



WM

CAPE BORDEAUX
RED BLEND
REPORT 2019

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

KEY FINDINGS

The first observation to make about the tasting for our fifth annual Cape Bordeaux Red Blend Report is that entries were down significantly – 65 entries received from 53 producers received this year compared to 81 entries from 64 producers in 2018, surely yet more evidence of the economic distress that the South African wine industry finds itself in.

The standard of wine, however, is as good as ever with 29 of the 65 wines rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. This is equivalent to 44.6% of the line-up whereas last year 40.7% made the cut, average score 89.4 this time around compared to 89.1 a year ago.

The Stellenbosch district once again dominates proceedings by producing seven of the top 10 and 20 of the 29 wines rated 90-plus. As for vintage, 25 entries were from 2016, 13 from 2017 and 12 from 2015, the rest older. Of the top 10, five were from 2017.

The average cellar-door price of the 29 wines to rate 90-plus is R382 a bottle with Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Malbec Petit Verdot 2016 at R150 being the cheapest and MR de Compostella 2016 at R1 300 the most expensive. It's a premium category but these wines are still radically under-priced in world terms – a bottle of Bordeaux Second Growth Chateau Cos d'Estournel 2015 will cost you R3 750 from Wine Cellar in Cape Town.

As ever, the most successful wines in this tasting managed to combine flavour intensity with freshness and structure. There were quite a few lighter bodied wines which benefit from being immediately accessible but lack the volume and brilliance to warrant very high reward.

Conversely, there were wines that seemed to have been worked hard in the cellar in order to achieve weight and power and these often forfeited refreshment value - balance is one of the fundamentals of wine aesthetics for a reason.

It was notable that many of the older wines, including those from much vaunted 2015, were already quite mellow, with tannins polymerising quickly, and you have to question quite how long their lifespan will be. Another point of debate was the seeming sweetness many of the wines displayed – producers may be inclined to pick as ripe as possible in order to achieve fullness in the end-wine but often food-friendly savouriness seems to get lost.

The producer of the wine judged best overall won a new 300-litre Selection barrel worth €903 (equivalent to R14 330 at the time of writing) from Tonnellerie Sylvain – this went to Botanica for the Arboretum 2017.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me 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 re-tasting where necessary rather than relying solely on arithmetic averaging.

TOP 10

94 Botanica Arboretum 2017

Price: R285

Total production: 12 050 bottles Abv: 14.5%

53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Cabernet Franc, 21% Merlot and 3% Petit Verdot.

Matured for 15 months in French oak, 10% new. A complex nose showing red, black and blue berries plus herbs and flowers. The palate displays wonderful fruit purity and fine tannins – poised, properly detailed and super-long.

93 Leipzig Grand Master 2017

Price: R160

Total production: 4 700 bottles and 150 magnums Abv: 13.31%

34% Merlot, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Malbec, 11% Cabernet Franc and 9% Petit Verdot.

Matured for some 12 months in French oak. The nose shows red and black berries plus tilled soil and pencil shavings while the palate is marked by pure fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins. Well balanced, long and savoury.

93 Morgenster Estate Reserve 2014

Price: R490

Total production: 17 000 bottles Abv: 14.5%

39% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Cabernet Franc and 10% Petit Verdot.

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 60% new. Red and black berries, some floral perfume, a herbal note and pencil shavings on the nose. The palate is rich and dense – pure, sweet fruit and silky tannins. Plenty of power in evidence.

93 Raats Family Wines Jasper Red Blend 2017

Price: R250

Total production: 30 350 bottles Abv: 14%

53% Cabernet Franc, 36% Malbec, 5% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Petit Verdot.

Matured for 16 months in French oak, none new. Red and black berries, some attractive herbal character and pencil shavings on the nose. The palate is medium bodied with a lovely energy about it – good fruit definition, fresh acidity and fine tannins.

93 Remhoogte Reserve Sir Thomas Cullinan 2015

Price: R315

Total production: 5 450 bottles Abv: 14.5%

70% Merlot and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon.

Matured for 25 months in French oak, 60% new. The nose shows red and black fruit, oak spice and undergrowth – no longer entirely primary. The palate is rich, broad and flavourful, the tannins already starting to mellow, the finish nicely savoury.

92 Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2017

Price: R498

Total production: 21 940 bottles Abv: 14.24%

49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 16% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec, and 5% Petit Verdot.

Matured for 23 months in French oak, 100% new. Dark fruit, fresh herbs and pencil shavings on the nose. Full bodied yet well balanced – good depth, bright acidity and firm tannins. The finish, meanwhile, is long and dry.

92 Eikendal Classique 2017

Price: R325

Total production: 9 995 bottles Abv: 14.12%

51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 12% Petit Verdot and 8% Cabernet Franc.

Matured for 12 months in French oak, 25% new. A hint of reduction before black fruit, some leafiness and toasty oak on the nose. The palate is succulent with vibrant acidity and firm but fine tannins, the finish possessing a certain saltiness.

92 Morgenster Lourens River Valley 2014

Price: R190

Total production: 42 000 bottles Abv: 14.5%

39% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Cabernet Franc and 10% Petit Verdot.

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 25% new. Top note of violets before dark fruit, vanilla and cigar box while the palate is plush and full – plenty of sweet fruit and relatively soft, creamy tannins.

92 MR de Compostella 2016

Price: R1 300

Total production: 5 500 bottles Abv: 14.5%

63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Cabernet Franc, 12% Malbec, 6% Petit Verdot and 2% Merlot.

