



LAURIUMCAPITAL

Signature Red Blend

REPORT 2016

KEY FINDINGS

The Bordeaux-style red wine category (with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in prominent roles but potentially including Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot) is well established but why should South African winemakers be obliged to use this and only this model? Cape White Blends are causing great excitement around the world so why not Cape Red Blends or, as we have dubbed them, “Signature Red Blends”?

We called for wines which were “distinctive of their originators” and instead of the usual practice of dividing them into various sub-groups according to style (Pinotage-based vs Shiraz-based being the differentiation most usually made), we tasted them as one continuous line-up – the thinking being that the fundamentals of wine appreciation such as complexity and balance should apply when it came to making quality assessments.

63 entries were received from 46 producers for this year’s competition and the average score was 87.8 (compared to 87.2 for a similar tasting of Bordeaux-style reds earlier in the year). There were 16 wines to be rated 90 or higher on the 100-point quality scale and what’s of particular interest is that Stellenbosch’s usual domination of wine competitions did not apply as much here. There were six wines from this district but also five multi-regional blends, two from Paarl and one each from Northern Cape, Slanghoek and Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley.

A lot more terroirs at play but also a lot more varieties, the top-performing Joostenberg Bakermat 2014 featuring, for instance, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Syrah, 12% Merlot and 12% Touriga Nacional. This is no wannabe Côte-du-Rhône but a wine of singular vision on the part of cellar master Tyrrel Myburgh and winemaker Micu Narunsky.

And there’s something for everyone with wines like the Joostenberg and the Newton Johnson Granum 2014 showing freshness and elegance while wines like Ernie Els Proprietor’s Blend 2014 or the Rust en Vrede Estate 2013 displaying plenty of power without forfeiting precision.

Wines in this category shows a real sense of adventure on the part of producers which translates to particular excitement in the glass but what is the standing of these wines in the market place? The average price of the 16 wines to rate 90-plus is R198.56 (ranging from R76 a bottle for the Zonnebloem Shiraz Mouvédre Viognier 2014 to R425 for the Ken Forrester The Gypsy 2012) which seems entirely fair if not downright cheap. In addition, the average production of the top 16 is 2 000 six-bottle cases which is small if not entirely insignificant. The market is, however, generally conservative and you imagine that these often quite exotic blends are not the easiest wines for producers to sell...

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by myself and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely Hennie Coetzee, taster for Platter's South African Wine Guide, and James Pietersen of Wine Cellar, a Cape Town firm which brokers and cellars 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

94

Joostenberg Bakermat 2014

Price: R160

Total production: 2 400 bottles

Abv: 14%

38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Syrah, 12% Merlot, 12% Touriga Nacional. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 15% new. Very fragrant on the nose with notes of flowers and scrub before red fruit and spice. The palate is juicy and fresh with crunchy, nicely grippy tannins. Has a lovely vibrancy about it.

Newton Johnson Family Vineyards Granum 2014

Price: R240

Total production: 5 400 bottles

Abv: 13.93%

88% Syrah, 12% Mourvèdre. Matured for 12 months in 500-litre French oak barrels, 27% new. A complex and engaging nose of red and black fruit, flowers, pepper and spice plus smoked meat. Pure fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins. Wonderfully composed with layers of flavour.

92

Solms-Delta Hiervandaan 2014

Price: R160

Total production: 3 300 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

86% Grenache, 10% Cinsault, 4% Shiraz. Matured for 12 months in old French oak. Wild strawberry, scrub and white pepper on the nose. The palate is light and fresh with very fine tannins making for a particularly delicate, pretty wine.

91

Eikendal Charisma 2014

Price: R100

Total production: 15 894 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

61% Shiraz, 27% Petit Verdot, 12% Sangiovese. 80% matured in old 500-litre barrels, 20% in 4 500-litre vats for 15 months. A hint of reduction before red and black fruit, pepper and spice. Good core of fruit, fresh acidity and grippy tannins. Luscious yet savoury.

91

Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2014

Price: R230

Total production: 30 000 bottles

Abv: 14.77%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Shiraz, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec, 5% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. Matured for 18 months in 300-litre oak barrels, 70% French oak and 30% American, of which altogether 50% was new. Red and black fruit, some fynbos-like perfume plus attractive oak on the nose. The palate is rich and full with plenty of ripe fruit, fresh acidity and firm tannins. Impressive structure.

