



PRESCIENT
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
~ REPORT 2016 ~

KEY FINDINGS

There were 12 wines out of 60 submitted to rate 90 points or higher on the 100-point scale and again Stellenbosch was well represented with six of the wines featuring grapes sourced solely from this district while Spier Woolworths Private Collection 2013 is a blend of Stellenbosch-Darling fruit and the Môreson Magia 2013 contains 15% Stellenbosch fruit to go with 85% from Franschoek.

Franschoek has always tried to lay claim to making good Cabernet Sauvignon so interesting to note that in addition to the Môreson, Rickety Bridge and Stony Brook from this ward are also among the top performers. Something positive appears to be happening at Plaisir de Merle on the Paarl side of the Simonsberg because both the own label 2012 and the Nederburg II Centuries 2012 from grapes grown on this property having rated well, too.

It's easy to fixate on the wines rating 90 or above but it needs to be re-iterated that those wines scoring 86 to 89 are also very good, this band of points roughly equivalent to Four Stars in terms of the old Five Star rating system.

What did the panel look to reward? Most basically, wines which showed purity of fruit, freshness and structure. A somewhat surprising phenomenon to manifest in this tasting was the amount of wines to show red fruit rather than the black fruit more typically associated with the variety, these wines also tending to be quite light bodied. The panel's verdict was these were easy and fun but lacking the heft and detail that you might expect from top-end Cab. Whether this was because of some vineyard inadequacy or a deliberate decision by winemakers to make more accessible, faster moving product, it's difficult to say.

Conversely, there were some very big, sweet, soft offerings. Pyrazine "greenness" is always a topic of debate when judging Cabernet Sauvignon and many viticulturists and winemakers are obviously doing everything in their power (more open vineyard canopies, later picking dates) to avoid this being a criticism of their end-wines.

The whole issue is compounded in that "big, sweet and soft" is what tends to appeal to a well-heeled but uninitiated market segment and there is a sense that some winemakers are doing excessively heavy extractions on fruit that is already very ripe in an effort to achieve plushness. The result is wines that become caricatures.

In the end, the wines that rated best displayed depth of flavour but not at the expense of balance and ended *dry*. Austerity might be out of fashion with the market at large but not with this panel. Cabernet is intended to be aged and a certain firmness in youth is precisely what is required if that is to be so.

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APPROACH

The tasting is capped at 60 wines, partly consisting of examples which have fared well in recent local or international competition and partly from those producers I consider to be the best in their field even if somewhat low profile.

While other bigger tastings can have a useful talent-spotting function, the intention here is very much to do good by what might be called the seeded players, the finite line-up in particular intended to avoid the perils of palate fatigue.

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, scoring done according to the 100-point system.

TASTING NOTES

94

Delaire Graff Reserve 2013

Price: R500

Total production: 4 900 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 80% new. A classic nose of red and black fruit, violets and graphite. Medium bodied yet intensely flavoured – great composure and length.

94

Spier Woolworths Private Collection 2013

Woolworths price: R149.95

Total production: 16 400 bottles

Abv: 14.47%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon (Darling and Stellenbosch). Matured for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. Red and black fruit, fresh herbs and pencil shavings on the nose. Succulent fruit, fresh acidity and powdery tannins – lovely purity and poise.

93

Plaisir de Merle 2012

Price: R180

Total production: 84 000 bottles

Abv: 13.98%

86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot, 5% Cabernet Franc and 3% Malbec. Matured for 16 months in mainly French oak, 48% new. Dark fruit, mint plus vanilla and spice on the nose. The palate shows good depth of flavour and a wonderfully creamy texture before a very long finish.

92

Nederburg II Centuries 2012

Price: R345

Total production: 6 400 bottles

Abv: 14.66%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon from Simonsberg-Paarl vineyards. Matured for 28 months in French oak, 100% new. The nose shows red and black fruit, milk chocolate plus a slight leafy quality. Complex and classically styled – good depth of flavour, fresh acidity and fine tannins.

91

Môreson Magia 2013

Price: R750

Total production: 1 200 bottles

Abv: 14.22%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon (85% Franschoek, 15% Stellenbosch). Matured for 18 months in French oak, 100% new. Red and black berries, a subtle herbal note, a little earthiness and some attractive oak. A powerful wine – good fruit purity, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins.

91

Thelema 2012

Price: R195

Total production: 29 000 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 45% new. Cassis, a hint of mint plus chocolate and a little earthiness. Rich and full on the palate with fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins, the finish long and savoury.

