



**SAUVIGNON BLANC-SEMILLON BLEND
&
WOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC
REPORT
2017**

KEY FINDINGS

This is the fifth annual Sauvignon Blanc-Semillon Blend/Wooded Sauvignon Blanc Report (previously known as the White Hot Wine Awards) and the category remains as strong as ever. There were 38 blends entered from 34 producers for this year's competition and the average score on the 100-point quality scale was 90.0.

For the first time, Wooded Sauvignon Blanc was included as some very exciting wines seem to be emerging in this category, 18 examples received from 15 producers and here the average score was 89.9.

Given the general excellence of the wines, why do they not have a greater popular following? The panel reflected that they make for rather demanding drinking. The comment was made in quite a few instances about how severe acidity seemed – high acidities usually correspond with low pH levels which goes towards a wine's age-worthiness and there was a sense that many of the wines are very much in need of some bottle maturation before they show any of their true potential.

It's not just the acidities that make these wines so very particular but also their overall flavour intensity and complexity, this in large part because they originate from very particular vineyards, typically maritime or at altitude – Constantia, Darling, Durbanville, Elgin and Elim featuring often among the top performers as the place of origin.

Are there any improvements to be made? In this regard, oak management was something of a talking point. On the one hand, barrel fermentation and maturation provides breadth and texture but on the other hand, it can make a wine look unduly sweet and soft, the overall effect being to rob it of its brightness and vivacity. Sometimes, the suspicion was that oak was being used to mask acidity.

And, then, of course, the issue of methoxypyrazines versus thiols, the former causing a wine to show as "green" and the latter associated with grandadilla, grapefruit and tropical fruit aromas and flavours. How much to tolerate of either? Pyrazines can contribute to lovely fynbos or herbal aromatics but such wines can look a little lean and mean on the palate; thiols are typically achieved via grapes picked at higher ripeness levels and here the problem is a lack of drive and a general simplicity in the end wine.

Whereas the general practice when it comes to commodity Sauvignon Blanc is to make it very reductively, winemakers seem far more inclined to use oxidative techniques when it comes to these often small-batch, deluxe wines. This seems to be done in an effort to get texture and more complex secondary character in the final result but can lead to an unduly developed character.

Lastly, a word on blends compared to wooded Sauvignon Blanc. Perhaps inevitably and speaking in broad terms, the former tend to be more powerful and the latter more elegant. It's interesting to note that the two top performing examples of Wooded Sauvignon Blanc, namely Cape Point Vineyards Reserve 2015 and Marianne 2016, both contained small portions of Semillon, but after this tasting, the panel had the sense that there is most definitely a place for 100% Sauvignon Blanc treated with oak, especially if the motivation is to unlock the secrets of a single vineyard.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by myself and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely Roland Peens and James Pietersen, both of Wine Cellar, Cape Town merchants and cellarers of fine wine. We tasted blind, ratings done according to the 100-point system. Final scores were awarded on the basis of discussion that involved retasting where necessary rather than relying solely on arithmetic averaging.

Christian Eedes,
Editor, Winemag.co.za

TASTING NOTES: BLENDS

93

Bizoe Henriëtte 2016

Price: R190

Total production: 2 500 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

70% Semillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc. Half of the Semillon barrel fermented and half in plastic egg while the Sauvignon Blanc was tank fermented. Matured in barrel for seven months. Wonderfully complex nose with a floral top note before citrus, peach, apple and blackcurrant. The palate shows pure fruit and lovely fresh acidity. Medium bodied yet layered with an extremely long finish.

93

Gabrielskloof The Landscape Series Magdalena 2016

Price: R260

Total production: 3 211 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

59% Bot River Sauvignon Blanc, 41% Franschoek Semillon, both components fermented and matured for 10 months in 400- and 500-litre barrels. Very expressive on the nose with a floral top note before citrus, peach, yellow apple and blackcurrant. The palate is rich and broad with layers of flavour. Zesty acidity lends balance and the finish is long and savoury.

93

Highlands Road Sine Cera 2015

Price: R140

Total production: 6 000 bottles

Abv: 14.34%

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon, blending occurring after six months on the lees, 10% of the Sauvignon Blanc component matured in barrel. A rather exotic mélange of citrus, green melon and granadilla on the nose. The palate is very focused with excellent fruit concentration and vibrant acidity before a salty finish. Most striking.

93

Nederburg Private Bin D252 Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016

Price: R315

Total production: 800 bottles

Abv: 12.93%

76% Darling Sauvignon Blanc 24% Philadelphia Semillon. Mainly tank fermented. An attractive nose of flowers, citrus, green apple and white peach. The palate is very elegant with clean, well-defined fruit and

racy acidity, the finish long and pithy.

93

Nitida Coronata Integration 2016 (BEST OVERALL)

Price: R150

Total production: 3 360 bottles

Abv: 13.88%

51% Sauvignon Blanc fermented in tank, 49% Semillon fermented in new oak. After fermentation, the wine was blended and returned to older 300-litre barrels for eight months. A herbal top note before citrus, peach plus attractive oak. Rich and full with coated acidity and a savoury finish. Precise and polished, this is a very impressive wine.

