

Babylonstoren introduction



Against the backdrop of the Simonsberg, Du Toitskloof and Franschhoek mountains, Babylonstoren spans across hectares of orchards, wheat fields and vineyards. With an impressive garden at its epicenter, the estate is a glorious work of architectural and landscape restoration and research. Former magazine editor Karen Roos, Babylonstoren current owner, has brought Babylonstoren into the 21st century by restoring its original 17th century glory, both a center of hospitality excellence and as a working farm. The name dates back to a time when a large hill on the property became a routine meeting spot for the diverse local population. It became referred to as “The Tower of Babel” due to the converging of the many languages spoken in the area.

Pieter Vanderbyl planted the first vineyards in Babylonstoren, in 1692, after the Governor of the cape granted him the estate. Some of the original farming structures erected by Vanderbyl in the 17th century remain on the estate and are some of the best preserved examples of colonial farming architecture. These include the iconic Cape Dutch werf (farmyard), Koornhuis (a wheat barn) and an old cellar.

The last decade has been decisive in redefining Babylonstoren’s ethos and brand; under the ownership of Karen Roos, the estate has undergone extensive restoration and the development of an exclusive hospitality concept that includes two restaurants, a boutique hotel, a farm shop, a bakery and a spa. Key to the project is that Babylonstoren thrives as productive land under sustainable farming. As a working farm, Babylonstoren’s acreage is divided between fruit orchards, vineyards, wheat fields and even a rice paddy. The estate’s epicenter is the formal fruit & vegetable garden, that is not only a masterpiece of architectural landscaping but also supplies the estate’s restaurants and shop.

With 88 ha under vine, Babylonstoren grows 13 different grape varieties with the highest plots – of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay – lying against Simonsberg at about 600 metres above sea level. Standing on Simon’s Mountain, looking over these vineyards, you can see Table Mountain to your west on a clear day. The shale and granite soils are not the only things contributing to Babylonstoren’s unique terroir. The farm boasts a large garden and is surrounded by various types of agriculture, fruit, lavender, herbs, and fynbos, all of which give Babylonstoren’s wines a strong sense of place. The estate’s two restaurants and hotel take full advantage of all the farm has to offer, with “farm to table” taking on a literal, meaningful sense.

While Babylonstoren has been producing grapes since its inception, the first own-label wines were only released with the 2011 harvest, under the leadership of cellar master Charl Coetzee (formerly of Kaapzicht and Clos Malverne) and winemaker Klaas Stoffberg (formerly of Ernie Els Wines).

The wine range aims to be a combination of the very essence of Babylonstoren – keeping things simple and as true to the earth as possible. “It is this that we strive to achieve in our wine” says Charl Coetzee “truth to the area we are situated in, on the slopes of Simonsberg, and simplicity by making elegant and balanced wines, as natural as possible.”

