

12^{of} 100Tammy
Claassen

Here to be Grounded

Crafting stories through wine, purpose and perseverance: Turning passion into excellence.

Every bottle of wine tells a story. It carries the character of the land, the influence of the seasons, the care of the people who nurtured it and the vision of the winemaker who brought it to life. For Tammy Claassen, Head Red Winemaker at Durbanville Hills, that belief is more than a philosophy, it is a reflection of her own journey.

Raised in a family deeply connected to agriculture, Tammy developed an appreciation for the land from an early age. She grew up understanding that success is seldom instant and that meaningful achievements are often rooted in patience, hard work and perseverance. Those early lessons would later become the foundation of a career that has established her as one of South Africa's respected voices in winemaking.

After completing a BScAgric degree in Viticulture and Oenology at Stellenbosch University, Tammy embarked on a journey that would take her from some of South Africa's leading wine estates to international harvest experiences in the United States and Germany. Along the way, she refined her craft, expanded her knowledge and developed a winemaking philosophy grounded in authenticity, minimal intervention and respect for terroir, the unique environmental factors that shape every wine.

Today, with more than 17 years of industry experience and as a former Cape Winemakers' Guild Protégé, Tammy leads red winemaking at Durbanville Hills, one of South Africa's most recognised wine brands. Yet, despite her achievements, she remains grounded in the values that first inspired her journey: humility, integrity, faith and a commitment to continuous learning.

What makes Tammy's perspective distinctive is her belief that wine should never feel exclusive or intimidating. While often associated with prestige and tradition, she sees wine as something deeply human. Every bottle, she believes, tells a story of people – of vineyard workers, cellar teams, farmers, families and communities. Wine's true magic lies not in awards or ratings, but in its ability to bring people together around a table to share conversations, laughter and memories.

Among all varietals, Pinotage holds a special significance for her. Proudly South African, resilient and often underestimated, she sees in it a reflection of her own journey. Like the cultivar, Tammy has learned that strength often emerges through challenges and that true character is revealed through perseverance.

Her story serves as a powerful reminder to young women everywhere that background does not define destiny. With courage, faith and a willingness to remain true to oneself, extraordinary things become possible.

For Tammy, the journey may have begun in the vineyards, but its impact continues wherever people gather, raise a glass and create memories together.

Your
story
matters

