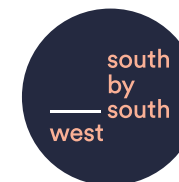


the meandering négociant



## 2016 MERLOT ~ MARGARET RIVER ONE TONNE PROJECTS



Merlot is often neglected as a single varietal. It is championed in the Margaret River region's 'notorious' Cabernet Merlot blends, but often – and sadly – overlooked as the lead grape.

We decided 2016 was the time to give Merlot the attention it deserves and make it a One Tonne Project wine. Our Merlot is driven by old world style, particularly the garage producers from the Right Bank in Bordeaux. Yet we have given this wine a new world spin, inspired by our season among producers in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, which renewed our love for this grape. This Merlot presents well among our collection and stands alone as the smooth operator of our current collection.

We have called this One Tonne Project The Blackbird Merlot, a nod to the French meaning of Merlot, 'the little blackbird'. 'The Blackbird Merlot' is therefore something of a tautology but the name works, since we have used two parcels of Merlot from different vineyards in the Margaret River region. We are winemakers, not writers, after all.

### VINTAGE & VITICULTURE

Warm and dry conditions prevailed for the harvest of this Merlot. The 2016 vintage carried a larger than average crop load so ripening was gradual rather than accelerated. Two parcels of Merlot fruit were picked in late March, both from the warmer Carburnup sub-region of Margaret River. Half a tonne from the Gibindee Vineyard went with half a tonne from the Dowling Vineyard. The average Baumé across the two parcels was

13.5. Both vineyards are founded on sandy loam and ironstone soils and the quality of both parcels of fruit was outstanding, with Merlot working best in the northern areas to achieve its ripe plum characters.

### WINEMAKING

After harvest, the fruit was destemmed, lightly crushed, inoculated with a Bordeaux yeast strain and fermented in stainless steel open fermenters to soften the tannins and enhance the flavour, aroma and complexity. The wine was pressed off skins and blended with a small amount of Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon, then matured using new and one year-old French oak for 12-15 months. A very small amount of Petit Verdot (2.5%) was blended in at the time of bottling to provide the final balance.

### APPEARANCE

In a glass the wine presents a dark ruby red colour with a cherry red hue.

### NOSE

A lifted bouquet of dark plums and red berries are combined with herbaceous notes of eucalypt, nutmeg, mocha and cedar oak.

### PALATE

Mouth filling flavours of ripe dark plums and sweet blackberries are balanced with nutmeg and vanilla spice. Silky smooth, yet firm tannins add great length to the finish of this medium bodied wine.

### TREATMENT

We aim for minimal intervention to let the fruit express itself, yet there are certain things we do need to maintain the quality and integrity of this wine. We've added minimal sulphites to stabilise the wine and ensure its shelf life. It has also been fined with the aid of egg whites and skim milk products to remove harsh phenolic compounds. We use this method as opposed to other by-products as it is extremely gentle in nature and does not strip flavour nor character from the wine, creating a final, high quality polish.

Cases	50
Alcohol	14.6%
Total Acidity	6.4 g/l
pH	3.45
Residual Sugar	0.1 g/l
Drinking Best	2017 - 2027
Closure	Stelvin