



**10
YEAR
OLD
WINE
AWARDS**

INTRODUCTION

Just how well do modern-era South African wines perform as they get older? One of the most important measures of great wine is that it should be age-worthy, that is it should become more pleasurable and more interesting to drink with time in the bottle, but the capacity of local wines to deliver on this is typically not examined in any meaningful way. We therefore felt it important to initiate the 10 Year Old Wine Awards.

KEY FINDINGS

72 entries from 41 producers were received – one Méthode Cap Classique, 15 white wines, 52 reds and four fortifieds. Of these, 19 wines rated 90 points or more on the 100-point quality scale – six white wines, 10 red wines and three fortifieds.

The first point that needs to be made is that the practice of maintaining a wine library does not seem to be as well established among producers as it ought to. Stock requirements for participation in this exercise were not onerous – two bottles for the formal tasting plus a further six bottles to be served at the awards ceremony in the event a wine performed well – and yet feedback in a number of instances was that not a single bottle from the 2007 remained!

What conclusions can be drawn based on this tasting? The panel was generally pleasantly surprised by how well the wines showed, very few showing excessive decay. By the same token, however, there is a difference between a wine which has merely survived the ageing process and one which has improved, emerging more refined and complex. Perhaps, therefore, too many wines which were merely sound rather than truly exciting.

One wine which did indeed capture the imagination was the Tokara Elgin Sauvignon Blanc 2007, which is looking pristine a decade on from vintage. In any event, the white wines entered showed disproportionately well relative to the reds, which will suit those who argue that South Africa is more accomplished at the former than the latter. That said, there wasn't a sense that many of the whites were going to get very much better going forwards – 10 years might be a very long time to keep a white for many South Africans but it's nothing when you consider Vouvray or Mosel Riesling.

When it comes to the reds, it is interesting to note that there is no ideal analysis which guarantees longevity - in fact, far from it with alcohols ranging from 13.3% in the case of the Haut Espoir Shiraz to 14.88% in the case of the Remhoogte Estate. Wines of fruit power are currently a little out of fashion but some of the best reds in this tasting have lasted precisely because they were made in a rich, full-bodied style. That said, there were quite a few other wines, which for all their stature, lacked detail.

Another talking point among the judges was wines which appeared excessively green – a decade ago, single-variety Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux-style red blends were the industry's most ambitious wines and many examples in these two categories now appear a little weedy and thin, whether this was due to inappropriate vineyard management or leaf-roll virus a matter of speculation.

Lastly, mention must be made of the stunning White Muscadel from Nuy and two very respectable Port-style fortifieds from Boplaas and Bredell's. Such wines might not have a very great consumer following but there is no doubt that South Africa does them very well indeed and they are, of course, built to last.

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

Chardonnay

91

Tokara Stellenbosch 2007

Alc: 14% RS 2.4 g/l TA 6.1 g/l pH 3.3

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 40% new. Citrus and some waxy character on the nose. The palate is rich and full, mellow but still very sound with a savoury finish.

90

La Bri 2007

Alc: 13.97% RS 3.28 g/l TA 7.6 g/l pH 3.28

One third fermented spontaneously. Matured for 12 months in French oak, a third new. Lime, green apple and some pleasant wet wool character. Medium bodied with fresh acidity – really well balanced.

Chenin Blanc

91

DeMorgenzon Reserve 2007

Alc: 13.73% RS 4.9 g/l TA 6.6 g/l pH 3.1

Spontaneous fermentation before maturation lasting eight months. Marmalade, a hint of mushroom, spice and a slight nuttiness. Sweet on entry but balanced by tangy acidity.

91

Rudera Robusto 2007

Alc: 14% RS 14.2 g/l TA 7.5/l pH 3.26

Matured in French oak, 50% new. Citrus, stone fruit, mushroom and spice. Rich and broad on the palate, bright acidity lending balance, the finish long and savoury.

90

Jordan Barrel Fermented 2007

Alc: 14.5% RS 2.7 g/l TA 6.4 g/l pH 3.22

Matured for eight months in French oak, none new. Contains a 39% tank fermented portion. Citrus, peach, some leesy character and a slight nuttiness. Rich and full with good texture making for nicely coated acidity.