Guardian Peak Summit 2014

Price: R150

Total production: 16 981 bottles

Abv: 14.55%

66% Syrah, 25% Mourvèdre, 9% Grenache. Matured for 18 months in French and American oak, 30% new. Red and black fruit, hedgegrow plus attractive oak. Full but balanced – good fruit concentration, bright acidity and firm but fine tannins before a long and savoury finish. Seamless in construction.

Ken Forrester The Gypsy 2012

Price: R425

Total production: 13 500 bottles

Abv: 14%

53% Grenache, 41% Syrah, 6% Mourvèdre. Components matured separately for 12 months in old French oak barrels before blending and being returned to barrel for another 12 months. Red and black fruit, a little scrub plus spice and white pepper on the nose. The palate is medium bodied with pure fruit, particularly fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins, the finish having an almost saline character.

KWV The Mentors Canvas 2014

Price: R280

Total production: 8 667 bottles

Abv: 14.74%

64% Shiraz, 18% Mourvèdre, 13% Petite Sirah, 4.5% Tempranillo, 0.5% Viognier. Components matured separately for 12 months in old French oak barrels before blending and being returned to barrel for another six months. A combination of 300- and 500-litre barrels used, 90% French and 10% American. Red and black fruit plus fynbos and attractive oak. Good fruit density, fresh acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and savoury. Polished in the best sense.

91

Leipzig Master Blend 2015

Price: R90

Total production: 2 550 bottles

Abv: 14.4%

36% Pinotage, 33% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Malbec. Matured for 10 months in second-fill French oak. Red and black fruit plus attractive oak-derived notes of vanilla, chocolate and spice. Rich and full but balanced – sweet-fruited and smooth textured but zesty acidity ensures balance.

Nederburg Ingenuity Spanish Blend 2012

Price: R305

Total production: 7 000 bottles

Abv: 14.14%

90% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano. Matured for three months in 100% new American oak followed by another 14 months in 100% new French oak. The nose shows cherries and plums as well as vanilla, spice and a not unpleasant malty quality. Very rich and broad on the palate, this is a wine intended to make an impression.

Opstal Carl Everson Cape Blend 2014

Price: R150

Total production: 3 100 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

A third each of Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinotage and Shiraz, the former component matured in new barrels and the latter two in third- and fourth-fill barrels, all 300-litre French oak for 18 months. Red and black fruit, vanilla and spice on the nose. Rich and ripe on the palate – good fruit concentration, fresh acidity and smooth tannins. Very appealing in the modern idiom.

Orange River Cellars Lyra Vega 2013

Price: R86

Total production: 4 000 bottles

Abv: 14.45%

56% Petit Verdot, 20% Merlot, 17% Shiraz, 7% Tannat. Components matured separately for 17 months. Barrels used were a combination of French, American and Hungarian oak, a total of 80% new. Red and black fruit, some tea leaf plus spice and a hint of chocolate. Full and dense, although fresh acidity provides balance and the firm but fine tannins ensure the wine ends suitably dry.

91

Rust en Vrede Estate 2013

Price: R390

Total production: 43 280 bottles

Abv: 15.15%

58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Syrah, 11% Merlot. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 100% new. Red and black fruit plus vanilla and spice. Rich and broad, smooth in texture with moderate acidity – a very polished offering.

90

KWV Cathedral Cellar Triptych 2013

Price: R115

Total production: 23 928 bottles

Abv: 14.38%

50% Cabernet Sauvignon 25% Shiraz, 13% Malbec, 8% Petit Verdot 4% Cabernet Franc. Matured for between 14 to 16 months in French oak, 40% new. On the nose, red and black fruit, black olive, some herbal character, pepper and spice plus a little vanilla. The palate possesses a good core of fruit and fresh acidity while the tannins provide just the right amount of grip.

Romond Vineyards Rebus Cape Cuvée 2011

Price: R220

Total production: 861 bottles

Abv: 14.6%

67% Pinotage, 23% Cab Sauvignon and 10% Merlot. Matured for 34 months in old French oak barrels. Red and black fruit, fresh herbs and even a hint of mint, chocolate and spice on the nose. Good flavour intensity, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins, the finish long and dry.

Zonnebloem Shiraz Mourvèdre Viognier 2014

Price: R76

Total production: 8 416 bottles

Abv: 13.52%

87% Shiraz, 12% Mourvèdre, 1% Viognier. Matured for 12 months in American, French and Hungarian oak barrels, some new. A definite note of reduction on the nose but also red and black fruit plus spice. The palate is rich and intensely flavoured, plenty of ripe fruit upfront before a savoury finish.

