

# On the Vera Cruz Trail



*Vera Cruz Vineyards*



*Spatz and Vera, 2010*



Spatz Sperling of Delheim recognised the growing consumer interest in red wines in the early 1970's. Realising his Drie Sprong vineyards would not enable him to compete in the "super red wine" market, Spatz searched for more suitable land further afield. In 1975 he found his new vineyards close by, purchasing 80 ha of prime land on Klapmutskop, approximately three kilometres as the crow flies to the north-west of Drie Sprong.

Now came Spatz's opportunity to honour his wife in the same way as Hans Hoheisen had honoured his Deli. "Behind every successful man is a good woman" goes the saying, and Vera Sperling has been a driving and creative force behind Spatz - and also in the forefront of helping to build the Delheim name into what it is today. The Vera Cruz (Vera's Cross) vineyards were named after Mrs. Sperling. It has been suggested that it commemorates the cross and suffering she has had to bear since marrying Spatz in 1965!

These vineyards are noted for their Clovelly loamy-sand soils and extend on a gradual incline between 200 and 355 metres above sea level. The annual rainfall is approximately 30% lower than on Drie Sprong and the vines receive in the region of 10 to 12 days more sunshine. These conditions are ideal for those rich, muscular reds that are a hallmark of what has become known as one of the Cape's top red wine pockets - the Muldersvlei bowl. Spatz had found the land he needed to compete with the best of the reds.

According to Victor Sperling, viticulturist, the Estate now knows which variety performs best on certain sites and how training can influence the quality of the harvest. The Shiraz grapes come from a northfacing site and the soil contains more limestone than other areas of the farm. It is the bush vines that actually provide the best fruit. The low yield, 6 ton's/ha, appears to be the same whatever the training but the low trained bush vines have a better phenolic ripeness than nearby cordon trained vines. It is this awareness of site, training and canopy management that has enabled the Estate to produce excellent raw materials for the wine.

Due to the high quality level required, only a very small volume of the Vera Cruz wines is produced each year. The maiden vintage in 1998 received a gold medal at the 2000 International Wine and Spirit Competition in London, a Double Gold Veritas award, a Double Gold Michelangelo Award, and a 5-star rating in the Platter Wine Guide.