



Tonnellerie
Saint Martin

PINOT NOIR
~ REPORT 2018 ~

KEY FINDINGS

For all the improvements in quality that the South African Pinot Noir category has shown in recent times, the category is far from well established – plantings just about doubled from 487ha in 2000 to 962ha in 2010 but the rate of increase slowed to 23% in the next seven years, 1 182ha in the ground at the end of 2017. It constitutes 1.25% of the national vineyard, the seventh most planted red variety in the country behind Cinsaut and ahead of Cabernet Franc, and it should not be overlooked that much of it ends up Méthode Cap Classique.

If making fine wine is something undertaken against the odds, then particularly so when it comes to making fine Pinot Noir under local conditions. Still, the variety is steeped in romance (because of its association with its traditional home of Burgundy, perhaps the most romantic wine region of them all) and punters seem prepared to pay a premium for wines from this variety as a consequence.

For the second annual category report sponsored by Tonnellerie Saint Martin, 36 entries were received from 26 producers, a significant decrease on the 52 entries from 33 producers in last year's report. It is, of course, a producer's prerogative not to participate but you do wonder if there is a reluctance by some of those working with the grape to subject themselves to too much scrutiny.

That said, the overall quality of the wines in the line-up this year was pleasing, the average score on the 100-point quality scale being 89 (compared to 88.1 in 2017) and there were 12 wines to rate 90-plus (34% of the line-up). Two Burgundies were included as ringers, Joseph Drouhin Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru 2015 rating 92 points and Harmand-Geoffroy Gevrey-Chambertin 2015 90.

Where does Pinot do best in SA? If we look at the spread of growing areas among the 12 top performers, Elgin just shades it with five wines, the greater Hemel-en-Aarde area close behind with four while Ceres Plateau, Durbanville and Elim also feature with one each.

What's a reasonable amount to pay for top SA Pinot? The average price of the top 12 wines is R386 a bottle – wine prices are hugely topical at the moment and the observation has been made that consumers are going to have get used to paying more if vineyards are to stay in the ground. A substantial differential, however, between the lowest of these (Sutherland Elgin 2015 at R155 a bottle) and the highest (Creation The Art of Pinot Noir 2015 at R893), which can only be described as curious...

The feeling among the panel was that as much as Pinot is difficult to make, so is it to assess in formal judging environment. It responds more dramatically to different winemaking approaches than just about any other variety and a wine which might have a lot of appeal to one taster is often not to the taste of another.

Even so, the purity of fruit on display, whether wines are made in a lighter or heavier style, seems to get better and better. One slightly peculiar phenomenon to be noted was that many wines show a herbaceousness that was perhaps not in evidence five or 10 years ago. The panel agreed that this was quite an attractive quality, when not excessive, but were a bit stumped as to explain its origin. Whole-bunch fermentation? Eucalyptus trees? Or even magical, mystical terroir?

The producer of the wine judged best overall won a barrel of their choice from Tonnellerie Saint Martin – this went to Creation for the The Art of Pinot Noir 2015.

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 REPORT

93

Creation The Art of Pinot Noir 2015 – **BEST WINE OVERALL**

Price: R893

Total production: 3 350 bottles

Abv: 13.94%

Matured for 12 months in French oak, 50% new. Black and blue berries, some musk, earth, vanilla and spice. Rich but balanced with layers of flavour – dense fruit and racy acidity before a long, dry finish making for a sumptuous drinking experience.

93

Iona 2013

Price: R287.50

Total production: 7 000 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

Matured for some 12 months in 300-litre French oak barrels, 25% new. A complex nose showing red fruit, beetroot, musk and spice. Rich and broad with good texture and a savoury finish. Flavourful and quite delicious.

93

Kershaw Elgin Clonal Selection 2017

Price: R605

Total production: 5 850 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

From five different clones: 777, 667, 115, 114 and 113. Matured for 11 months in a combination of 228-, 300- and 500-litre French oak barrels, 12% new. Very primary on the nose with notes of floral perfume, red cherry, cranberry and pomegranate plus a little reduction. The palate is most appealing with great fruit definition, bright acidity and lovely ripe tannins. A wine of particular clarity and balance.

93

Stonebird 2016

Price: R460

Total production: 580 bottles

Abv: 13.79%

Fermented and matured for 10 months in clay amphorae. Red and black berries, a top note of musk but also some earthiness and spice on the nose. Excellent core of fruit, bright acidity and fine tannins – beautifully judged.

93

Sutherland Elgin 2015

Price: R155

Total production: 14 000 bottles

Abv: 13.5%

Matured for nine months in French oak, 15% new. Red and black berries, tea leaf and musk on the nose. The palate shows lovely structure – dense fruit, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins, the finish long and pleasantly austere.

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

92

Elgin Vintners 2016 – R209

Joseph Drouhin Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru 2015 – R1 550

91

Bosman Family Vineyards Upper Hemel en Aarde Valley 2017 – R160

David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner 2016 – R220

90

Nitida 2016 – R160

Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2017 – R285

Donkiesbaai 2017 – R300

Harmand-Geoffroy Gevrey-Chambertin 2015 – R840

Creation The Art of Pinot Noir 2016 – R893

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Andy Mitchell Wines Elgin 2016	Elgin	86
Benguela Cove Walker Bay 2017	Walker Bay	87
Bosman Family Vineyards Upper Hemel en Aarde Valley 2017	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	91
Brunia 2017	Sondagskloof	88
Creation Emma's 2017	Walker Bay	88
Creation The Art of Pinot Noir 2015	Walker Bay	93
Creation The Art of Pinot Noir 2016	Walker Bay	90
David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner 2016	Elim	91
De Grendel Op Die Berg 2015	Ceres Plateau	88
Donkiesbaai 2017	Ceres Plateau	90
Elgin Ridge 282 2016	Elgin	89
Elgin Vintners 2016	Elgin	92
Harmand-Geoffroy Gevrey-Chambertin 2015	Gevrey-Chambertin	90
Haute Cabrière Reserve 2015	Franschhoek	87
Highlands Road 2014	Elgin	89
Highlands Road 2015	Elgin	87
Iona 2013	Elgin	93
Iona 2015	Elgin	89
Jasper Raats Cuvée Rika 2016	Elgin	84
Joseph Drouhin Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru 2015	Chambolle-Musigny	92
Kershaw Elgin Clonal Selection 2017	Elgin	93
Kruger Family Wines Pearly Gates 2017	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	89
Lourensford The Dome 2017	Cape South Coast	87
Maastricht 2017	Dubenville	88
Nitida 2016	Cape Town	90
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2017	Elgin	88
Shannon Vineyards 2017	Elgin	89
Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2016	Elgin	89
Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2017	Elgin	90
Solitary Single Vineyard Projects Morning Bell 2016	Polkadraai Hills	84
Stellar Organics The River's End 2016	Koekenaap	89
Stellar Organics The River's End 2017	Koekenaap	88

Stonebird 2016	Walker Bay	93
Sutherland Elgin 2015 (Thelema)	Elgin	93
The Fledge & Co. 2015	Elgin	87
The Fledge & Co. 2016	Elgin	89
Whalehaven Conservation Coast 2016	Upper Hemel- en-Aarde Valley	89
Windfall 2017	Robertson	89