

## NEETHLINGSHOF WINE ESTATE'S SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

South Africa, Stellenbosch, November 2017; **GRAPES** have been grown on the renowned Stellenbosch Wine Estate, Neethlingshof, for more than 300 years, a history celebrated in the estate's The Short Story Collection – a portfolio of reserve wines. Each of these wines draws attention to rich and varied narratives, including Neethlingshof's commitment to sustainable farming practices.

The estate's philosophy is guided by a great respect for the natural flora and fauna and their aim is to extend this approach to every aspect of their farm and wine making.

**As** a voluntary member of the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative (BWI), Neethlingshof highlights their commitment to eco-sustainability, setting aside for conservation 28 hectares of the 150 hectares wine farm (under vine) and focusing on replanting the indigenous Renosterveld species to restore the natural balance in nature.

**M**arginal vineyards on the estate have been uprooted and returned to natural vegetation, rather than being replanted, allowing for the creation of natural wilderness corridors across the farm. Of the estate's 376 hectares just 150 hectares are under vineyard.

**The** Short Story Collection is a portfolio of reserve wines that celebrate both the history and conservation success of the estate.

*"The Short Story Collection was born with The Owl Post Pinotage,"* explains winemaker De Wet Viljoen, who worked harvests in the Cape and California before joining Neethlingshof in 2003. *"We wanted to bring the biodiversity and history of the estate into the wines."*

The owl posts, erected to attract these nocturnal predators into the vineyards, are just one example of Neethlingshof's holistic and sustainable approach to viticulture. The estate's integrated pest management system forms part of the winery's focus on production integrity to reduce its dependence on pesticides.

**W**hen Maria and Charles Marais bought the land in 1788 the farm was then known as De Wolvendans (the Dance of the Wolves). While there's little chance of sighting any mystical wolves here today, this eco-sensitive approach to viticulture has reaped huge rewards and owls are not the only predator that has returned to the farm.

The Six Flowers wine highlights the story of Maria Magdalena Marais, the resourceful and feisty young widow who took over the building of the estate's manor house after the death of her husband, Charles, in 1813. The home was completed the following year and is now a national monument. As a tribute to her children she personally created and placed six flowers representing her five children and herself in the Manor House's gables. Still relevant today, these six flowers represent the current generation's restoration of renosterveld vegetation that was common among the vineyards in the 1800s.

With tracts of endangered renosterveld plantations attracting plenty of indigenous birdlife, caracals have recently made their home here too.

**T**his elusive cat is celebrated in The Caracal, an elegant Bordeaux-style red-blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot. A full-bodied and powerful wine, it boasts firm but supple tannins and notes of blackcurrant and cherry, oak and vanilla.

**T**he last wine in the Short Story Collection honours the woman who started it all: Maria Magdalena Marais. The Maria is a Noble Late Harvest made from Weisser Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc, sourced from dry-land vineyards on the upper slopes of the farm where sea mists off False Bay create the perfect conditions for *botrytis cinerea* (noble rot) to flourish. With its appealing bouquet of dried apricots and honey, combined with a perfect balance between sweetness and acidity, it's a fine tribute to the woman who first shaped the Neethlingshof estate.

**F**or over two hundred years this iconic estate in the Stellenboschkloof has turned out some of the finest wines in the district. The history of those long years are written in

the vineyard rows and the gable above the manor house; in the cool of the cellar and in the long row of stately pines that lead visitors to the cellar door. Where, if you taste carefully and listen closely, every bottle has a tale of its own to tell.

**Neethlingshof** Wine Estate lies in the heart of the Stellenbosch Winelands and is flanked by the Bottelary Hills and Papegaisberg Mountains. It has more than a dozen distinguishable terroirs that allows grape varieties to be matched perfectly with the best soil, aspect and climatic conditions.