







Quinta Essentia, founded in 2015, is a partnership between Betz Family Winery, leading South African winemaker Carl van der Merwe, and DeMorgenzon owner Wendy Appelbaum. They have set out to rediscover and resurrect compelling low yielding old bush vine Chenin Blanc vineyards in Stellenbosch South Africa, and then craft wine that expresses this unique terroir.

Ancient wisdom held that four elements - Air, Earth, Fire and Water - constitute the world, and that various combinations of these elements could create all objects and substances. The existence of the four elements implied that there must be an additional "fifth element", the "Quinta Essentia". The Quinta Essentia was the aether itself; the substance that the heavens were made of. It was considered to be eternal, immutable and the source of all things. Philosophers have debated Quinta Essentia for centuries: no one has managed to explain it conclusively.

Carl van der Merwe, Wendy Appel

The Quinta Essentia partners say that the search for vineyards with the potential to make an ethereal wine is just as elusive. "Trying to solve this mystery is what makes winemaking so special. It's about possibility and the journey, not the destination. We invite you to be part of our voyage of discovery."

The old Chenin Blanc vines are located at the foothills of the Helderberg mountain, amongst the fabled Cape Fynbos. The undeveloped valley has served as protection from the winds that can devastate some vineyards on the Helderberg. This site is famous for deadly puff-adders and Cape Cobras who find their way out of the mountains hunting mice in between the vines. Marauding baboons are summer visitors when the heady scent of the ripening grapes call, and the rare Cape Leopard still stalks here. There is a wealth of diversity offered by the unspoilt mountains.

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There are four vineyards:

- Electric Granite – this site enjoys a persistent breeze from nearby False Bay. 35-year-old bush vines grow on structured, 100% weathered granite soil. Their leaves are the smallest of all the vineyards. They have thickened in response to the constant pressure of the wind. In addition to the incessant wind off the ocean, low nutrient soils have constrained the growth of these vines. The bunches are small and very compact with hard crunchy berries full of freshness and brightness. One can almost taste the crispness of the sea air in the fruit. This combination of yellow fruit and this freshness gives the resultant wines a natural tension, almost a nervousness, that can only be attributed to the windy conditions and granitic soils, hence the name Electric Granite. Electric granite brings a tension and mid palate structure to the wine. The finished wine displays a caramelized honey character and a wonderful taught mouthfeel.

- Mountain's Edge: Fortitude - old bush vines that have been trained into basket shapes. These gnarled old vines exude a sense of gravitas and strength. With strong upright limbs they bear their bunches high off the ground and, with open arms, receive the sun from above. This sunlight penetrates the fruiting zone, whilst the height of the vine structure bears the fruit away from the heat radiating off the soil surface allowing preservation of tropical fruit flavours. The bunches are slightly larger here, and the vines seem to have more access to water and nutrients. This is evident in the size of the vines and the general strength of the block. There is a feeling of youthful vigour and vivacity here despite the fact that these vines are over 35 years old. The grapes burst with flavor and this same heady fruit character, of tropical fruits and yellow stone fruit is transferred into the resultant wine. The palate shows breadth and weight and serves as a fuller more fruit concentrated component in The Aether.

- Mountain's Edge: The Sands - in the valley below us a timeless stream flows, having left large deposits of weathered sandstone on top of a bed of granite bedrock. Close to the stream there is one particular vineyard that shows a particular will to survive. Sand drains quickly, with the result that these vines have had to force their roots deep between the fissures of the weathered granite to search for valuable water needed during the growing season. The bunches and berries are smaller than usual. The berries show