

Spice Route,
`Chakalaka` Swartland 2021
Swartland, Coastal Region, South Africa

Spice Route



Grape Varieties	22% Grenache 18% Carignan 17% Durif 17% Mourvèdre 17% Shiraz 9% Tannat
Winemaker	Charl du Plessis
Closure	Diam
ABV	14%
Residual Sugar	3.3g/L
Acidity	6.4g/L
Wine pH	3.39
Bottle Sizes	75cl
Notes	Vegetarian, Practising Organic, 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

Chakalaka is Spice Route's signature wine. It is a blend of six different grape varieties. The varieties for this vintage: Grenache, Carignan, Durif, Mourvèdre, Shiraz and Tannat were selected for their suitability to the Swartland's dry growing conditions. Fruit for this wine is sourced from predominantly dry-farmed bush vines, planted on Richter 99 rootstock, which is known for producing deep rooted vines. The region's deep iron-rich clay and decomposed granite soils have a good water retaining capacity and produce elegant and robust red wines.

VINTAGE

One of the Cape's best vintages, especially for Rhone varieties. 2021 saw delightfully warm conditions which allowed for an extended ripening period. The vineyard experienced minimal stress throughout the growing season. The longer ripening time allowed for extremely concentrated, aromatic, and healthy grapes which were able to reach optimal ripeness prior to harvest. Overall, an excellent vintage.

VINIFICATION

The grapes were hand harvested, destemmed and lightly crushed and then fermented in open top concrete fermenters ('kuipe'). Manual punching down took place during fermentation. The wines were then racked off and sent to barrels for malolactic fermentation and further ageing. Each component for the blend was matured in seasoned French and American oak for 12 months before blending occurred. Post blending, the final wine was returned to the same used oak barrels for further maturation before bottling.

TASTING NOTES

This wine is deep ruby in colour. On the nose, spicy aromas mingle with blackcurrant, cherry and plum fruit. Full-bodied and rich, the palate displays well-integrated oak and smooth, structured tannins. Chakalaka, a Zulu word that implies togetherness, refers to a South African blend of spices, used to add flavour to local dishes. This wine is inspired by the unique combination of flavours.