Matured for 24 months in French oak, 50% new. Red and black fruit, floral perfume, some leafiness and attractive oak on the nose. Good concentration, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Deceptively accessible now, this is refined as ever and should mature well.

92 Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2016

Price: R225

Total production: 40 000 bottles Abv: 14%

44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 7% Malbec, 7% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc.

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 35% new. Berries, violets and herbs plus attractive oak on the nose while the palate possesses a good core of fruit, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Particularly elegant.

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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Botanica Arboretum 2017	94	R285
Leipzig Grand Master 2017	93	R160
Raats Family Wines Jasper Red Blend 2017	93	R250
Remhoogte Reserve Sir Thomas Cullinan 2015	93	R315
Morgenster Estate Reserve 2014	93	R490
Lanzerac Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot 2016	92	R170
Morgenster Lourens River Valley 2014	92	R190
Nederburg The Brew Master 2016	92	R200
Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2016	92	R225
Neethlingshof The Caracal 2017	92	R270
Eikendal Classique 2017	92	R325
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2016	92	R400
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2017	92	R498
MR de Compostella 2016	92	R1 300
Zorgvliet Richelle 2017	91	R300
Schultz Family Wines Boneyards 2016	91	R395
Epicurean 2011	91	R529
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Malbec Petit Verdot 2016	90	R150
Rustenberg John X Merriman 2016	90	R190
Jason's Hill Izak Reserve 2015	90	R200
Creation Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot 2016	90	R210
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2017	90	R295
Rietvallei Estéanna 2016	90	R320
Vriesenhof Kallista 2015	90	R320
Overgaauw Tria Corda 2015	90	R390
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2016	90	R462
Glenelly Lady May 2014	90	R520
Overgaauw DC Classic 2015	90	R680
Alto M.P.H.S. 2015	90	R1 025

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Aaldering Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2016	Stellenbosch	87
Allée Bleue L'Amour Toujours 2015	Banghoek	88
Alto M.P.H.S. 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2017	Simonsberg-Paarl	92
Botanica Arboretum 2017	Stellenbosch	94
Constantia Glen Five 2015	Constantia	88
Creation Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot 2016	Walker Bay	90
Cronier Reserve Le Mieux 2016	Coastal Region	87
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Diemersdal Private Collection 2017	Durbanville	89
Dornier Donatus Red 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Eikendal Classique 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Epicurean 2011	Western Cape	91
Ernie Els Signature 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Gabriëlskloof The Blend 2017	Bot River	88
Glenelly Lady May 2014	Stellenbosch	90
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2016	Constantia	90
Haut Espoir Gentle Giant 2014	Coastal Region	84
Holden Manz Big G 2015	Franschhoek	89
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Cabernet Franc Petit Verdot 2014	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Cabernet Franc Petit Verdot Malbec 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Malbec Cabernet Franc Petit Verdot 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Idiom Merlot Cabernet Franc Cabernet Sauvignon Petit Verdot Malbec 2016	Stellenbosch	86
Jason's Hill Izak Reserve 2015	Breedekloof	90
Jordan Cobblers Hills 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Klein Gustrouw Reserve 2014	Jonkershoek Valley	89
La Bri Affinity 2015	Franschhoek	88
Laibach The Ladybird 2017	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	89

Lanzerac Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot 2016	Jonkershoek Valley-Stellenbosch	92
Lanzerac Le Général 2016	Jonkershoek Valley-Stellenbosch	89
Leipzig Grand Master 2017	Western Cape	93
Louisvale Dominique 2017	Stellenbosch	86
Meerlust Rubicon 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Morgenster Estate Reserve 2013	Stellenbosch	89
Morgenster Estate Reserve 2014	Stellenbosch	93
Morgenster Lourens River Valley 2013	Stellenbosch	89
Morgenster Lourens River Valley 2014	Stellenbosch	92
MR de Compostella 2016	Stellenbosch	92
Mulderbosch Faithful Hound 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Muratie Ansela van de Caab 2016	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	89
Nederburg The Brew Master 2016	Western Cape	92
Neethlingshof The Caracal 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Nitida Calligraphy 2017	Durbanville-Cape Town	88
Oneiric First Quantum Grand Reserve Blend 2012	Elgin	85
Overgaauw DC Classic 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Overgaauw Tria Corda 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Paul Wallace Crackerjack 2016	Elgin	88
Raats Family Wines Jasper Red Blend 2017	Stellenbosch	93
Remhoogte Reserve Sir Thomas Cullinan 2015	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	93
Rietvallei Estéanna 2016	Robertson	90
Rousseau Babette 2016	Western Cape	88
Rustenberg John X Merriman 2016	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	90
Schultz Family Wines Boneyards 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Spencer Bay The Blend 2014 (Namaqua Wines)	Olifants River	89
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2016	Stellenbosch	92
Vilafonté Seriously Old Dirt 2016	Western Cape	88
Vilafonté Seriously Old Dirt 2017	Paarl	87
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Malbec Petit Verdot 2016	Simonsberg-Paarl	90
Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2016	Western Cape	92
Vriesenhof Kallista 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Warwick Trilogy 2015	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	89

Yonder Hill Nicola 2016	Stellenbosch	85
Yonder Inanda 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Zevenwacht Reserve 2014	Stellenbosch	89
Zorgvliet Richelle 2017	Stellenbosch	91

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