



CAPE
WHITE
BLEND
REPORT
2017

KEY FINDINGS

First, a reminder as to what constitutes a “Cape White Blend”? Our working definition is a wine made from any combination of varieties as long as it includes a significant Chenin Blanc component, specifically more than 15% and less than 85%.

Why insist on Chenin Blanc? It's what make such wines particularly, if not uniquely, of this country. If we were to make Chenin Blanc non-compulsory then producers forfeit a significant point of difference relative to wines from elsewhere in the world - with approximately 18 000ha of Chenin in the ground, it's our most planted variety and we should find ways to celebrate it.

38 entries were received from 31 producers and the average score on the 100-point quality scale was 90.4 – the highest average of our category tastings this year.

Taken as whole, these are extraordinarily brave and adventurous wines. The convention of preventing oxidation at all costs in order to preserve primary fruit is typically pretty much dispensed with and the result is an unusual array of aromas and flavours – think cut apple, honey, nuts and rising dough. Some examples remind you of cider and others of Sherry.

How much of this “funky” character to tolerate? According to the panel, the best wines were those where the original fruit remained more or less intact and the oxidative character mentioned above served to add complexity. Too much exposure to oxygen during the vinification process and wines started to show flaws like browning of colour and excessive volatile acidity. Sometimes, there wasn't any overt shortcoming other than a slight dullness or listlessness. Conversely, there were a few wines which were arguably not oxidative enough presenting as quite primary and straightforward.

Winemakers are clearly trying to push boundaries with these wines and many are inclined to opt for spontaneous fermentation (using naturally occurring yeasts on grape skins and winery equipment rather than inoculating with a commercial yeast) to achieve more complexity. However, these occasionally don't ferment as dry as they might and the panel noted one or two wines which seemed unduly sweet. In a similar vein, the richness and texture achieved via lees contact on many of the wines was impressive but the panel felt some were a little too oily or greasy and hence clumsy.

The best wines, however, manage to combine extraordinary complexity with balance. They are certainly not for engaging in lightly but will provide much reward for those wishing to deviate from the mainstream.

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

TASING NOTES

95

Keermont Terrasse 2015

Price: R160

Total production: 15 882 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

56% Chenin Blanc, 17% Viognier, 14% Sauvignon Blanc, 13% Chardonnay. Fermented and matured for 12 months in older French oak. A subtle but compelling nose of citrus and peach plus dried herbs and yellow earth. Great depth of fruit – dense and thick textured but equally not short of freshness thanks to vibrant acidity, the finish long and savoury. Profoundly good.

94

Lammershoek Terravinum Reserve White 2016

Price: R185

Total production: 9 200 bottles

Abv: 13.11%

60% Chenin Blanc, 22% Viognier, 18% Chardonnay. Components fermented separately in tank and older barrels of various sizes before maturation lasting eight months. Enticing floral perfume before pear and white peach plus some leesy complexity. Pure and fresh on the palate with great length, a saline quality to the finish. Tightly wound and promises much in time to come.

94

Solms Delta Amalie 2015

Price: R180

Total production: 12 000 bottles

Abv: 14%

30% Chenin Blanc, 30% Grenache Blanc, 25% Roussanne, 15% Verdelho. Fermented and matured for 12 months in a combination of 500-litre barrels, 2000-litre foudres and concrete eggs. Citrus and stone fruit plus some waxy character on the nose. Rich and thick textured on the palate – dense fruit, nicely coated acidity and a savoury finish. Complex and subtle.

93

Cavalli Cremello 2015

Price: R135

Total production: 10 939 bottles

Abv: 13.64%

42% Chenin Blanc, 31% Chardonnay, 27% Verdelho. 80% matured for 12 months in French oak, 35% new. A beautiful nose showing top notes of flowers and herbs before green, white and yellow fruit plus some earth and spice. Pure and focused – good fruit concentration and driving acidity.

93

Lammershoek The Innocent White Blend 2015

Price: R88

Total production: 12 100 bottles

Abv: 13.56%

59% Chenin Blanc, 16% Sauvignon Blanc, 12% Harslevelü, 8% Chardonnay, 5% Viognier. Matured for five months in a combination of old oak barrels, foudre and concrete tanks. Citrus, white peach and cut apple plus some yeasty complexity. Quite lean but intensely flavoured with a salty finish.

93

Olifantsberg Blanc 2016

Price: R165

Total production: 4 000 bottles

Abv: 14%

46% Roussanne, 22% Grenache Blanc, 16% Chenin Blanc, 16% Chardonnay. Fermented and matured for 10 months in older French oak. Top notes of hay and dried herbs before pear, white peach and apple on the nose. The palate is rich, round and textured but not short of freshness, the finish nicely pithy.

