

Philippe Foucher

SYRAH · 2020

WINE OF ORIGIN PAARL

Wines are made not only for the moment of drinking, but for patience, memory, and time.

THE VINEYARD

Philippe Foucher is a study in restraint, shaped as much by its mountain site as by the decisions made in the cellar. The Syrah vineyards lie along the slopes of the Klein Drakenstein Mountains, where the warmth of Paarl is moderated by movement of cooler air through the vineyards. This combination allows the fruit to reach full maturity while retaining the freshness and aromatic definition that distinguish Syrah from a broader, more opulent expression of Shiraz.

The sandy clay loam soils give the vines both depth and structure, contributing to the concentration of the fruit while supporting a firm, finely composed palate. Warm days build colour and flavour, yet elevation and airflow help maintain tension within the grapes. It is this interplay between generosity and freshness that forms the foundation of Philippe Foucher.

IN THE CELLAR

In the cellar, the intention is to preserve rather than embellish what the vineyard has produced. The winemaking follows a philosophy of minimal intervention, careful extraction, and long maturation, with fermentation approached gently and without forcing excessive colour, tannin or weight from the fruit. The natural structure of the Syrah is allowed to establish itself slowly.

Approximately twelve months of maturation in French oak brings polish, texture and depth while remaining deliberately secondary to the fruit. Further ageing in bottle before release gives the wine time to settle into itself, allowing the oak to recede, the tannins to become more finely integrated and the various elements of the wine to find equilibrium.

This patient approach is central to the style of La Luandière. The objective is not simply longevity, but evolution: wines that retain their identity as they mature and become more layered, nuanced and complete with time.

TASTING NOTES

An irresistible, suave and elegant wine, lustrous dark garnet, perfumed nose and silky smooth palate. This has the class of a Côte Rôtie minus the Viognier, it is European in complexion, definitely a Syrah rather than a Shiraz, it is graceful, flawless, perfectly balanced and natural and belies its intensity. There is clever, 'hands off' winemaking here, the wine is not forced or manipulated and delights in clean, succulent, focussed fruit because of it. Truly a prestige wine and my favourite so far, the wood is hidden, so too its 14.5% alcohol, and impossible to store for the future.

The 2020 vintage carries considerable concentration, yet its power is remarkably discreet. Dark fruit sits at the centre of the wine, surrounded by finely handled oak, supple tannins and a smooth, enveloping texture. Nothing appears exaggerated. The alcohol is absorbed into the structure, the oak remains beneath the surface, and the fruit retains a striking purity.

There is a compelling contrast between the wine's depth and the ease with which it moves across the palate. Black berries, plum and dark fruit are supported by savoury spice and a subtle mineral firmness, while the tannins provide shape without hardness. The texture is plush but controlled, creating the impression of considerable strength held within an elegant frame.

CELLARING

This is a warmer-climate expression of Syrah, but one defined by refinement rather than excess. Its generosity is evident in the richness of the fruit and the softness of its texture, while freshness, balance and precision keep the palate composed. The result is a wine of immediate sensual appeal that never loses its sense of structure.

Philippe Foucher 2020 combines ripeness with restraint, intensity with polish and power with an unusually graceful touch. It is expressive now, yet its concentration, fine tannin and integrated oak provide the foundation for continued development in bottle, where deeper savoury, earthy and spicy characters are expected to emerge with time.

