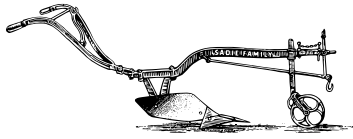


2020 REVIEW
COLUMELLA





COLUMELLA REVIEW 2020

THE SADIE FAMILY WINES

Columella

20 YEAR REVIEW ON APRIL 27TH 2020

In a world of daily change and constant pressure from globalised issues and entities it is important to sometimes just stand back and slow down to a near stand-still, for fine wine is truly the work of time and the result of careful observation.

In 2000, when we set out with the first year of Columella, we decided to keep the vinicultural policies in place for at least 10 years and only review such policies after every decade. Any practice or policy in the cellar needs the 10 years to be pressure-tested against changing climactic conditions, the viticultural changes and the reaction of the various soils.

The first decade was reviewed on April 30th, 2010 with the first 10 vintages in the bottle and after this review a number of changes were made - we will just touch on those briefly: A decision was made to pick grapes earlier and to keep alcohol levels down, under 14% as a policy. We started to use between 30-40% whole cluster in the fermentations, and not to do three punch-downs on the red skin caps in the fermentation tanks daily. The percentage of new oak was lowered from 40% – 60 % at times to a mere 10 % and at 12 months the wine was racked from barrel to big old foudres for the additional year of ageing.

Those were the results of the first review based on the wines we had in the glass, the analysis on paper and the general feel and interpretation of the variables. From 2010 onwards the Columella bottling has become more refined, lifted in fruit, with greater elegance, greater transparency... and the overall freshness and connectivity of the wine and the landscape have certainly been forged more seamlessly.

On April the 27th this year we had the second review of the Columella wine and its evolution and had the chance to consider the effect of the above measures that had been put in place and their impact on the respective vintages since. It was clear that the directives taken in 2010 were certainly leading us in the right direction.

During this year's review the following transpired: the wines were fresher, they held better onto their youth and they developed many greater drinking qualities over time, but we also realised that, in some instances, some of the tannin profiles (now another 15+ years later on the initial vinification) have come to age and some of those earlier tannins definitely developed better - and our feel now is that we need to scale down on the whole cluster fermentations.

Something else we observed: the absorption of potassium from the stems does have severe ramifications into the future of the wines and their ageing. We will work on getting the natural fermentations to initiate faster as the lagging phase does require much more focus on microbiology - it brings about greater complexity at times, but it is definitely a sphere we will focus on during the next decade. Most important: the biggest realization and affirmation was the notion that these wines honestly need minimum 8 years in the bottle prior to even consider drinking them.

The wines were all perfect, for all the bottles were from our own cellar and were aged at between 16 – 18 degrees over the seasons. Not one bottle was even remotely off.

The corks were great and overall it seemed as if the corks of 2002, 2004 & 2007 were slightly more porous and did break up a bit, the others all had perfect extractions. Since 2015 we have also started using 100% pre-tested corks in order to have the greatest guarantee in terms of the future of the bottled wines.



Cork Pre-Bottle Testing – DS 100



The wines were tasted 3 times over intervals in the course of a day and here below the findings and the recommendations. The main reason for releasing this document is that we believe it may aid the collectors of our wines in their planning and future approach to opening the wines.

2000 VINTAGE

Displayed very earthy aromas, almost like freshly ploughed earth, and some tobacco leaf. The aromatics displayed darker fruit than anticipated. The taste of the wine is a very dry classic entry with some pencil lead and cedar aspects. The wine still holds much class and our suggestion would be to drink it between now and 2028. It still holds fruit and youth.

2001 VINTAGE

Displayed much darker and riper fruit on account of a very dry year then. The riper fruit and black olive, cassis and graphite aspects are all notions of a more extracted and compressed wine. The massive tannins that this wine held have softened tremendously and we would suggest drinking it between now and 2025.

2002 VINTAGE

Displayed earthy aromas - what the Burgundians refer to as the “sous bois”, the undergrowth of forest floor aromas: extremely earthy, honeyed flavours. The wine has tremendous length and being one of the few vintages ever with lots of rain in harvest in the Swartland (that alone is a unicorn reality), this is a wine completely of its own and it will age well into 2035, but it does drink amazingly now.



2003 VINTAGE

Displayed black dark graphite and black olive tapenade-like aromas from a very warm vintage at the time. The wine very much looks like a wine from Chateauneuf du Pape, but the most remarkable aspect is that the fruit aromas in the wine have not dried out with ageing.

Yet, this wine does need a proper oxtail stew and can easily be kept till 2030.

2004 VINTAGE

Displayed spicy herbal and “fynbos” / “garrigue” like aromas with a very strong Syrah and almost Northern Rhone wine identity. The tannins are extremely smooth and this wine was drinking so well that it almost seemed as if about now is a great time for drinking it,

but it may also be kept into 2030.

2005 VINTAGE

Displayed darker aromas of dark olive and graphite again, with black fruits and some spicy aromas, leaning towards the notions of 2001 but with lesser extraction and slightly sweeter and earthy aromas combined. The fruit is starting to dry out and we would suggest drinking this wine from now till 2028.

