

# Pilgrim Wines Chenin Blanc 2023

## Terroir & Site

This 2023 vintage marks a significant shift in origin — now from the **Swartland** side of the Paardeberg rather than WO Voor Paardeberg. The vineyard lies in the **Langkloof** area, on the **northern slopes of the Paardeberg**, an area that has earned its place among South Africa's most revered Chenin Blanc terroirs.

This Single Vineyard block forms part of the **Old Vine Project**, originally **planted in 1982**, and showcases the classic hallmarks of mature Swartland Chenin — deep roots, low yields, and profound site expression. The soils are **decomposed granite with interspersed layers of shale**, giving a powerful mineral backbone and extraordinary textural depth to the wine.

This was the **first and only** vintage we were able to produce from this exceptional vineyard. Sadly, the block was **uprooted after the 2023 harvest**, having been deemed uneconomical to maintain — a sobering reminder that, as much as wine is art, it is also agriculture. Despite this, we are immensely proud to have captured the vineyard's swan song in a single, remarkable bottling that stands as a testament to the site's brilliance.

## Harvest Report

Winter 2022 was cold and wet, as per normal — except that “normal” is no longer what we call an ever-changing climate system. With a major **El Niño** climate event coming into play in the northern parts of the world, we knew going into the season we could expect the unexpected.

We started the picking season quite early, and so it seemed to continue throughout. The first to arrive was **Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc and Bastardo**, a full **two weeks earlier** than usual. As it turned out, we had a **classic early vintage** with fresh acidities and amazing fruit development. There was a very heavy early patch of rain which continued into an early rainy season, catching many producers unprepared.

For our Chenin, this translated into beautifully **balanced, fruit-driven ripeness** with **vibrant acidity**, a vintage of clarity, freshness, and expression.

## Vinification Method

The grapes were **de-stemmed and crushed**, with the majority (**±80%**) undergoing **natural fermentation directly in small, neutral French oak barrels**. The remaining **20%** was fermented **on the skins**, split between two approaches:

- roughly **10%** underwent a **cool soak** before pressing,
- and the other **10%** was **fermented on the skins until dry**, then pressed and transferred to barrel.

All barrels were kept separate and tasted regularly before blending after **eight months**. Maturation continued for a total of **twelve months in barrel**, followed by **a further year in bottle** prior to release.

The result is a wine of remarkable depth, purity, and age-worthiness. The old barrels contribute no overt oak flavour — only gentle oxidative integration and mouthfeel enhancement.

This 2023 vintage proudly earned **Pilgrim Wines' first-ever Platter's 5-Star rating**, a milestone achievement that speaks to the pedigree of both the vineyard and the winemaking.

## Tasting Notes

**Colour:** Pale straw with a subtle golden edge, indicating maturity and depth.

**Nose:** Highly expressive and exuberant — layers of **ripe stone fruit, white pear**, and **yellow peach**, intertwined with a distinct **Swartland minerality** and hints of **fynbos** and **subtle citrus pith**. There's even a faint **sauvignon-like aromatic lift**, adding complexity and brightness.

**Palate:** Broad, textured, and commanding. This is perhaps the **most full-bodied Chenin Blanc** we've ever made, showing immense palate weight and precision. The touch of skin contact imparts delicate notes of **marzipan, pith**, and fine **phenolic grip**, elevating structure and balance. The tannin interplay from the skins stabilises the wine naturally, preserving its **incredible freshness** and **long ageing potential**.

An unforgettable expression of an irreplaceable vineyard — profound, textural, and truly timeless.

## Analysis

Alc: 13.5% Vol.

RS: 2.6 g/l

pH: 3.45

TA: 5.6 g/l

VA: 0.60 g/l