

Pilgrim Wines Syrah 2023

Vineyard Information

Perched on a **northeastern-facing slope** of **Stellenbosch Mountain**, these Syrah vines enjoy uninterrupted views across the valley and out toward Table Mountain. The vineyard remains **carefully isolated** to protect it from neighboring leaf roll infections and has been **meticulously farmed** to produce fruit of purity and power.

The decomposed **red-brown granitic soils** typical of this part of Stellenbosch provide a perfect foundation for Syrah — well-drained, low in fertility, and able to express minerality and texture with remarkable precision.

This 2023 vintage was produced **exclusively from clone SH7C**, the celebrated Australian clone known for its **lush, fruit-forward personality**. Unlike the dual-clone combination used in earlier vintages, this release focuses purely on the expressive, opulent side of Syrah — generous red and black fruits, supple tannins, and aromatic intensity.

Harvest Report

Winter 2022 was cold and wet — a “normal” that’s no longer truly normal in our ever-changing climate. With a major **El Niño system** in the northern hemisphere, we anticipated unpredictability, yet the season proved one of **classic timing and balance**.

The **2023 growing season** unfolded evenly. Following an unusually wet **spring (September 2023 being the wettest in 50 years)**, vine growth was vigorous but well-managed. As **summer arrived**, warm and dry conditions took hold, ensuring **steady ripening and healthy fruit**.

The resulting crop displayed **excellent natural acidity**, deep colour, and generous fruit concentration — hallmarks of a near-perfect Syrah year. Harvest took place in **late February 2023**, with grapes arriving cool and pristine at the cellar.

Winemaking Practices

From the outset, the intention remained to craft a Syrah of **balance and poise** — a “golden mean” between the traditional, fruit-laden South African Shiraz style and the lean, peppery Syrah expression favoured by the modern movement.

For the 2023 vintage, we introduced **30% whole-bunch fermentation**, leveraging stems to amplify aromatic lift and structural tension. Additionally, **20% of the de-stemmed stalks** were **added back into the ferment**, providing a controlled measure of **stalk spice** and enhancing phenolic grip.

Fermentation took place in small open-top fermenters, with **gentle extraction** through regular punch-downs and a carefully managed oxygen regime. The inclusion of stalks contributed both **white and black pepper nuances**, restoring spice complexity often subdued in clone SH7C.

After pressing, the wine was racked to **neutral and third-fill French oak barrels**, where it matured gracefully for **24 months**. The long *élevage* refined the tannins into a silk-like texture, integrated the fruit, and allowed natural micro-oxidation to polish the wine’s aromatic layers.

Tasting Notes

Colour: Deep **ruby-red core** with a youthful violet rim — vibrant and clear, hinting at the wine's freshness and longevity.

Nose: Explosively **fruit-driven**, the aromatics burst with **black cherry, mulberry, plum, and ripe raspberry**, framed by delicate hints of **white and black pepper, violet**, and **subtle smoky spice** from the whole-bunch inclusion. Over time in the glass, notes of **dried herbs, aniseed, and cedar** gently emerge.

Palate: Smooth, focused, and layered. The palate carries a beautiful **weight and volume** yet remains **light on its feet** — the hallmark of great Syrah. Velvety tannins glide seamlessly across the mouth, balanced by **bright natural acidity** that keeps the wine lively and precise. The fruit purity of SH7C shines through — plush red and black fruits intertwined with savoury spice and graphite minerality. The finish is long, harmonious, and poised, leaving behind a whisper of pepper and dark cherry.

A stunningly expressive, modern Syrah that bridges fruit richness with finesse — a vintage that feels both powerful and graceful in equal measure.

Analysis

Alc: 14.5 % Vol.

pH: 3.57

TA: 5.7 g/l

VA: 0.85 g/l

RS: 2.6 g/l