



PRESCIENT

PINOTAGE
REPORT 2020

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2020



Winemag.co.za is set to produce 12 category reports over the course of the year. Each report is based on the outcome of a blind tasting of wines entered within the specific category.

We will announce a Top 10 with the release of each successive report. Producers of these wines will be notified and are able to purchase newly designed Top 10 stickers while producers of the remaining wines may acquire regular rating stickers – consumers are encouraged to look out for these in the retail environment.

The programme culminates in a gala dinner where the individual best wine per category will receive an award and ratings on the 100-point quality scale for all the Top 10 wines will be revealed.

The Best of Category wines will subsequently be shown at tastings in both Johannesburg and London.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me 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*

KEY FINDINGS

Pinotage, a cross between Pinot Noir and Cinsault, was first engineered by Stellenbosch University's Professor Abraham Perold in 1925. It is South Africa's third most widely planted red wine variety after Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz and while the latter two varieties have been in decline over the last decade, Pinotage increased by 9.1%, area under vineyard being 6 662 ha at the end of 2019. Even so, it is often considered a bit of an oddity and is even mocked and ridiculed in some quarters – Winemag.co.za has been inclined to leave well enough alone up till now but finally curiosity got the better of us...

And what an interesting tasting this proved to be. 57 entries were received from 33 producers, 33 rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale, illustrating that in basic quality terms Pinotage easily holds its own against single-variety Cab, Merlot and Shiraz.

Perhaps the variety's greatest attribute is the depth of fruit it delivers while its most considerable drawback is its awkward, sometimes bitter tannins, careful vinification required if rustic, inelegant wines are to be avoided.

It would appear, however, that Pinotage is benefiting from some particularly considered, imaginative work in both vineyard and cellar. Among the Top 10 were several wines (Beyerskloof Diesel 2018, Kaapzicht Steytler 2018, La Cave 2018 and Môreson The Widow Maker 2018) made in the powerful style that has traditionally exemplified high quality. Here the challenge is to not let the wine become contrived – very ripe fruit, heavy extraction and obvious oak can make for wines that are too ostentatious, heavy and dull. The best examples manage to deliver fruit concentration without sacrificing character and balance.

What was immensely pleasing, however, was to see several wines made in a quieter, more nuanced style. A decade ago, the argument was often made that Pinotage might benefit from earlier picking in the vineyard and a minimum of messing around in the cellar leading to lighter, more energetic wines. It's taken a while for such wines to come to the fore, but they are now most definitely here – see BVintners Liberté 2018, Lievland Bushvine 2018 and MAN Family Wines Bosstok 2018 among the Top 10 as prime examples in this regard. The potential stumbling block when seeking to make wines in such a vein is that they become too simple, but even the less successful attempts still offer pleasantly easy drinking.

In conclusion, then, Pinotage should no longer be the butt of all South African wine industry jokes. It remains an idiosyncratic variety but it does seem to be providing new and intriguing drinking experiences like few others and that can only make life more interesting for wine lovers.

Of the Top 10, Stellenbosch dominated with five from this district, with Durbanville, Paarl, Wellington and Swartland also represented plus one designated as W.O. Coastal Region, this being MAN Family Wines Bosstok 2018 (grapes from Agter Paarl). Average cellar-door price of the Top 10 is R302 a bottle with the offering from MAN being the most affordable at R75 a bottle.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



B Vintners Liberté 2018

R300

Total production: 3 000 bottles Abv: 13.5%

50% whole-bunch fermentation before maturation lasting 18 months in older French oak. An enticing nose with notes of red currant, cherry, pomegranate and musk. The palate is light-bodied and energetic – pure fruit, fresh acidity and crunchy tannins. This is precisely made, being wonderfully clean and linear.



Beyerskloof Diesel 2018

R850

Total production: 8 900 bottles Abv: 15%

Matured for 19 months in French oak, 100% new. Black and blue berries, vanilla, chocolate and spice on the nose while the palate is rich and broad – good depth of fruit and smooth tannins. Possesses plenty of flavour, the finish long and savoury.



De Grendel Amandelboord 2018

R220

Total production: 6 436 bottles Abv: 14.33%

Matured for 11 months in 20% new French oak, 10% new American oak and the remainder older. A complex nose with notes of cherries, plums, earth, herbs and spice while the palate is medium bodied and well balanced with lovely fruit purity, fresh acidity and fine tannins.





Kaapzicht Steytler 2018

R550

Total production: 2 474 bottles Abv: 14.57%

Matured for 20 months in French oak, 80% new. Attractive aromatics with a top note of rose before cherries and plums plus vanilla. The palate is rich and thick textured with lush fruit and chewy tannins. Plenty of fruit power in evidence but equally very well balanced.



La Cave 2018 (Wellington Wines)

R200

Total production: 7 338 bottles Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 100% new. Dark berries, vanilla, tar, and spice on the nose. The palate is sheer and full – great fruit density to go with nicely grippy tannins. Succulent on entry before a super-dry finish.



L'Avenir Provenance 2017

R165

Total production: 25 000 bottles Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 10 to 14 months in a combination of steel tanks and barrel, some of which was new. Red and black berries, flowers and herbs. The palate is medium bodied and well balanced – a good core of fruit to go with fresh acidity and fine tannins.





Lievland Bushvine 2018

R150

Total production: 9 600 Abv: 13.5%

85% Pinotage, 8% Grenache, 4% Shiraz and 3% Cinsault. Matured for 13 months in French oak, 13% new. Aromatics of red cherry, fynbos, earth and spice while the palate is medium bodied with lovely fruit purity, fresh acidity and fine tannins before a salty finish. Deftly put together.



