

OLDENBURG

VINEYARDS



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Overview

The Stone Axe

At Oldenburg, winter is slowly descending upon us, bringing with it the 'cold units' that the vines need for their dormancy. There seems to be much being said of late about the science of sleep - and the importance of getting a full 8 hours. Nothing new there, but through better understanding of the brain through things like MRI scans, it has become clear that our minds function better with enough rest. This also holds true for vineyards. With our night-time temperatures now dipping into low single digits, the vines settle in for a deep rest, building their energy for next spring and the rigour of the growing season.

In late May, we were awarded our first Decanter World Wine Awards Gold for our Rondekop Stone Axe Syrah 2016. Out of nearly 17,000 wines entered from all corners of the globe, only 400 received a Gold (about 2.5%)! The team is hugely excited about this accolade!

The Stone Axe Syrah comes from a vineyard at the top of Rondekop. In that vineyard, we previously unearthed actual stone axes, made by ancient humans (at least 50,000 -100,000 years ago).



One of the Syrah blocks is north facing (providing more summer radiation) as well as terraced (which intensifies the heat). When the southeaster blows, these blocks receive the full force of the prevailing wind. This creates a relatively hostile environment - and the vines are often challenged. By the time we harvest, the canopies have started turning yellow - a clear sign of a vine nearing exhaustion; however, it is this very struggle that helps produce exceptional fruit.

Caring for vineyards is often quite counterintuitive; the vines need to be healthy, but they also need to struggle. If conditions are too harsh (no water, high temperatures and severe winds) the vine can shut down completely, and the fruit will not ripen. On the flip side, too much water and generally ideal conditions will shift the vine's primary focus to growing shoots. This excessive (growth) vigour, as it is known, leads to inferior berry quality. Typically, the explanation is that a struggling vine opts to put scarce resources into producing the best fruit - basically natural selection kicking in - to give it the best chance of producing successful progeny. Thankfully, natural selection does not factor in our use of the fruit to make wine!

It is a fine line between struggle and excess, but that is where we find the sweet spot of exceptional fruit quality. Vines really do seem to be like people: both need plentiful sleep and tend to be at their best when they drink just the right amount!

Our Rondekop Stone Axe Syrah 2016 was a small production of only 1024 bottles. As we are almost out of stock, this wine is now only available in limited quantities from the tasting room, and on allocation for 8 Elements Wine Club members. We also have a small amount of stock in our UK warehouse, so please [contact us](#) for orders in UK or Europe.

Our Stone Axe Syrah is proudly displayed in The Tasting Room, along-side our stone axe collection. Why not visit, warm yourself at one of the fireplaces and enjoy a taste of this special wine?

Television



Review



Rondekop Stone Axe 2016 - Magnum

There is a particularly luxurious, impressive and even elegant touch that comes with presenting a magnum bottle of wine to a group of guests. Lush and opulent, it's also surprisingly practical - why open multiple bottles when one big one will do? Combine that with the theory that wines age better in magnum bottles than they do in 750ml bottles - and you have to ask, shouldn't we be buying more magnums? We think so. Allow us to introduce you to our big, beautiful Stone Axe 2016 Magnum.

The Stone Axe Magnum has a lovely purple hue, with a slight browned edge in comparison to the 750ml, which has a more intense, deep purple colour.

On the nose, the wine shows darker fruits than the smaller format, with notes of plum, raspberry jam, prunes, mushroom, sundried tomatoes and sandalwood. A slight almond nuttiness presents itself, which is also reflected on the palate. The palate has a bright acidity, which carries the fruit exceptionally well, and supports balanced, smooth tannins.

The Rondekop Stone Axe 2016 Magnum is only available from The Tasting Room, at R1145 per bottle. The 750ml is available [online](#) at R380 per bottle. To enquire about magnums and available older vintages, enquire [here](#).

Interview

Brendin Benjamin - The Cellar

Hailing from Heidelberg in the Western Cape, Brendin moved to Stellenbosch at the start of high school, where he attended school until Grade 10. In 2010, he took a job working in the cellar at De Morgenzon, and the following year he started working in the cellar at Glenelly. He also spent 18 months working in the warehouse at Asara, but of all his work experience, it's his time in the cellar that inspires him the most - and instilled in him a love for and interest in winemaking.

In Brendin's family, wine is a calling and a way of life. His twin sister works in wine exports, and his brother is assistant winemaker at MAN family wines.



Brendin joined the Oldenburg team in January 2019, and has been thriving at the challenge of working in a new team, and a brand new cellar.

Brendin lives in Idas Valley, and is engaged to be married in March 2020 (sorry ladies, he's off the market!). When he isn't in the cellar, he's watching rugby - either on the field or on the TV. He's a devout Blue Bulls fan and loves going to the games. When he isn't immersed in rugby, he enjoys other wine farms with his brother and sister. The odd time he isn't watching rugby, he enjoys the occasional movie - mostly comedies and action films.

If he hadn't found his home in the wine industry, he would likely have followed his dad into farming with livestock.

His favourite part of the job is seeing the wines take shape, through the harvesting process, fermentation, racking and blending. Step by step, overseeing the grapes become wine. Winter is his least favourite time, as there is very little action in the cellar.

Brendin's passion for wine is driving him to becoming a winemaker's assistant - and he is prepared to work hard to get there, because he doesn't see himself doing anything else. What a brilliant example and inspiration to all of us.

Bird's Eye View

The TOPS at Spar Wine Show - Cape Town | 11-13 July | Grandwest

Come explore The TOPS at Spar Wine Show, and seek out our wines to enjoy and take home. Book your tickets [here](#).

If you have any comments, questions or feedback for us - about the newsletter or anything else, for that matter - please don't hesitate to get in touch. Simply hit "Reply" and send us your thoughts. We would love to hear from you.

Warm wishes in wine,

Adrian

Pride, Ambition, Respect, Team

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