



PRESCIENT
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
~ REPORT 2018 ~

Compiled by Winemag.co.za

KEY FINDINGS

What a treat to compile the annual Cabernet Sauvignon Report on behalf of multinational financial services provider Prescient! 2015 has been billed as one of the great vintages of the modern era and based on this tasting, the hype is completely justified. Whereas there were 15 wines out of 65 to rate 90 points or higher on the 100-point quality scale in the 2017 report, this year there were 40 out of 89 (23% versus 45%).

In 2017, eleven wines or 17% of the line-up were from the 2015 vintage whereas this year, 50 or 56% were. Out of the 40 wines to rate 90-plus, 25 were from the 2015 vintage. Once again, Stellenbosch dominated with 30 of the top 40 wines from this district. Average price of the top 40 wines was R292.97 a bottle (ranging from R120 for the Glenelly Glass Collection 2015 to R980 for the Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2015).

What's so exciting about these wines? The 2015 growing season was one of the driest and earliest in some time and it would appear that this has done Cabernet Sauvignon plenty of favours. Bud break was early and even, cooler temperatures than usual in February were ideal for ripening, while the dry conditions also contributed to a very healthy crop with almost no losses to disease or rot.

The result is wines of particular power. The best show ripeness of fruit and tannin without sacrificing complexity and finesse. Again and again, the panel was impressed by the palate density on display but what was remarkable was the detail and refreshment value still in evidence, elements that often get lost in lesser vintages.

It has been said that deciding on picking date is the most important task a winemaker faces and there were a few wines where grapes might have been harvested a little earlier to avoid a resulting jamminess. Conversely, there were wines which appeared unduly green or medicinal or even minty - pyrazines (the chemical compound responsible for this) are inherent to the variety but it will always be a point of debate just how much of this character should be present. Those examples from vineyards planted in the maritime locations of Constantia and Durbanville often seem particularly vegetal while leafroll virus also doesn't help when it comes to achieving optimal fruit expression.

There were a handful of wines which suffered from over-extraction – whereas winemakers are often more cautious and calculated when it comes to achieving colour, flavour and structure in lesser vintages, it seems like some got carried away in 2015!

On the whole, however, a timely reminder why so many consider Cab to be king. The best that the panel tasted are dark, deep and tannic – not necessarily wines to be drunk young but rather wines to be cellared so that they can reach their full potential. Investment wines, you might say.

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 Roland Peens 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

95

Nederburg The Manor House 2015

Price: R162

Total production: 90 000 bottles

Abv: 14.7%

A blend of 86% Cabernet Sauvignon (sourced from Paarl and Groenekloof), 12% Merlot and 2% Tannat. Matured for 18 months in a combination of new, second- and third-fill barrels, 93% French and 7% American oak.

Red and black fruit, some floral perfume, fresh herbs and attractive oak on the nose. The palate shows great fruit density without sacrificing freshness, while the tannins are particularly fine. Very well put together.

94

Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch 2015

Price: R365

Total production: 7 120 bottles, 102 magnums, 20 3-litre bottles, 12 5-litre bottles

Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 18 months in 300-litre French oak barrels, 100% new. Black fruit, just a hint of fresh herbs and attractive oak on the nose. The palate is full but balanced – excellent fruit expression, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Intensely flavoured and very long on the finish, this is built to last.

93

Delaire Graff Reserve 2015

Price: R750

Total production: 7 000 bottles

Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 18 months in French oak barrels, 100% new. Red and black fruit, violets, pencil shavings and oak spice on the nose while the palate is rich and full but perfectly balanced. Layers of flavour and very long on the finish.

93

Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2015

Price: R139

Total production: 90 435 bottles

Abv: 14.89%

Matured for 20 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Red and black fruit, a herbal note, spice and some earthiness on the nose. Rich and ripe on the palate with smooth tannins, this is a blockbuster!

93

Strydom Rex 2015

Price: R265

Total production: 2 200 bottles

Abv: 14.7%

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 40% new. Cassis, graphite and a little reduction on the nose. Extraordinary depth of fruit, bright acidity and firm tannins make for a wine of particular weight and power.

93

Zorgvliet 2016

Price: R140

Total production: 5 272 bottles

Abv: 14.35%

Matured for 18 months in French oak barrels, 21% new and then a further four months in tank. Red and black fruit, some herbal character, violets and attractive oak on the nose. Relatively medium-bodied with pure fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and savoury. Elegant and refined.

BUYING GUIDE: CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90 - 92

92

Stellenbosch Reserve Ou Hoofgebou 2016 – R140
Fleur Du Cap Unfiltered 2014 – R143
Holden Manz 2013 – R160
Dombeya Fenix 2014 – R165
Spier Woolworths Private Collection 2015 – R169.99
Plaisir de Merle 2014 – R210.82
Thelema 2014 – R240
Tokara Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 2014 – R320
Warwick The Blue Lady 2015 – R350
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2015 – R365
Glenelly Lady May 2012 – R490
Glenelly Lady May 2013 – R490
Le Riche Reserve 2015 – R550
Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2015 – R980
Villion 2015 – Not yet released.