MAN Family Wines Bosstok 2018

R75

Total production: 18 700 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Grapes from Agter-Paarl – 90% Pinotage, 5% Cinsault and 5% Grenache. Matured for 12 months, 75% in steel tanks and 25% in American oak, 20% new. A pretty nose with notes of plums, cherries, herbs and spice. The palate meanwhile is light-bodied with vibrant acidity and crunchy tannins. A particularly elegant take on the variety.



Môreson The Widow Maker 2018

R280

Total production: 9 900 bottles Abv: 14.99%

25% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 30% new. A heady and exotic nose with notes of dark berries, lilies, incense and oak spice. The palate is rich and full – there's plenty of dense, sweet fruit to go with smooth tannins and the finish is long and dry. Makes a big impression.





Painted Wolf Guillermo 2019

R230

Total production: 9 600 bottles Abv: 14.77%

85% Pinotage, 15% Syrah. 30% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured in French and American oak, 25% new. A top note of banana before red and black berries, chocolate and a hint of baking spice on the nose while the palate is rich and broad with lush fruit and smooth tannins. Possessing layers of flavour, this comes across as carefully crafted.



BUYING GUIDE CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
MAN Family Wines Bosstok 2018	Top 10	R75
Lievland Bushvine 2018	Top 10	R150
L'Avenir Provenance 2017	Top 10	R165
La Cave 2018 (Wellington Wines)	Top 10	R200
De Grendel Amandelboord 2018	Top 10	R220
Painted Wolf Guillermo 2019	Top 10	R230
Môreson The Widow Maker 2018	Top 10	R280
B Vintners Liberté 2018	Top 10	R300
Kaapzicht Steytler 2018	Top 10	R550
Beyerskloof Diesel 2018	Top 10	R850
Delheim 2017	91	R150
Diemersdal Reserve 2019	91	R165
Beyerskloof Reserve 2018	91	R170
Chamonix Greywacke Pinotage 2017	91	R200
Painted Wolf Guillermo 2018	91	R230
Schneider 2019 (Kaapzicht)	91	R250
Spioenkop "1900" 2018	91	R265
Flagstone Writer's Block 2018	91	R280
B Vintners Liberte 2017	91	R300
Alle Bleue Black Series Old Vine 2018	91	R400
Delheim Vera Cruz 2016	91	R470
L'Avenir Single Block 2018	91	R650
Diemersdal 2019	90	R100
L'Avenir 2018	90	R100
Nuy Mastery 2018	90	R125
Middelvlei Free-Run 2018	90	R145
Painted Wolf 2019	90	R150
Kaapzicht 2018	90	R160
Longridge 2018	90	R190
De Grendel Amandelboord 2019	90	R220
Diemersdal The Journal 2018	90	R320
Kaapzicht Steytler 2017	90	R550
Lanzerac Pionier Single Vineyard 2017	90	R1 095

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Aaldering 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Aaldering Lady M 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Allée Bleue 2018	Franschhoek / Piekenierskloof	89
Allée Bleue Black Series Old Vine 2018	Piekenierskloof	91
B Vintners Liberté 2017	Stellenbosch	91
B Vintners Liberté 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Bellevue 1953 2017	Bottelary Stellenbosch	86
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2016	Stellenbosch	73
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2017	Stellenbosch	88
Bellingham 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Beyerskloof Diesel 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Beyerskloof Diesel 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Beyerskloof Reserve 2017	Stellenbosch	87
Beyerskloof Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Bosman Family Vineyards 2016	Wellington	89
Bowwood 2017 (Vondeling)	Voor Paardeberg	88
Chamonix Greywacke Pinotage 2017	Franschhoek	91
David & Nadia Topography 2019	Swartland	89
De Grendel Amandelboord 2018	Durbanville	Top 10
De Grendel Amandelboord 2019	Durbanville	90
Delheim 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Delheim Vera Cruz 2016	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	91
Diemersdal 2019	Cape Town	90
Diemersdal Reserve 2019	Durbanville	91
Diemersdal The Journal 2018	Durbanville	90
Diemersfontein Carpe Diem 2018	Wellington	89
Flagstone Writer's Block 2018	Breedekloof	91
Kaapzicht 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Kaapzicht Steytler 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Kaapzicht Steytler 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
La Cave 2018 (Wellington Wines)	Wellington	Top 10
Lammershoek The Innocent 2018	Swartland	87
Lanzerac Pionier 2018	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	90
Lanzerac Rosé 2018	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	88
L'Avenir 2018	Stellenbosch	90
L'Avenir Provenance 2016	Stellenbosch	88
L'Avenir Provenance 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
L'Avenir Single Block 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Lievland Bushvine 2018	Paarl	Top 10
Longridge 2018	Stellenbosch	90
MAN Family Wines Bosstok 2018	Coastal Region	Top 10
Middelvlei Free-run 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Middelvlei Momberg 2018	Stellenbosch	86
Môreson The Widow Maker 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Nuy Mastery 2018	Nuy	90

Painted Wolf 2019	Breedekloof	90
Painted Wolf Guillermo 2018	Swartland	91
Painted Wolf Guillermo 2019	Swartland	Top 10
Saxenburg Private Collection 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Schneider 2019 (Kaazicht)	Stellenbosch	91
Spioenkop 1900 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Spioenkop Elgin 2018	Elgin	88
The Giant Periwinkle Sun Spider 2018	Cape Agulhas	89
Under Oaks Reserve 2017	Coastal Region	88
Wildekrans 2018	Bot River	89
Wildekrans Barrel Select Reserve 2017	Bot River	88
Windmeul Reserve 2017	Coastal Region	89

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