Sauvignon Blanc

94

Tokara Elgin 2007

Alc: 14.29% RS 1.5 g/l TA 6.7 g/l pH 3.0

Matured on the lees in tank for three months. A compelling nose of lime, green apple and blackcurrant plus an intriguing note of reduction. Pristine on the palate – a great core of fruit plus zippy acidity, the finish long and pithy.

Cabernet Sauvignon

91

Neil Ellis Vineyard Selection Jonkershoek Valley 2007

Alc: 14% RS 1.7 g/l TA 5.6 g/l pH 3.86

Matured for 24 months in French oak, 75% new. A brooding nose of cassis and some earthiness. Rich and full on the palate balanced by bright acidity, the tannins still firm.

90

Le Riche Reserve 2007

Alc: 14.78% RS 2.5 g/l TA 5.4 g/l pH 3.63

Matured for 24 months in French oak, 70% new. Red and black fruit, some floral fragrance and attractive oak spice on the nose. Full but balanced – concentrated fruit, good freshness, the finish long and savoury.

Pinot Noir

91

Hamilton Russell Vineyards 2007

Alc: 13.6% RS 3.1 g/l TA 6.3 g/l pH 3.52

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 34% new. Red fruit, some musky perfume, a subtle herbaceous note and leather on the nose. Medium bodied with fresh acidity and fine tannins.

Red blends

92

Simonsig Tiara 2007

Alc: 14.47% RS 3.1 g/l TA 5.3 g/l pH 3.69

67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. Matured for 17 months in 95% French and 5% American oak, 67% new. The nose shows red and black fruit, some herbal character, oyster shell, char and spice. Rich and full – great depth of fruit, fresh acidity with relatively firm tannins.

92

Tokara Director's Reserve 2007

Alc: 14.5% RS 1.6 g/l TA 5.6 g/l pH 3.72

67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Petit Verdot, 8% Malbec and 8% Merlot. Matured for 20 months in French oak, 80% new. Fresh herbs and some floral character before dark fruit, pencil shavings and some earthiness. Rich and thick textured on the palate, the finish long and savoury. Properly complex.

91

Remhoogte Estate 2007

Alc: 14.88% RS 4.3 g/l TA 5.5 g/l pH 3.62

32% Merlot, 29% Syrah, 26% Cabernet Sauvignon and 13% Pinotage. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 70% new. Riper berry fruit, some black olive and an earthy quality on the nose. Super-rich and smooth textured on the palate. In a modern style but deftly executed.

91

Villiera Monro 2007

Alc: 13.5% RS 1.9 g/l TA 6.2 g/l pH 3.58

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot and 10% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 24 months in French oak, mostly new. Red and black fruit, a subtle herbal character, earth and attractive oak on the nose. Medium bodied and beautifully balanced – pure fruit, lively acidity and fine tannins. Very elegant.

90

Daylea 2007 (Grangehurst)

Alc: 14.54% RS 2.1 g/l TA 6.3 g/l pH 3.47

48% Shiraz, 37% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 4% Mourvèdre and 1% Petit Verdot. Matured in French oak for 20 months. Red cherry and some attractive herbal character. Medium bodied with bright acidity and firm tannins. Classically styled.

Shiraz/Syrah

91

Haut Espoir 2007

Alc: 13.3% RS 3.8 g/l TA 5.1 g/l pH 3.67

Matured for 12 months in a combination of new and second-fill barrels. Red fruit, olive, some meatiness and spice. Sweet on entry but pleasantly savoury on the finish.

90

Simonsig Merindol 2007

Alc: 13.8% RS 2.1 g/l TA 5.2 g/l pH 3.6

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 100% new. Red and black fruit, lavender, some herbal character and attractive oak spice. Appears sweet on entry but still very much intact.

Muscadel

94

Nuy 2007

Alc 16.54% RS 227 g/l TA 4.5 g/l pH 3.25

Wonderfully complex nose – a floral top note before sultana, citrus, mint and spice. Excellent balance – luscious fruit, lively acidity and the spirit very well integrated. Characterful and delicious.

Port-style Fortified

91

Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2007

Alc 18.7% RS 95 g/l TA 5.3 g/l pH 3.8

80% Touriga Nacional, 18% Tinta Barocca and 2% Souzão. Matured for 12 months in Portuguese barrels. Red and black fruit, chocolate and spice on the nose. Lovely purity – rich but not too weighty with good freshness. Perhaps a little hot on the finish.

