

Spice Route,
`Tarragon` Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2023
Swartland, Coastal Region, South Africa

Spice Route



Grape Varieties	100% Chenin Blanc
Winemaker	Charl du Plessis
Closure	Screwcap
ABV	13%
Residual Sugar	1.5g/L
Acidity	6g/L
Wine pH	3.51
Bottle Sizes	75cl
Notes	Vegetarian, Vegan

PRODUCER

Charles Back was a pioneer in the Swartland when he started Spice Route in 1998. "Without [Charles]...the Swartland would still be regarded as a rural backwater" wrote Tim Atkin. Today, the region is the source of many of South Africa's outstanding wines, yet Spice Route remains one of the best and most credible producers in the region, due largely to the fact that they own their own vineyards. Spice Route's 100 hectares of vineyards are situated in Malmesbury and Darling. The former, all bush trained on Malmesbury shale and red clay subsoils (the clay ensures the vineyards are dry grown), give the Grenache and Mourvèdre the intensity of fruit that makes this region so exciting. Winemaker Charl du Plessis has been with Charles for 15 years, and knows the region intimately. The winemaking is 'hands off', as Charl is keen to capture the flavours and structure of the outstanding fruit he has grown.

VINEYARDS

The fruit for this Chenin Blanc is sourced from vineyards planted in 1978 in the Swartland. The vines are planted on a south-east facing slope and are dry farmed, yielding small thick-skinned berries. The soils are predominantly koffiekliip (decomposed granite and iron-rich clay), known for producing rich and concentrated wines.

VINTAGE

Winter rainfall was low in the Swartland, which had an impact on yields. However, rain in November and December of 2022 just following fruit set was beneficial. Spice Route's vineyards did not experience the usual three to five day long heatwaves in late January and early February before harvest, and instead experienced only shorter one to two day heat spikes, which helped to retain freshness. Spice Route's yields were around 13% down, however fruit quality was excellent.

VINIFICATION

The grapes were harvested by hand, destalked and gently pressed before settling for 48 hours in stainless steel tanks. The juice was then transferred to 500 litre French oak barrels (12% new), for fermentation. The wine spent 8 months in barrel before bottling, enhancing the wine's naturally rich texture and aromatic complexity.

TASTING NOTES

The 2023 vintage has aromas of fresh pineapple, honey and yellow peach. On the palate, silky texture and vibrant acidity are complemented by notes of juicy stone fruit and lime peel. The finish is long and refreshing.