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Glenelly Glass Collection 2015 – R105
Eikendal 2016 – R195
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2015 – R195
Le Riche 2015 – R220
Ernie Els Proprietor's 2015 – R325

90

KWV Cathedral Cellar 2015 – R120
Sutherland 2014 – R145
Lanzerac 2015 – R150
Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2015 – R150
Joostenberg Philip Albert 2015 – R165
Jordan The Long Fuse 2015 – R189
Groot Constantia 2016 – R223
Rudi Schultz 2015 – R250
Diemersdal M.M. Louw 2015 – R290
Waterford 2015 – R320
Nederburg Two Centuries 2014 – R374
Bartinney Skyfall 2014 – R380
Rustenberg Peter Barlow 2015 – R500
Erika O. 2015 – R550

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Allesverloren 2016	Swartland	88
Alto 2014	Stellenbosch	89
Bartinney Skyfall 2014	Stellenbosch	90
Benguela Cove 2015	Walker Bay	87
Boschendal 1685 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Bosman Family Vineyards 2013	Wellington	87
Buitenverwachting 2014	Constantia	86
Delaire Graff Reserve 2015	Banghoek	93
Diemersdal M.M. Louw 2015	Durbanville	90
Diemersdal M.M. Louw 2016	Durbanville	89
Dombeya Fenix 2014	Stellenbosch	92
Dornier Equanimity 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Durbannville Hills Collectors Reserve The Castle Of Good Hope 2016	Durbanville- Cape Town	87
Eikendal 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Erika O. 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Ernie Els 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Ernie Els Proprietor's 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Fleur Du Cap Series Privée 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Fleur Du Cap Unfiltered 2014	Stellenbosch	92
Glenelly Glass Collection 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Glenelly Lady May 2012	Stellenbosch	92
Glenelly Lady May 2013	Stellenbosch	92
Groenland Premium 2016	Bottelary- Stellenbosch	89
Groot Constantia 2016	Constantia- Cape Town	90
Groot Phesantekraal 2015	Cape Town	89
Guardian Peak LAPA 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Haut Espoir 2012	Franschhoek	88
Holden Manz 2013	Franschhoek	92
Joostenberg Philip Albert 2015	Paarl	90
Jordan The Long Fuse 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Journey's End The Cape Doctor 2012	Stellenbosch	87
Keermont 2015	Stellenbosch	84
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2015	Stellenbosch	93
Knorhoek Pantère 2015	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	87
KWV Cathedral Cellar 2015	Stellenbosch	90
La Bri Limited Release 2015	Franschhoek	89
Lanzerac 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	90

Le Riche 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Le Riche Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Longridge 2015	Stellenbosch	84
Louisvale Five Barrels 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Meinert 2014	Devon Valley	85
Môreson Magia 2015	Franschhoek	88
Môreson Mata Mata 2016	Franschhoek	88
Muratie Martin Melck Family Reserve 2014	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	89
Nederburg The Manor House 2015	Western Cape	95
Nederburg Two Centuries 2014	Western Cape	90
Neethlingshof 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	94
Oneiric 2015	Elgin	86
Org de Rac Reserve 2013	Swartland	82
Org de Rac Reserve 2015	Coastal	89
Overhex Survivor 2016	Swartland	87
Peter Falke PF 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Plaisir de Merle 2014	Simonsberg- Paarl	92
Rainbow's End 2016	Banghoek- Stellenbosch	88
Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve 2015	Franschhoek	88
Rickety Bridge The Bridge 2015	Franschhoek	89
Rudera Platinum 2014	Stellenbosch	86
Rudi Schultz 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Rustenberg Peter Barlow 2015	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	90
Rust en Vrede Estate Vineyards 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Saxenburg Private Collection 2013	Stellenbosch	89
South Hill 2015	Elgin	87
Spier 21 Gables 2015	Stellenbosch	85
Spier Woolworths Private Collection 2015	Coastal Region	92
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Stark-Condé Three Pines 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	89
Stellenbosch Hills 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenbosch Reserve Ou Hoofgebou 2016	Stellenbosch	92
Stellenbosch Vineyards 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Stofberg Family Vineyards Mariëtte 2015	Bredekloof	86
Strydom Rex 2015	Stellenbosch	93
Sutherland 2014	Elgin	90
Thelema 2014	Stellenbosch	92

Tokara Stellenbosch Reserve Collection 2014	Stellenbosch	92
Usana The Fox 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Uva Mira The Mira 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Villion 2015	Bot River	92
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Napoleonsberg 2013	Simonsberg- Paarl	89
Vriesenhof 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Warwick The Blue Lady 2015	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	92
Waterford 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Zonnebloem 2016	Stellenbosch	86
Zevenwacht 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Zorgvliet 2016	Banghoek	93