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Akkerdal TDT 2012	Franschoek	83
Alvi's Drift Albertus Vijoer Limited Release 2012	Worcester	87
Alvi's Drift Drift Fusion Reserve 2012	Worcester	87
Alvi's Drift Drift Fusion Reserve 2013	Worcester	87
Beaumont Vitruvian 2012	Bot River & Walker Bay	87
Big Easy By Ernie Els Red 2015	Western Cape	88
Blake Family Wines Amethyst 2014	Swartland	85
Bonnievale Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz 2015	Bonnievale	84
Clos Malverne Auret 2013	Stellenbosch	87
Clos Malverne Spirit Of Malverne 2013	Stellenbosch	88
Creation Syrah Grenache 2015	Walker Bay	87
Daschbosch Plicatilis 2013	Western Cape	85
David & Nadia Elpidios 2013	Swartland	88
David & Nadia Elpidios 2014	Swartland	87
De Krans Tritonia 2014	Calitzdorp	87
Edgebaston The Pepper Pot 2014	Coastal Region	87
Eikendal Charisma 2014	Stellenbosch	91
Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2014	Stellenbosch	91
Guardian Peak Summit 2014	Western Cape	91
Haut Espoir Gentle Giant 2009	Franschoek	88
Haut Espoir Gentle Giant 2010	Franschoek	87
Hermanuspietersfontein Die Martha 2012	Walker Bay	87
Highlands Road Shiraz Mourvèdre 2013	Elgin	86
Joostenberg Bakermat 2014	Paarl	94
Ken Forrester Renegade 2012	Western Cape	87
Ken Forrester The Gypsy 2012	Western Cape	91
Ken Forrester Three Halves 2011	Western Cape	87
Ken Forrester Woolworths Reserve Collection Shiraz Grenache Mourvèdre 2013	Western Cape	87
Kloovenburg Eight Feet 2013	Swartland	85
KWV Abraham Perold Tributum 2013	Coastal Region	87
KWV Cathedral Cellar Triptych 2013	Western Cape	90
KWV Roodeberg Dr. Charles Niehaus 2013	Coastal Region	87
KWV The Mentors Canvas 2014	Coastal Region	91
Lanzerac Le Général 2013	Jonkershoek Valley	87
Leipzig Master Blend 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Lemberg Louis 2014	Tulbagh	87
Leopard Frog Vineyards Tao 2009	Stellenbosch	88
Leopard Frog Vineyards Tribe 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Môreson ¶ Not Age 2014	Coastal Region	89
Nederburg Ingenuity Italian Blend 2012	Western Cape	88

Nederburg Ingenuity Spanish Blend 2012	Western Cape	91
Nederburg The Motorcycle Marvel 2014	Western Cape	87
Newton Johnson Family Vineyards Granum 2014	Upper Hemel- en-Aarde Valley	94
Opstal Carl Everson Cape Blend 2014	Slanghoek	91
Orange River Cellars Lyra Vega 2013	Northern Cape	91
Plaisir de Merle Grand Plaisir 2010	Western Cape	86
Plaisir de Merle Petit Plaisir 2013	Western Cape	87
Romond Vineyards Rebus Cape Cuvée 2011	Stellenbosch	90
Rustenberg RM Nicolson 2014	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	86
Rust en Vrede 1694 Classification 2013	Stellenbosch	88
Rust en Vrede Estate 2013	Stellenbosch	91
Signal Gun Tin Hill Red 2015	Durbanville	84
Simonsig Frans Malan 2014	Stellenbosch	87
Solms-Delta Hiervandaan 2014	Western Cape	92
Spier Creative Block 3 2013	Coastal Region	85
Steenberg Catharina 2014	Constantia	87
Stellenzicht The Mistaken Identity 2010	Stellenbosch	87
Strandveld The Navigator 2013	Elim	87
Sumaridge Epitome 2010	Upper Hemel- en-Aarde Valley	85
Val du Charron Black Countess 2013	Western Cape	89
Vondeling Erica 2013	Voor Paardeberg	84
Waverley Hills Shiraz Mourvèdre Viognier 2012	Tulbagh	84
Zonnebloem Shiraz Mourvèdre Viognier 2014	Stellenbosch	90