92

Benguela Cove Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016

Price: R125

55% Semillon, 45% Sauvignon Blanc. A herbal top note before white peach, naartjie plus a little vanilla and oak spice. Medium bodied with pure fruit, fresh acidity and a savoury finish. Precisely assembled.

92

Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2016

Price: R235

84% Sauvignon Blanc, 16% Semillon. Wonderfully expressive on the nose with notes of white peach, apple, naartjie, blackcurrant and vanilla plus some leesy complexity. The palate is rich and broad with a slight oxidative quality. Well balanced with layers of flavour.

92

Constantia Uitsig Natura Vista 2015

Price: R155

70% Semillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc. A particular herbal character to go with citrus and sea-breeze notes. Lovely depth of fruit plus cracking acidity on the palate.

92

Fairview Drie Papens Fontein Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016

Price: R160

51% Semillon, 49% Sauvignon Blanc. Expressive nose displaying hay and dried herbs before green melon and black currant. Rich and very flavoursome with nicely coated acidity and a little white pepper on the finish.

92

Mulderbosch Faithful Hound White 2015

Price: R155

62% Semillon, 38% Sauvignon Blanc. White peach, black currant, a hint of vanilla plus some waxiness on the nose. Rich and broad with well integrated acidity and a savoury finish.

92

Stellenzicht The Ratio 2015

Price: R175

62% Sauvignon Blanc, 38% Semillon. A subtle yet complex nose with notes of citrus, peach, white pepper and spice plus some waxiness. The palate is rich and smooth textured with nicely coated acidity and an intensely savoury finish.

91

David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner The Bowline 2015

Price: R210

62% Sauvignon Blanc, 38% Semillon. Flowers and fynbos before lime and white peach. The palate is tight and lean with pure fruit and vibrant acidity before a salty finish.

90

Celestina Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016

Price: R145

56% Sauvignon Blanc, 44% Semillon. Green melon and tropical fruit with a herbal note in the background. Rich and ripe, smooth in texture but snappy acidity lends balance. Deep and delicious.

90

Constantia Glen TWO 2016

Price: R250

70% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Semillon. Subtle yet complex nose showing citrus blossom before white peach, apple and blackcurrant. The palate is nicely understated with pure fruit, moderate acidity and a gently savoury finish.

90

Creation Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016

Price: R150

80% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Semillon. Top notes of flowers and fynbos before citrus and granadilla. Rich and flavourful with coated acidity, some white pepper bite on the finish.

90

Delaire Graff White Reserve 2015

Price: R285

60% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Semillon. Subtle notes of lime, lemon and some herbal character on a generally shy nose. Relatively lean with piercing acidity before a pithy finish. Elegant and austere in style.

90

Glenwood Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016

Price: R120

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon. Citrus, white peach and some black currant on the nose. Pure and fresh on the palate with a saline finish. Intense but not weighty, a well-balanced wine.

90

Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve White 2015

Price: R280

75% Semillon, 25% Sauvignon Blanc. A pronounced herbal top note before green bean and white peach plus attractive oak. Lean and super-fresh on the palate with a savoury finish – all makes for a rather singular wine.

90

Iona One Man Band 2016

Price: R260

60% Semillon, 40% Sauvignon Blanc. Some reduction before apple and peach plus oak spice on the nose. The palate shows dense fruit and firm acidity, the wine quite stern and unapproachable right now but should mature with benefit.

90

Kevin King Bassey 2015

Price: R155

58% Sauvignon Blanc, 42% Semillon. Citrus, spice and some waxiness to the nose. Rich and smooth textured with well integrated acidity. A slight oxidative quality adds interest.

90

Nitida Coronata Integration 2015

Price: R150

60% Semillon, 40% Sauvignon Blanc. Top notes of fynbos and sea breeze before citrus, white peach and blackcurrant plus a little spice. Rich, layered and long.

90

Vergelegen GVB White 2014

Price: R360

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon. A herbal note before citrus and attractive oak on the nose. The palate is rich and full with vibrant acidity. Impressive structure and length.

90

Zorgvliet Simoné 2016

Price: R160

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon. Fresh herbs and hay before citrus and green apple on the nose. The palate displays clean, well-defined fruit and very fresh acidity before a saline finish.

TASTING NOTES: WOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC

93

Cape Point Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc Reserve 2015

Price: R150

Total production: 3 360 bottles

Abv: 14.11%

90% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Semillon. Fermented and matured for 14 months in old 600-litre barrels. A hugely complex nose showing dried herbs, peach, blackcurrant, a little spice and some leesy complexity. Rich and round on the palate before a long and avoury finish. Very characterful.

93

Marianne 2016

Price: R170

Total production: 10 050 bottles

Abv: 14.12%

92% Sauvignon Blanc, 8% Semillon. Fermented and matured for nine months in French oak, 50% new. The nose shows blackcurrant with some white pepper in the background. Pure and hugely concentrated with driving acidity before a saline finish. Makes a big statement.

