



Ever since we planted our first Pinot Noir vineyards on the Newton Johnson farm in 2003, we were mindful that it would take years for these vines to find their feet and express any notion of terroir, if any. With each season, as the vines have evolved, our perceptions and expectations of them have evolved with them. Some have reached their ceiling, while others have excelled beyond. The authenticity and consistency to which the Seadragon and Windansea vineyards have defined themselves, has led us to regard them as our top growth vineyards. Their maturity, complexity and singular expression are ably demonstrated in each of these cuvées.

SEADRAGON is our oldest vineyard of Pinot noir and our first glimpse into the possibilities open to this grape variety and its grasp of our soils on this farm. It is the sole component of the first 2008 vintage of the Family Vineyards label and remains the archetype of our style. For us this vineyard, at its best, is the most profound, ornate and complete wine from one parcel that we produce and is unmistakable in its consistency. The wine may be full of succulence, intensity, floral aromatics, delicacy and spice, all brought together with sumptuous grip. It seems as though the roots draw from every component of the soil, from the dark, loose, carbon-rich layers above, to the red iron-rich clay below. As it matures the growth in the vineyard is restrained and easy to handle, and the yield of grapes is small and intensely flavoured.

TASTING NOTES

Seadragon's fine fruits and perfumes are deep and profound. Pure and vivid red fruit embroidered with fresh violet and wilted rose petals, accentuated by the bass tones of dark fruit and earthiness. The thick velvet fruit and texture in the mouth is framed with fine, brittle tannin that reaches long into the finish.

ANALYSIS

Alcohol by volume	14.2 %
Total Acidity	5.8 g/l
pH	3.5
Residual sugar	2.2 g/l

LOCATION & CLIMATE

This vineyard lies mid-slope at an altitude of 260m, in the porphyritic Granite soils of the Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley. This appellation ranges from 4 to 8 km in proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. The climate is cool and temperate, where parallel mountain ranges channel the southerly oceangoing winds through the appellation during the summer. These southerly winds in turn create regular sea mists and overcast conditions, moderating the temperatures in the valley. The annual rainfall is 850mm, with 50% falling in the winter months (May – August).

APPELLATION	Wine of Origin UPPER HEMEL-EN-AARDE VALLEY
SOIL	The topsoil comprises of fine crystals and fragments of granite with 10% of clay, and parts with a mix of broken-up claystone. Decomposed granite layers underneath are well drained and have a large percentage of coarse fragments and varying clay content (30% - 40%). Root depth reaches up to 1.3m where they reach a dense clay bank, rich in iron.
ASPECT	North facing. Slope of 12%
TRELISSING	7-wire Vertical Shoot Positioning (VSP) with movable wires
AGE OF VINES	22 years
PRUNING	Cordon & Single Guyot
VINES PER Ha	2857 - 4000
AVERAGE YIELD	4.6 tons/ha (31 hl/ha)

2024 VINTAGE

Growing Season & Harvesting

The peerless 2024 vintage has a close resemblance to a warmer 2017, characterised by its flawless ripening conditions, bringing depth to the wines without being overbearing. The most important precursor was having a decent and uninterrupted winter, seeing ample rain early on and the lowest average temperature since the winter of 2016. Ideal dormancy ensures good fertility in the vines and even budding come springtime. Budding was fairly early due to the early winter, with the first Pinot Noir vineyard starting on 22 August and the last starting on 4 September (Sandford's cooler southern slope). There was plenty of rain early on in September, compounded by the infamous flood that hit the Hemel-en-Aarde on 24 September, delivering over 400mm of rain in 48 hours. Besides the extensive damage to roads, bridges and the course of the Onrus river, the vineyards did not see any damage or disease as the temperatures were still too cold for mildew. The rains had dissipated by November, though the water sodden soil and fine weather fuelled the vegetative growth in the vines and the flowering was excellent. The fine weather continued, turning to some warm days in the high 20's (°C) as veraison was finishing. There were no major rain events approaching harvest and the preceding few weeks of warm weather ensured that tannin ripeness was optimal. The harvest dates for our single Pinot noir vineyards, Windansea and Seadragon, were fairly normal (12 & 13 February respectively), despite the early start to the season, and the length of ripening was enough to develop layers of complex flavour. The length from the middle of flowering to harvest was 101 days for Seadragon and 98 days for Windansea. **Seadragon** was harvested on **13th February**.

WEATHER DATA RESPECTIVE TO VINTAGE SEASONS

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DORMANCY / WINTER (June - August)					
Rain (mm)	202	348	277	235	280
Average Temperature (°C)	13.6	13.5	13.2	13.7	12.9
Accumulated Chilling Portions (Dynamic Model)	28	33	45	35	39
VEGETATIVE GROWTH (September - December)					
Rain (mm)	233	200	197	152	378
Average Temperature (°C)	16.8	15.9	15.7	16.6	16.4
Growing Degree Days units (°C)	884	790	765	874	830
RIPENING (January - February)					
Rain (mm)	99	46	20	92	51
Average Temperature (°C)	20	19.8	20.6	19.9	20.6
Total hours over 30°C	26	12	57	27	38
Growing Degree Days (°C)	637	614	663	616	667

Winemaking

The grapes are packed in to large-surface area crates to limit pressure on the bunches. The day's harvest is cooled down overnight to 8°C in the winery's refrigerated cold room. The bunches are sorted on a conveyor, destemmed, and fall directly to the fermenter (with no crushing). **No sulphur** is used in the winemaking, allowing diverse micro-organisms from the grape itself to flourish unrestrained in the spontaneous fermentation. This parcel also contains a discretionary percentage (varying from **20-30%**) of **whole bunches**. Cold maceration ensues for 6 to 7 days at 8 to 10°C. All parcels are **fermented by spontaneous yeasts**, and only *pigeage* (punching down) applied for extraction. The wine spends approximately 25 days on the skins before pressing. After pressing, it is racked and left to complete its malolactic fermentation and maturation in barrel on its lees.

Maturation & Bottling

Matured for 11 months in barrique (228L) barrels produced in Burgundy and custom made for this vineyard. Tighter grained oak is preferred for subtle flavour, with longer seasoning and slower, lower temperature toasting. **New oak** comprises **25%**. The wine is racked to old wood for another **5 months of élevage**. **No fining or filtration**, and a sulphur adjustment before bottling.

BOTTLES PRODUCED	2 6 5 0 x 750ml
BOTTLING DATE	3 June 2025
CELLAR DOOR PRICE	R 925.00
BEST DRINKING	2 – 15 years