION, except when absolutely necessary - so far only two white wines.

Back breaking and/or tedious manual work includes -

PICKING, PRUNING, SUCKERING and all other vineyard work is done by hand.

MINIMAL SPRAY PROGRAMME is well within IPW (Integrated Production of Wine) guidelines.

SULPHUR ADDITIONS ARE KEPT TO A MINIMUM. Also well within IPW guidelines.

FINING. We only use bentonite (a natural clay substance) for most of our Chenin Blanc barrels. Occasionally we decide to fine some of our red wines with fresh egg whites.

CAREFUL RACKING. When not using gravity, we push the wine gently with a compressor from barrel to barrel or into the blending and bottling tank.



ONLY BARRELS. All our wines go directly to barrels and each individual barrel has to be monitored on a regular basis. Even in a small winery like ours, this is a huge task.

First load of Petit Verdot from neighbouring Keermont vineyards

ESCOM BRING ON THE LOAD SHEDDING. By hand means we plug in very little for winemaking purposes - the destemmer/crusher, the compressor and the capsuling machine. We do hand punchdowns, use a hand basket press, bottle by gravity and put the cork in with a hand corker. All packaging is done by hand except the capsules, which are rolled on with a little machine.

WE HAVE A FACT SHEET FOR EVERY WINE WE RELEASE ON OUR WEBSITE. This describes the exact winemaking nuances from the vineyard details to any additions or manipulations that may have been made.

Getting back to the 2008 harvest

It was a great pleasure to have **Tremayne Smith** helping us this year. Tremayne recently graduated from Elsenburg College and has agreed to submit himself full time to "handcrafting" the vineyards and wine at our new [Malagas](#) project, near Cape Infanta. We were further blessed to have the assistance of **Jolene Hunter** who recently graduated from Stellenbosch University. She has been selected to do a 2 year Masters Degree in Anger, Loire, France. She is a talented young winemaker and we wish her much success. So it was fortuitous that we had such quality assistance during quite a difficult, drawn out harvest. It meant we could think on our feet instead of in a stupor of exhaustion.

The **growing season** was characterized by slightly above average rainfall which led to significantly higher growth. We had to battle to keep up with key vineyard management practices, but by veraison the vineyards were looking in good shape. Ripening was quite even and we only had to drop a small percentage of green bunches.

The **ripening period** was characterized by mini (short and moderate) heat waves alternating with irritating, but most fairly ineffectual, rainy days. Timing of each block or part block was crucial and hang time was generally longer than usual. By and large we seem to have got this about right. Consequently the tannins are also quite ripe and supple, while the fruit flavours are less ripe and attractively fresh - though lacking the intensity of the better vintages. Usually the challenge is unripe tannins and overripe fruit flavours. pH's were a little higher than usual due to the higher growth and longer hang time. To conclude, probably a vintage that will drink well early on without great maturation potential beyond 10 years or so. A drinkers vintage rather than a



Baby Rock Martins at the Elevation 393 House

collectors!

"The fabulous 2006 vintage"

At this early stage the wines look very promising with good colour, intense flavours and lots of good quality tannins."

Cut and paste from our April 2006 newsletter and the same impression persists. These are big wines, but well balanced, almost elegant with a refreshing line of minerality starting to emerge.

[Blueprint Shiraz 2006](#) We have made a number of small improvements in the vineyard and quality creeps closer to our Shiraz with every vintage.

(2005 92 points Wine Spectator. 4 stars Platter)

[Shiraz 2006](#) When we bottled the 2005, I thought we might never make a better Shiraz, but this, in its own way, is every bit as good.

(2005 94 points Wine Spectator. 5 stars Platter)

[Cabernet Sauvignon 2006](#) Layered, complex fruit and firm structure - classic De Trafford Cab.S.

(2005 not yet rated Wine Spectator. 4½ stars Platter)

[Elevation 393 2005](#) Simply the best - a selection of the best barrels of Cabernet Sauvignon; Merlot and Shiraz from our Mont Fleur vineyard, 393 metres above sea level.

(2004 not yet rated Wine Spectator. 4½ stars Platter)

Cork Policy

If you do come across a corked wine, please post the offending cork back to us and we will take it up with the particular cork supplier and depending on the outcome, replace or refund you accordingly.

Vintage Progress

Our [vertical tasting notes](#) on the website should assist you in deciding when to drink our older wines. We plan to present a few vertical tastings at the [Garden Cottage](#) during August (Wednesday 6, Wednesday 13 and Friday 15 August 2008). Please [contact us](#) if you are interested in attending.

LITHOGRAPHS – limited edition of signed and individually numbered canvas prints 25 x 25 cm of paintings by Rita Trafford, some of which are used for our Chenin Blanc and Straw Wine labels. See “[Paintings](#)” on our website.

NEXT RELEASES

Our Merlot 2006, Plan B 2007 and Chenin Blanc 2008 will be available in November/December 2008.

Please place orders as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.
We look forward to your visit, phone call, fax or email: info@detrafford.co.za

Best regards
David, Rita and the de Trafford team.

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