92

Stark-Condé Round Mountain 2016

Price: R185

100% Sauvignon Blanc. A hint of reduction before citrus, white peach and blackcurrant. The palate shows power and presence thanks to great depth of fruit and driving acidity.

91

Klein Constantia Perdeblokke 2016

Price: R290

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Subtle notes of citrus, peach and blackcurrant plus attractive oak on the nose. The palate is lean in a good sense with super-fresh acidity and a pithy finish. Wonderfully composed.

90

Authentique 2016

Price: R100

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Elderflower, citrus and white peach plus a little mushroom in the background. Rich and thick textured, racy acidity however lends balance. Layers of flavour, the finish long and savoury.

90

Glendirik 2016

Price: R290

100% Sauvignon Blanc. The nose shows citrus blossom before lime, white peach and apple. Strikingly pure fruit with fresh acidity, the finish long and dry.

90

Jordan The Outlier 2016

Price: R123

100% Sauvignon Blanc. A cut-grass top note before pear and white peach. Good fruit density and racy acidity make for a punchy wine.

90

Klein Constantia Block 361 & 372 2015

Price: R290

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Fennel, blackcurrant and attractive vanilla on the nose. Good fruit concentration and fresh acidity on the palate before a salty finish. Delicious!

90

Mulderbosch 1000 Miles 2015

Price: R200

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Yellow peach and blackcurrant plus some waxy complexity and spice on the nose. Rich and full on the palate with tangy acidity.

90

Neil Ellis Amica 2016

Price: R215

100% Sauvignon Blanc. A shy nose but subtle hints of lime and white peach can be detected. The palate is well balanced with clean fruit and fresh acidity before a salty finish.

90

Nitida Wild Child 2016

Price: R140

100% Sauvignon Blanc. Some appealing herbal character before citrus on the nose. Light and fresh with a dry finish, this is a particularly elegant wine.

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z: BLENDS

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Benguela Cove Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016	Walker Bay	92
Bizoe Henriëtte 2016	Western Cape	93
Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2015	Cape Peninsula	89
Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2016	Cape Peninsula	92
Celestina Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016	Cape Agulhas	90
Constantia Glen TWO 2016	Constantia	90
Constantia Uitsig Natura Vista 2015	Constantia	92
Creation Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016	Walker Bay	90
Darling Cellars Lady Ann Darling 2015	Darling	87
David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner The Bowline 2015	Elim	91
Delaire Graff White Reserve 2015	Coastal Region	90
Fairview Drie Papens Fontein Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016	Darling	92
Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserve Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016	Elim	89
Gabriëlskloof The Landscape Series Magdalena 2016	Western Cape	93
Glenwood Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016	Franschhoek	90
Glenwood Grand Duc Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016	Franschoek	87
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve White 2015	Constantia	90
Groote Post Seasalter 2015	Darling	87
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2010	Elgin	89
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2015	Elgin	93
Iona One Man Band 2016	Elgin	90
Kevin King Bassey 2015	Elgin	90
Morgenster White Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Mulderbosch Faithful Hound White 2015	Western Cape	92
Nederburg Private Bin D252 Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016		93
Newton Johnson Resonance 2016	Walker Bay	89
Nitida Coronata Integration 2015	Durbanville	90
Nitida Coronata Integration 2016	Cape Town	93
Simonsig Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2017	Western Cape	88
Steenberg Magna Carta 2016	Constantia	87
Stellenzicht The Ratio 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Strandveld Adamastor 2015	Elim	89
Tokara Director's Reserve White 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2016	Elim	88
Vergelegen GVB White 2014	Stellenbosch	90
Vrede en Lust Barrique 2015	Elgin	88
Waverley Hills Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2017	Tulbagh	88
Zorgvliet Simoné 2016	Banghoek	90

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z: WOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Authentique 2016	Durbanville	90
Cape Point Vineyards Reserve 2015	Cape Peninsula	93
Diermersdal MM Louw 2016	Durbanville	89
Diemersdal Wild Horseshoe 2016	Durbanville	88
Glendirik 2016	Constantia	90
Hermanuspietersfontein Nr 5 Kat met die Houtbeen 2014	Sondagskloof	89
Hermanuspietersfontein Kleindogter 2015	Sondagskloof	88
Jordan The Outlier 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Klein Constantia Block 361 & 372 2015	Constantia	90
Klein Constantia Perdeblokke 2016	Constantia	91
Marianne 2016	Western Cape	93
Mulderbosch 1000 Miles 2015	Western Cape	90
Neil Ellis Amica 2016	Jonkershoek Valley	90
Nitida Wild Child 2016	Durbanville	90
Stark-Condé Round Mountain 2016	Jonkershoek Valley	92
Steenberg Barrel Fermented Rattlesnake 2016	Constantia	87
The Fledge & Co. Fumé Blanc 2016	Western Cape	89
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Blanc Fumé 2015	Elgin	89