90

Bredell's Cape Vintage Reserve 2007

Alc 20% RS 88.5 g/l TA 4.1 g/l pH 3.75

43% Tinta Barocca, 28.5% Souzão, 19.5% Touriga Francessa and 9% Touriga Nacional. Matured for 24 months in old oak. Black and blue fruit plus spice. Wonderful depth on the palate – rich and round with soft tannins and slight salty quality to the finish.

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
MCC		
Simonsig Kaapse Vonkel Brut 2007	Western Cape	88
Chardonnay		
Iona 2007	Elgin	78
La Bri 2007	Franschhoek	91
Simonsig 2007	Stellenbosch	86
Tokara Stellenbosch 2007	Stellenbosch	92
Chenin Blanc		
Aubergine 2007 (Rudera)	Stellenbosch	85
DeMorgenzon Reserve 2007	Stellenbosch	91
Jordan Barrel Fermented 2007	Stellenbosch	90
Ken Forrester 2007	Western Cape	85
Rudera 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Rudera Robusto 2007	Stellenbosch	91
Sauvignon Blanc		
Highlands Road 2007	Elgin	87
Neil Ellis Vineyard Selection Jonkershoek Valley 2007	Jonkershoek Valley	85
Tokara Elgin 2007	Elgin	94
Semillon		
Haut Espoir 2007	Franschhoek	84
White blend		
Tokara White 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Cabernet Sauvignon		
Bon Terroir 2007	Stellenbosch	86
Conradie Family Vineyards 2007	Nuy	84
Delheim Grand Reserve 2007	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Hartenberg 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Haut Espoir 2007	Franschhoek	85
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2007	Stellenbosch	88
La Bri 2007	Franschhoek	87
Le Riche Reserve 2007	Stellenbosch	90

Neil Ellis Vineyard Selection Jonkershoek Valley 2007	Jonkershoek Valley	91
Restless River 2007	Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	84
Rudera Platinum 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Simonsig Labyrinth 2007	Stellenbosch	84
Thelema 2007	Stellenbosch	88
Merlot		
Remhoogte Reserve 2007	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	87
Saxenburg Private Collection 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Steenberg 2007	Constantia	87
Pinotage		
Conradie Family Vineyards Single Vineyard Barrel Selection 2007	Nuy	77
Grangehurst 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Lanzerac Pionier 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Neethlingshof Short Story Collection The Owl Post 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Neil Ellis Vineyard Selection Jonkershoek Valley 2007	Jonkershoek Valley	87
Pinot Noir		
Hamilton Russell Vineyards 2007	Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	91
Vriesenhof 2007	Stellenbosch	86
Red blends		
Alto MPHS 2007	Stellenbosch	82
Beyerskloof Field Blend 2007	Stellenbosch	84
Buitenverwachting Christine 2007	Constantia	80
Daylea 2007 (Grangehurst)	Stellenbosch	90
De Trafford Elevation 393 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Grangehurst 2007	Stellenbosch	84
Grangehurst Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Grangehurst Nikela 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Haskell IV 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Hartenberg The Mackenie 2007	Stellenbosch	86
Haut Espoir Gentle Giant 2007	Franschhoek	85
KWV The Mentors Orchestra 2007	Western Cape	87
Lourens River Valley 2007 (Morgenster)	Stellenbosch	87
Neethlingshof Short Story Collection The Caracal 2007	Stellenbosch	72

Remhoogte Estate 2007	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	91
Simonsig Tiara 2007	Stellenbosch	92
Tokara Director's Reserve 2007	Stellenbosch	92
Vergenoegd Estate 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Villiera Monro 2007	Stellenbosch	91
Vriesenhof Kallista 2007	Stellenbosch	85
Shiraz/Syrah		
Delheim Vera Cruz 2007	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	87
Hartenberg Gravel Hill 2007	Stellenbosch	87
Haut Espoir Shiraz 2007	Franschhoek	91
La Bri Shiraz Viognier 2007	Franschhoek	84
Saxenburg Private Collection 2007	Stellenbosch	86
Simonsig Merindol 2007	Stellenbosch	90
Uitkyk Special Reserve 2007	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	86
Steenberg 2007	Constantia	87
Vergenoegd 2007	Stellenbosch	84
Muscadel		
Nuy White 2007	Nuy	94
Port-style		
Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2007	Western Cape	91
Bredell's Cape Vintage Reserve 2007	Stellenbosch	90
De Krans Cape Vintage Reserve 2007	Calitzdorp	87