



dornier wine estate
a statement of distinction

Combining elegant wines and award-winning architecture, Dornier Wine Estate creatively fuses the opposites of change and stasis, seriousness and pleasure, complexity and simplicity. *By Mia Russell*

Nestled in the heart of the Stellenbosch Valley and surrounded by lush green mountains, lies the elegant Dornier Wine Estate. Claiming both local and fast-growing international fame for their wines, Dornier is also an architectural gem and in an industry where competition is rife and differences often indistinguishable, the distinct quality and unconventional style of Dornier Wine Estate, sets it apart and places it a cut above the rest.

Located on two estates, Keerweder and Stellenrust, both of which are steeped in history and long-standing tradition, Dornier lies on 167ha of prime viticultural land at the foothills of the Stellenbosch Mountain. Owned by Swiss/German artist Christoph Dornier, son of aircraft pioneer Claude Dornier, who worked with Count Zeppelin and designed fighter aircraft, the estate has been remodelled along clean, stark lines, with an undulating silver roof designed by Dornier himself 'to enhance the landscape'.

Described as ‘one of the best wineries in South Africa because of its simplicity,’ Dornier is a masterful fusion of art with architecture, embodying a synthesis of contrasting and complementary elements. The estate houses a slick, industrial-chic winery of facebrick and stainless steel, which is placed in juxtaposition with an elaborate Sir Herbert Baker masterpiece, one of the Cape’s oldest cellars, which serves to highlight the farms heritage.

“I didn’t want another Cape Dutch building,” comments Christoph on his vision for Dornier’s winery. “I wanted to create something that would instantly set us apart from the norm.” And it is this artist’s vision and creative foresight that does just that. On meeting Christoph, one is struck with the overwhelming feeling that Dornier Wines is the expression of its owner – a man who achieves success through unconventionality and courage. Inspired by surrealism and using art as a visual language for furthering his expression, traditional materials and an age-old concept with pioneering are used to create a functional, yet stylish and elegant building.

Immaculate gardens surround the estate and on approach, one is led along a path between the old Sir Herbert Baker house on the right, sleeping gently in all its Cape Dutch glory, and the new, modern winery on the left, with its sweeping, curved roof, which reflects the profile of the surrounding mountains, and a glassy pond, which mirrors the roofline and serves to cool the maturation cellar beneath.

Inside, there is an effortless flow of movement, with an administration area flowing into the cellar, maturation cellar and visitors tasting room. Walls of glass filter light into the deep, cavernous spaces of the maturation cellar, where huge stainless tanks are suspended high above the floor, and which can be seen from the guest plaza to allow for transparency of the winemaking process. Forest views and jarrah wood floors interact with industrial materials such as glass, stainless steel, aluminium and wood to give a minimalist feel, while splashes of colour from surrealist artworks by Christoph adorn treated facebrick walls to soften the scene. ▶



As with any wine farm though, the beating heart of the estate are the vineyards and as one stands and looks out over the vivid green undulating hillsides, with the sweet scent of vine leaves tickling your senses, you can understand why. Dornier currently has 70 hectares of land under vine, with a variety of grapes including Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Shiraz, Cabernet Franc, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Chenin Blanc. However, unlike most producers, Dornier Wines decides on the style of wine before harvesting. Grapes are picked exclusively on taste, whilst the secret to the complexity, body and character of the wines lies in the staggered harvesting of each vineyard block.

“To stand apart, we needed to create something unique,” enthuses Christoph. “By blending, you can combine the best wines, filling in with one varietal where another is lacking to produce something really exceptional - harmonious and balanced.”

This combination of enthusiasm and artistic visionary has reaped award-winning results. Says Christoph, “Dornier is an ongoing creative collaboration with these prime Stellenbosch vineyards and our dedicated team. We are led by the principles of tradition and inspired by perfection, yet realise the power of innovation. Everything that Dornier stands for and embodies – be it the place or the wines – creatively fuse the opposites of change and stasis, seriousness and pleasure, complexity and simplicity. We embrace difference where it leads to improvement, and still recognise the value of what has come before.”



Situated on Blaauwklippen Road, off the R44 opposite the Stellenbosch Golf Course, Dornier Wines is open for tastings Monday to Friday from 09h00 to 16h30 and on Saturdays from 09h00 to 15h00. For further information call Dornier Wines on (021) 880 0557, email info@dornierwines.co.za or visit www.dornierwines.co.za.