

THE RISCURA

RED  
HOT

WINE AWARDS

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2015



## INTRODUCTION

The Bordeaux region in the southwest of France is famous for its red blends, the best of which have the ability to mature with benefit for many years in bottle. The two grape varieties that feature most prominently are austere Cabernet Sauvignon and fleshy Merlot, although Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot also play a role.

In his excellent book *Wines of the New South Africa – Tradition and Revolution* (University of California Press: 2013), Tim James writes “(i)f the continued strength of the Bordeaux blend tradition in South Africa is based on proven success, it was begun on the basis of the authority of the Médoc and an attempt to replicate its strengths in a South African context”. Paarl winery Welgemeend was the first to produce such a blend in 1979 with Meerlust the year after.

## JUDGING PROCEDURES

85 entries were received from 64 producers for this year’s competition. The judging panel was chaired by myself and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely Roland Peens and James Pietersen, both of Wine Cellar, a Cape Town firm which brokers and cellars fine wine. We tasted blind, scoring done according to the 100-point system.

## KEY FINDINGS

Although the Bordeaux-style red blend category has traditionally been one with a reputation for high quality and reliability, it has in recent times largely escaped close scrutiny. Are these wines still at the pinnacle of what South Africa can produce?

There were 11 wines to be rated 90 or more on the 100-point quality scale so there are definitely some producers at work within the category capable of delivering excellence but unfortunately quality drops off rather fast after that – the average score of the entire line-up was a middling 85.3 points.

What makes the lack of depth in the category particularly troublesome is that there is often a major discrepancy between price and quality. It seems like many producers are observing the marketing convention of positioning their Bordeaux-style red blend as the expensive flagship in the range even when the intrinsics aren’t in the bottle.

It could well be asked why so many South African wineries still insist on emulating Bordeaux, a region which necessarily has a different climate and soils to what applies here. Then again, Bordeaux is not renowned among so many wine lovers for nothing and the challenge of being able at least to match and possibly to surpass the Classed Growths for basic quality is a worthy one.

Complexity, finesse and balance seem particularly elusive when it comes to this category, however. Many winemakers seem hell-bent on working with the ripest fruit possible, whether out of a paranoia that their wine show a pyrazine character and be called “green” or in an attempt to make a blockbuster and thus justify a premium price tag.



Where wines weren't completely overdone, then they often appeared quite ordinary showing juicy fruit and soft tannins, perfectly pleasant drinking but not particularly intellectually demanding or deserving of maturation.

So what did take the panel's fancy? This is a category which often does get maligned for being "green" but strangely enough, we found ourselves inclined to rehabilitate the term. No place for eucalyptus, mint or green pepper but there were wines showing fresh or dried herbs or a little scrub which were deemed to be very attractive and moreover, this character typically corresponded to a broader spectrum of fruit flavours as well as better structure. These, then, were the wines which got the big scores and probably warrant a place in your cellar.



## TASTING NOTES

### 92

Diemersdal Private Collection 2013

Price: R125

Total production: 46 000 bottles

Abv: 14.7%

62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 7% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot, 1% Cabernet Franc. 18 months in French oak, 40% new. Very expressive on the nose with notes of red and black berries, violets and bramble. Medium bodied with good freshness and fine tannins – has a lovely tensions about it.

MR de Compostella 2013 – **Best Overall and Winner of a Tonnellerie Sylvain Barrel**

Price: R900

Total production: 6 000 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

41% Cabernet Franc, 19% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Malbec, 14% Merlot, 9% Petit Verdot. Each variety matured separately for 12 months in barrel, the blended wine for another 12 months, a third each first-, second- and third-fill. Very youthful with notes of cassis and plums, fresh herbs and attractive oak. Good flavour intensity, fresh acidity, firm but fine tannins. Shows great composure and should mature well.