91

Vergenoegd 2011

Price: R190

Total production: 4 983 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 50% new. Red and black berries plus a pleasant leafy note and oak on the nose. Good fruit concentration, bright acidity and suitably fine tannins – full but balanced.

90

Boekenhoutskloof Stellenbosch 2014

Price: R420

Total production: 37 000 bottles

Abv: 13.9%

92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. On the nose, a floral top note before red and black berries plus attractive oak. Medium bodied with sweet fruit upfront but the finish savoury. Good freshness, the tannins particularly fine.

90

Fleur du Cap Unfiltered 2013

Price: R144

Total production: 19 000 bottles

Abv: 13.85%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 12 months in mainly French oak, 30% new. Cassis and pencil shavings on the nose. A great core of fruit with fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Very pure and long.

90

Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2013

Price: R115

Total production: 34 200 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 24 months in French oak, 40% new. Aromatics of red fruit and cigar box. The palate is medium bodied with a pleasing sweet 'n sour character before a long, dry finish.

90

Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve 2013

Price: R250

Total production: 8 100 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 24 months in French oak, 35% new. An intriguing nose of red berries, some floral fragrance, vanilla and a little spice on the nose. Good fruit expression, lively acidity and crunchy tannins.

90

Stony Brook Ghost Gum 2012

Price: R275

Total production: 4 800 bottles

Abv: 14.61%

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 32 months in French oak, 100% new. Cassis, some leafiness and graphite on the nose. Rich and full but balanced – good fruit purity, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins.

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Alto 2012	Stellenbosch	87
Bartinney 2013	Stellenbosch	84
Belfield Magnifica 2013	Elgin	85
Boekenhoutskloof Franschhoek 2013	Franschhoek	85
Boekenhoutskloof Stellenbosch 2014	Stellenbosch	90
Cederberg 2014	Cederberg	86
Cederberg Five Generations 2014	Cederberg	85
David Finlayson GS 2013	Stellenbosch	85
Delaire Graff Laurence Graff Reserve 2012	Stellenbosch	87
Delaire Graff Reserve 2013	Stellenbosch	94
De Trafford 2013	Stellenbosch	84
Diemersfontein Woolworths Reserve Collection 2013	Wellington	83
Edgebaston 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Eikendal 2014	Stellenbosch	87
Ernie Els Proprietor's 2013	Stellenbosch	85
Flagstone Music Room 2013	Western Cape	88
Fleur du Cap Unfiltered 2013	Stellenbosch	90
Glen Carlou Gravel Quarry 2011	Paarl	87
Groot Constantia 2014	Constantia	89
Guardian Peak Lapa 2013	Western Cape	88
Hartenberg 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Jordan 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2012	Stellenbosch	87
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2013	Stellenbosch	90
KWV Cathedral Cellar 2014	Western Cape	87
Laibach The Widow's Block 2014	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Le Riche 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Le Riche Reserve 2013	Stellenbosch	88
Meerlust 2012	Stellenbosch	87
Môreson Magia 2013	Coastal Region	91
Nederburg II Centuries 2011	Western Cape	87
Nederburg II Centuries 2012	Western Cape	92
Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2013	Stellenbosch	85
Neil Ellis Vineyard Selection Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Oldenburg Vineyards 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Plaisir de Merle 2012	Paarl	93
Restless River 2012	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	87
Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve 2013	Franschhoek	90
Rudera 2014	Stellenbosch	84
Rudera Platinum 2014	Stellenbosch	83

Rustenberg Peter Barlow 2010	Stellenbosch	84
Rust en Vrede Estate Vineyards 2014	Stellenbosch	87
Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Simonsig The Garland 2009	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	86
Spier 21 Gables 2013	Stellenbosch	85
Spier Woolworths Private Collection 2013	Coastal Region	94
Spier Woolworths The Hutton Single Vineyard 2014	Groenekloof	85
Stark-Condé 2013	Stellenbosch	89
Stark-Condé Three Pines 2013	Jonkershoek Valley	85
Stony Brook Ghost Gum 2012	Franschhoek	90
Strydom Rex 2013	Stellenbosch	88
Thelema 2012	Stellenbosch	91
Thelema The Mint 2013	Stellenbosch	86
The Stellenbosch Reserve Ou Hoofgebou Cabernet Sauvignon 2014	Stellenbosch	84
Vergelegen 2010	Stellenbosch	83
Vergelegen V 2012	Stellenbosch	86
Vergenoegd 2011	Stellenbosch	91
Villiera 2014	Stellenbosch	84
Warwick Blue Lady 2013	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	87
Webersburg 2013	Stellenbosch	87