

2024

Thorne & Daughters

CAT'S CRADLE CHENIN BLANC



TASTING NOTES

Swartland Chenin blanc needs no introduction, having long assumed its place among the world's key expressions of the grape variety. Here we have put together a collection of old vine vineyards from the Swartland where predominantly granite-derived soils give us a clear and pristine expression of Chenin blanc. Granite gives us clarity and the more iron-rich soils give us waxy, yellow fruit and generosity.

An enormous amount of work goes into the vineyard during the growing season to ensure that the vines can carry a healthy and balanced crop. Picking is done with a clear eye on the acidity of the crop which can fall away dramatically during the harvest due to the paucity of the granite based soils.

The 2024 wines are rich and expressive, with aromas of apple tarte tatin, barley sugar, and frangipane florals. A rich, beeswaxy palate is full of salty almonds, light honey, ripe yellow fruits and elderflower. The finish is long, textured and full. This is a wine that will reward some time in the cellar to allow its full aromatic expression to develop.

CAT'S CRADLE NUTS & BOLTS

Chenin blanc – Swartland
41-45 year old vineyards on decomposed granite
43 years old on iron-rich sands

Wine of Origin Swartland
Vintage 2024

Alcohol – 13.97%
Residual sugar – 2.4 g/L
Total acidity – 5.6 g/L
pH 3.4

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hello@thorneanddaughters.com • www.thorneanddaughters.com



ABOUT THE WINE

The tail end of 2023 was distinctly unsummery with one of the coldest, wettest Decembers on record. In January it felt like we had “stepped through the looking glass” with one of the hottest and driest January months in a long time. It certainly set the tone for quite a frenetic start to the harvest.

The dry and hot weather in January and February did create a lot of pressure to consider earlier picking dates and my gut feeling was that sugar accumulation was running a little ahead of flavour ripeness in a number of our vineyards. The call I made was to hang back a little and not pick too early. The resulting wines were big, bold and very expressive from early on. I would say we are averaging 0.5% more alcohol across the board on the 2024 wines and a touch less acidity, but I think we made the best picking decisions to capitalise on more abundant flavour profiles.

Chenin blanc on granite is something that we have worked with for all the years that we have been making our Thorne and Daughters wines, though Cat’s Cradle was only first released in 2017 as a single vineyard wine from the granite soils of the Paardeberg. The vision for this wine has evolved a bit and we are bringing in other small bits of old vine fruit from other soils in the Swartland to bring some more dimensions to the wine. I’ve really enjoyed that extra layer of buttery yellow fruit that the Nuweland portion (more iron-rich red granite-derived soils) brings to the wine.

The approach in the cellar is pure simplicity. The grapes are whole-bunch pressed in our Vaslin press (a big horizontal basket with two plates). No SO₂ is added to the juice. A rough settling follows pressing after which the wines undergo natural alcoholic and malolactic fermentation in old oak barrels. We add some sulphur dioxide late in the winter, and then again at bottling, keeping the level of sulphur dioxide as low as possible. The result is a wine that shows tension without losing its suppleness and core, and one that will reward time in the cellar.

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