2006 VINTAGE

Displayed very leathery and earthy aromas with a lot of Asian spice and some cigar box aromas. The wines had some kind of Bordeaux index to it in the aromas, but all of these complexities are very much compacted and compressed together. The acidity and the tannins are firm, but of those of the first decade this wine was drinking about the best and we would suggest that it may well still age till 2030, but there is really no reason for not drinking it now.

2007 VINTAGE

Displayed very dark blackcurrant and ripe fig aromas and the colour is opaque in appearance... almost like a dark horse in nature; and then spills over into very sweet silky and violet aromas. The tannins are very round (from what was also a warm vintage) with a more flat acidity and we would suggest drinking this wine anytime from now till 2030.

2008 VINTAGE

Displayed lifted, fresh red fruit aromas indicative of a cooler vintage, but there was some cassis, blackcurrant and ripe cherry aromas as well. The tannins are still very firm and deeply textured and this wine can still age for many years. Decantation suggested when drinking it now - or drink by 2038.

2009 VINTAGE

Displayed dark plum and black slate as well as some flinty aromas but the overall impression is that many of the aromatics are still locked up. The overall richness in aroma is met by quite a lively and lighter textured palate than expected and whereas the wine might present itself as a dark horse on the aromatics, it actually is drinking very well and we suggest drinking it now till 2034.

2010 VINTAGE

Displayed a very classic composition: all of the aromatics are in perfect balance and there is not a singular aspect out of line. The tannin and acidity balance is arguably the best of the wines of this first decade. It has the same equilibrium as 2000 and 2004, but with greater youth. Although it is an incredible glass of wine today it will age very well into 2040.





2011 VINTAGE

Displayed very powerful spicy, graphite and vegemite kind of aromas, to be expected from a dry vintage, with concentration on the overall fruit. At bottling this wine had an enormous volume of tannins which have softened and smoothed out.

The wine does hold a lifted acidity in the end of the palate.

Drinking now with decantation or well into 2035.

2012 VINTAGE

Displayed very refined spices and herbal aromas, very much like a wine of the northern Rhone in expression; and the same flavours run through all the way onto the palate.

The wine is just incredibly balanced. It is drinking very well currently and may just be served from the bottle, but there will also be no harm in drinking it well into 2035.

2013 VINTAGE

Displayed much more restrained unripe fig and black olive aromas and in terms of fruit: dark red fruit aromas. The palate is savoury and the fresh red fruit on the aromas does follow through onto the palate. The wine needs time and our suggestion would be to drink it between 2024 – 2044. Drinking it now will require decantation.



2003 was the year of blazing sun and serious tannins...

2014 VINTAGE

Presents itself as quite closed up, like a young 2001 vintage, with dark riper fruit – but it is still closed up and the wine has an almost forbidding edge to it in the sense that it is still withholding hidden qualities. The overall balance of the palate is fantastic – it is only towards the end of the palate that some of the fruit do dry out, but into a savoury finish again. The wine has an almost energetic aspect to it and it will age extremely well over the next 20+ years, well into 2045.

2015 VINTAGE

Displayed an incredible aromatical and textural purity from the outset and promises the highest potential in every respect. The wine is not to be opened in next 5+ years and the best suggestion is to age this further and wait for the 2025 – 2045 drinking window. We will obviously review this wine again in future.

2016 VINTAGE

Displayed very dark red fruit that seemed to be all coiled up in tannins and very neatly woven together. The wine is under tension and rightfully so. The focus in this wine is serious and all in all this one shows very high potential and reminds one of a mega complex helix – the only aspect that will reveal the true potential is time! This wine should be left alone for at least the first decade plus and will drink well into 2048 and possibly beyond.

2017 VINTAGE

Perplexing, in that there is almost no point of entry on the wine from an aromatic or taste aspect and the wine is still holding its cards to the chest. It does have some of the earthy aspects that were found in the early 2006 vintage. This wine is incredibly dry and restrained at this point but shouts of potential into the future. It will possibly develop into the same incredible complexities as was the case in the 2002 & 2004 vintage, but it needs the next 20 years to reveal itself. Drinking from 2027 – 2050.

2018 VINTAGE

Displayed fresh but dark fruit and purity with a lifted transparency. The tannins and texture of the wine are classy and very polished at this point, but obviously still extremely young. The wine sits in great balance and seems perfectly trimmed and just needs some waiting. In terms of waiting our suggestion would be to drink this wine from 2026 – 2038.



The Columella drinks interestingly well in the first-year post-release and then tends to hunch down and just disappear – somewhat like a submarine. It is during this time that patience is required and that patience is well-rewarded. One can decant the wine, but it is like trying to cheat on time and that space of an hour or two never truly brings greatness.

Please note that the above is a mere suggestion as to the qualities and the potential of the wine and in a decade from now they will be reviewed again. Hopefully these notes will help you as a valued client to plan and envision the way forward.

We also buy wine from many great producers across the globe and some bottles are so limited that one potentially gets only one or two bottles of a wine. In these cases, the margin for error in opening a bottle prematurely escalates, so we always considered putting together a regular review going forward – and the time is now.

It would have made no sense to publish this review after the first decade for very few of the wines would have been ready to open but now, 20 years on, it is time.



Enjoy the wines you have waited for!

Eben Sadie & Paul Jordaan

Review 27th April 2020