93

Painted Wolf Peloton Blanc 2016

Price: R100

Total production: 9 044 bottles

Abv: 13%

69% Chenin Blanc, 12% Viognier, 10% Roussanne, 6% Grenache Blanc, 3% Clairette Blanche. Partial spontaneous fermentation and maturation in barrel. Some floral fragrance before peach, earth, spice and some intriguing oxidative character. Great core of fruit, lively acidity and a savoury finish.

92

Fairview Nurok 2016

Price: R170

Total production: 10 200 bottles

Abv: 13.58%

43% Chenin Blanc, 30% Viognier, 15% Roussanne, 12% Grenache Blanc. Components fermented separately in a combination of tanks and barrels then matured for 10 months before blending. Pleasantly oxidative with notes of cut apple, yellow peach, ginger and other spice. Rich and broad – plenty of sweet fruit offset by tangy acidity.

92

Muratie Laurens Campher 2016

Price: R135

Total production: 10 000 bottles

Abv: 13.94%

47% Chenin Blanc, 27% Verdelho, 20% Sauvignon Blanc, 6% Viognier. Fermented and matured for 11 months in 500-litre French oak barrels, 20% new. Citrus, apple and white peach plus a pronounced but not unattractive leesy/reductive note. Rich and broad on the palate, creamy in texture but punchy acidity lends verve. Good fruit density and length.

BUYING GUIDE: CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90 – 91

91

Bergsig Icarus 2016

Price: R180

Blake's Family Wines Tourmaline 2016

Price: R120

Darling Cellars Lime Kilns 2016

Price: R100

Eerste Hoop Lodewijk X 2017

Price: R240

Miles Mossop Saskia 2014

Price: R257

Sijnn White 2016

Price: R180

90

Bosman Family Vineyards Adama 2016

Price: R150

B Vintners Haarlem to Hope 2016

Price: R185

Leipzig White Leipzig 2017

Price: R110

Marvelous Yellow 2015

Price: R90

Rascallion Vinyl Collection 33 1/3 RPM 2017

Price: R118

Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Chenin Blanc Semillon 2016

Price: R129

Zevenwacht The Tin Mine White 2016

Price: R79

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Alvi's Drift Reserve CVC 2016	Worcester	89
Avondale Cyclus 2014	Paarl	87
B Vintners Haarlem to Hope 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Bergsig Icarus 2015	Breedekloof	88
Bergsig Icarus 2016	Breedekloof	91
Blake's Family Wines Tourmaline 2016	Swartland	91
Bosman Family Vineyards Adama 2016	Western Cape	90
Cavalli Cremello 2015	Stellenbosch	93
Darling Cellars Lime Kilns 2016	Darling	91
DeMorgenzon Maestro White 2015	Stellenbosch	89
DeMorgenzon Maestro White 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Eerste Hoop Lodewijk X 2017	Cape South Coast	91
Fairview Nurok 2016	Paarl	92
Keermont Terrasse 2015	Stellenbosch	95
Kloovenburg Eight Feet 2016	Swartland	89
Lammershoek Terranvinum Reserve White 2016	Swartland	94
Lammershoek The Innocent White Blend 2015	Swartland	93
Leipzig White Leipzig 2017	Western Cape	90
Marvelous Yellow 2015	Western Cape	90
Miles Mossop Saskia 2014	Coastal Region	91
Muratie Laurens Campher 2016	Stellenbosch	92
My Wyn Les Grandes Horizontales 2015	Franschhoek	89
Nativo White 2015 (The Hughes Family Wines)	Swartland	89
Olifantsberg Blanc 2016	Breedekloof	93
Painted Wolf Peloton Blanc 2016	Coastal Region	93
Painted Wolf Pictus V 2016	Coastal Region	89
Rascallion Aquiver 2016	Western Cape	89
Rascallion Susurrous 2016	Western Cape	89
Rascallion Vinyl Collection 33 1/3 RPM 2017	Western Cape	90
Sijnn White 2016	Malgas	91
Solms Delta Amalie 2015	Western Cape	94
Springfontein Limestone Rocks Darkside of the Moon 2015	Walker Bay	89
Stark-Conde Field Blend 2017	Jonkershoek Valley	89
Ultra Liquors Secret Cellar CCG No. 808 NV	Western Cape	89
Vondeling Babiana 2016	Voor-Paardeberg	89
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Chenin Blanc Semillon 2016	Elgin	90
Vrede en Lust White Mischief 2016	Elgin	89
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine White 2016	Stellenbosch	90