### 91

Dombeya Fenix 2010 – **Best Value**

Price: R110

Total production: 3 936 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 41% Merlot and 10% Petit Verdot. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 40% new. Ripe blue and black berries, a hint of mint plus some vanilla on the nose. Big and bold – sweet fruited but not without freshness and both the extraction and oaking are very well judged.

Fleur du Cap Laszlo 2009

Not yet released.

Total production: 2 600 bottles

Abv: 13.3%

50% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Petit Verdot, 12% Malbec and 3% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 28 months in French oak, 100% new. Red and black berries, dried herbs, cigar box and pencil shavings. Concentrated with bright acidity and smooth tannins. Lovely balance and length – has a real vinosity about it.



## 91

Keet First Verse 2011

Price: R313.50

Total production: 9 000 bottles

Abv: 14%

29% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26% Merlot, 22% Cabernet Franc, 13% Petit Verdot, 10% Malbec. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 10% new. More red than black berries and an appealing herbal note on the nose. Lovely fruit expression on the palate, good freshness and fine tannins. The finish, meanwhile, is long and savoury. Dense but not weighty, this is a sophisticated offering.

Morgenster 2010

Price: R309

Total production: 20 000 bottles

Abv: 14.6%

48% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc and 7% Petit Verdot. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. A complex nose showing red and black berries, an olive-like quality and attractive oak. Luscious fruit, good freshness and fine tannins. Full but balanced with plenty going on.

Morgenster 2012

Price: Not yet released.

Total production: 39 000 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

72% Merlot, 16% Petit Verdot, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. Red and black fruit, subtle oak and a certain maritime quality. A weightless intensity on the palate – concentrated fruit, fresh acidity and remarkably fine tannins. Classically styled.

## 90

Fleur du Cap Laszlo 2008

Price: R335

Total production: 13 500 bottles

Abv: 14.21%

35% Merlot, 32% Cabernet Franc, 22% Petit Verdot and 11% Malbec. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 100% new. Red and black fruit plus some of that forest floor character that comes with development. The palate is medium bodied with good fruit expression but the tannins already quite soft and mellow. Well balanced and long on the finish – provides very satisfying drinking but starting to peak.



## 90

Overgaauw Tria Corda 2012

Price: R280

Total production: 4 000 bottles

Abv: 14%

62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. A herbal top note before red and black berries, vanilla and a little earthiness. Medium bodied with succulent fruit, bright acidity and a pleasantly dry finish.

Thelema Rabelais 2011

Price: R380

Total production: 6 500 bottles

Abv: 14.85%

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petit Verdot. Matured for 20 months in French oak, 80% new. Cassis plus attractive oak – pencil shavings and cigar box – on the nose. Full and dense on the palate – good depth of flavour, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Sweet on entry but the finish is long and dry.

Uva Mira O.T.V. 2013

Price: R600 (to be released in October)

Total production: 1 980 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Cabernet Franc, 13% Merlot. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 100% new. Red and black fruit, some tea leaf-like fragrance, spice and a little vanilla. Medium bodied with particularly fresh acidity and fine tannins. Layered and refined with a long finish. Should reward bottle maturation.



## COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Akkerdal Passion 2011	Franschhoek	77
Bartinney Élevage 2010	Stellenbosch	86
Belfield Aristata 2011	Elgin	78
Bonnievale Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2014	Bonnievale	82
Boschkloof Conclusion 2013	Stellenbosch	84
Chamonix Troika Reserve 2013	Franschhoek	85
Cloof Lynchpin 2010	Darling	87
Cloof Lynchpin 2013	Darling	83
Constantia Glen Five 2011	Constantia	82
Constantia Glen Three 2012	Constantia	82
Creation Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon Petit Verdot 2012	Walker Bay	85
Creation Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon Petit Verdot 2013	Walker Bay	86
Dalla Cia Giorgio 2012	Stellenbosch	86
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2012	Stellenbosch	89
DeMorgenzon Maestro Red 2013	Stellenbosch	86
Deux Frères Liberté 2012	Stellenbosch	81
DeWetshof Estate Thibault 2010	Robertson	83
Diemersdal Private Collection 2013	Durbanville	92
Dombeya Fenix 2009	Stellenbosch	88
Dombeya Fenix 2010	Stellenbosch	91
Eikendal Classique 2013	Stellenbosch	84
Ernie Els Signature 2012	Stellenbosch	85
Fleur du Cap Laszlo 2008	Coastal Region	90
Fleur du Cap Laszlo 2009	Coastal Region	91
Glen Carlou Grand Classique 2011	Paarl	85
Glen Carlou Grand Classique 2012	Paarl	86
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2012	Constantia	85
Hartenberg Estate The Mackenzie 2012	Stellenbosch	85
Hartenberg Estate The Mackenzie 2013	Stellenbosch	86
Hillcrest Hornfels 2012	Durbanville	82
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot 2010	Stellenbosch	84
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot Cabernet Franc 2011	Stellenbosch	84
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot 2012	Stellenbosch	84
Jordan Cobblers Hill 2012	Stellenbosch	84
Kaapzicht Steytler Pentagon 2012	Bottelary-Stellenbosch	85
Keet First Verse 2011	Stellenbosch	91
KWV The Mentors Orchestra 2010	Western Cape	85
KWV The Mentors Orchestra 2011	Coastal Region	86
KWV The Mentors Orchestra 2012	Coastal Region	84
La Bri Affinity 2013	Franschhoek	87



Laibach The Ladybird 2013	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	85
Le Bonheur Prima 2010	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	84
Leopard Frog Tantra 2006	Stellenbosch	84
Le Riche Richesse 2013	Stellenbosch	85
Longridge Ekliptika 2012	Stellenbosch	85
Marvelous Blue 2014	Western Cape	82
Miravel "1952" 2013	Stellenbosch	84
Morgenster 2010	Stellenbosch	91
Morgenster 2011	Stellenbosch	89
Morgenster 2012	Stellenbosch	91
MR De Compostella 2013	Stellenbosch	92
Mulderbosch Faithful Hound 2013	Western Cape	84
Muratie Ansela van de Caab 2011	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	86
Nederburg The Brew Master 2013	Western Cape	87
Neethlingshof Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Neethlingshof The Caracal 2012	Stellenbosch	85
Nitida Calligraphy 2013	Durbanville	86
Oak Valley The Oak Valley Blend 2009	Elgin	85
Oldenburg Vineyards Rhodium 2012	Stellenbosch	85
Overgaauw Tria Corda 2012	Stellenbosch	90
Raats Red Jasper 2013	Stellenbosch	86
Raka Five Maidens 2011	Klein River	82
Raka Quinary 2012	Klein River	81
Romond Rebus Fanfaronne 2009	Stellenbosch	83
Rustenberg John X Merriman 2012	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	84
Saronsberg Seismic 2012	Tulbagh	84
Simonsig Tiara 2011	Stellenbosch	87
Spier Creative Block5 2012	Coastal Region	84
Steenberg Echo Red Blend 2012	Coastal Region	85
Stellenrust Timeless 2011	Stellenbosch	85
Stellenrust Timeless 2012	Stellenbosch	86
The High Road Classique 2011	Stellenbosch	86
The High Road Director's Reserve 2011	Stellenbosch	85
Thelema Rabelais 2011	Stellenbosch	90
Thelema Sutherland Cabernet Sauvignon Petit Verdot 2010	Elgin	86
Tokara Director's Reserve 2011	Stellenbosch	84
Ultra Secret Cellar Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon NV	Darling	84
Uva Mira O.T.V. 2013	Stellenbosch	90
Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2012	Simonsberg-Paarl	85
Warwick Trilogy 2011	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	85
Waverley Hills Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2013	Tulbagh	82



Webersburg 2011	Stellenbosch	82
Welgemeend Douelle 2011	Paarl	81
Welgemeend Estate Reserve 2006	Paarl	84
Welgemeend Soopjeshoogte 2011	Paarl	84