



Tonnellerie  
Saint Martin

PINOT NOIR  
REPORT 2019

WINEMAG.CO.ZA



## KEY FINDINGS

For the third annual Pinot Noir report sponsored by Tonnellerie Saint Martin, the amount of entries was relatively small with 35 received from 24 producers compared to 36 entries from 26 producers last year – this is nothing if not a niche category in South Africa with total plantings amounting to 1 176ha, the equivalent of just 1.26% of the national vineyard. As the seventh most planted red variety, it comes in behind Cinsault and ahead of Cabernet Franc, with much of it utilised for Méthode Cap Classique.

Undertake a quick perusal of the line-up below, however, and it is clear that there are some notable absentees – are those big-name producers that stay away from such tastings not as confident in their product as they should be?

The good news is that the overall standard of what was on the tasting bench was high with 16 wines rating 90-plus (46% of the line-up). It should be noted, however, is that Pinot comes at a premium – the average price of these 16 wines being R361.25 compared to R286.29 for those wines to rate 90-plus in the Cab Report or R230.41 in the Shiraz Report.

Because of the reduced size of the sample, it's dangerous to draw any definitive conclusions but Elgin should at least be a little bit chuffed with its showing, this ward producing eight of the wines rating 90-plus.

The three wards of Hemel-en-Aarde have gone to great lengths to take ownership of the category in recent times, and though Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge did have one wine among those rating 90-plus in the form of Emma's 2017 from Creation, the verdict remains out as to where Pinot fares best. Best wine overall in this tasting was the Op Die Berg 2017 from De Grendel, made from fruit grown on the Ceres Plateau, an area whose wine growing potential is still far from being fully explored, while Simonsberg-Paarl, Sondagskloof and Stellenbosch plus two vintages of the same multi-regional blend from The Fledge & Co. also feature among the top performers.

As in year one and two of this report, the panel was intrigued by an herbaceous quality that many of the wines showed, this being quite attractive in some instances and disconcerting in others. Again, it was a matter of speculation as to what precisely gives rise to this, everything from the use of whole-bunch fermentation to the proximity of vineyards to eucalyptus trees being posited as explanations.

In general, the panel felt that the category showed some deft winemaking resulting in a number of wines that were pleasingly scented and pure of fruit. True gravitas, which is to say wines that spoke very clearly of their place of origin like the best of Burgundy does, appears to still be a way off, however.

As producer of the best wine overall, De Grendel won a new barrel of their choice from Tonnellerie Saint Martin.

# JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by myself and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely Trizanne Barnard of Trizanne Signature Wines and James Pietersen, of Wine Cellar, Cape Town merchants and cellarers of fine wine (regular panel member Roland Peens was on leave). 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 FOR THE MAGNIFICENT 7

94

### De Grendel Op die Berg 2017

Price: R200

Total production: 9 400 bottles Abv: 13.97%

Malolactic fermentation in new French oak barrels before maturation lasting 13 months in older barrels.

*An evocative nose of dark fruit, musk, scrub, spice plus a little toasty oak. Full-bodied with layers of flavour and lovely smooth tannins, the finish long and savoury.*



93

### Creation Emma's 2017

Price: R905

Total production: 1 630 bottles Abv: 14.32%

30% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 10 months in French oak, 40% new

*Black cherry, musk and spice on the nose. Rich and full on the palate with dense fruit, fresh acidity and firm tannins. Power packed.*



93

### Lothian Vineyards Vineyard Selection 2018

Price: R240

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 13.76%

Matured for 11 months in French oak, 20% new.

*Some smoky reduction on the nose before red cherry and a little musk. The palate, meanwhile, is light and linear – lovely fruit definition, crisp acidity and fine tannins, before a salty finish. Very elegant.*



92

## Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2018

Price: R300

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 13.76%

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 38% new.

*Red cherry, musk and a little smoked meat on the nose. Lovely fruit purity, zesty acidity and crunchy tannins. Balanced and lively.*



92

## Paul Cluver Estate 2017

Price: R275

Total production: 33 600 bottles Abv: 13.8%

Matured for 11 months in French oak, 32% new.

*Some smoky reduction before red and black berries, some pelargonium-like perfume but equally some earthy character on the nose. The palate shows concentrated fruit, vibrant acidity and firm but fine tannins. Beautifully balanced and super-tasty.*



92

## Meerlust 2017

Price: R300

Total production: 28 200 bottles Abv: 12.4%

20% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 11 months in French oak, 50% new.

*Red berries, musk and spice on the nose. The palate shows good fruit concentration, bright acidity and fine tannins – juicy on entry, chewy on the finish and full of tension. Delicious!*



# 92

## Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2017

Price: R345

Total production: 3 003 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Matured for 12 months in French oak, 20% new.

*Red and black berries, some musk and attractive oak on the nose. The palate is broad and smooth textured. The entry is sweet in the best sense, but the flavours change, the wine not short of intricacy, some spice to the finish.*



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
De Grendel Op die Berg 2017	94	R200
Lothian Vineyards Vineyard Selection 2018	93	R240
Creation Emma's 2017	93	R905
Paul Cluver Estate 2017	92	R275
Meerlust 2017	92	R300
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2018	92	R300
Shannon Rockview Ridge 2017	92	R345
The Fledge & Co. Katvis 2017	91	R200
The Fledge & Co. Katvis 2018	91	R200
Elgin Vintners 2017	91	R220
Plaisir de Merle Estate 2018	91	R300
Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2018	91	R345
B Vintners Black Bream 2016	90	R275
B Vintners Black Bream 2017	90	R275
Kershaw Elgin Clonal Selection 2018	90	R605
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2017	90	R795

## COMPLETE SCORES A – Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Botanica Mary Delany Collection 2018	Western Cape	88
B Vintners Black Bream 2016	Walker Bay	90
B Vintners Black Bream 2017	Sondagskloof, Walker Bay	90
Creation Emma's 2017	Walker Bay	93
Creation Reserve 2018	Walker Bay	88
Creation The Art of Pinot Noir 2017	Walker Bay	89
De Grendel Op die Berg 2017	Ceres Plateau	94
Domaine des Dieux Josephine 2015	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	89
Elgin Vintners 2017	Elgin	91
Haute Cabrière Réserve 2016	Franschhoek	89
Haute Cabrière The Haute Collection 2017	Franschhoek	85
Highlands Road 2015	Elgin	86
Kershaw GPS Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge 2018	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	88
Kershaw Elgin Clonal Selection 2018	Elgin	90
La Vierge Noir 2015	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	87
La Vierge The Affair 2018	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	89
Lothian Vineyards Vineyard Selection 2018	Elgin	93
Meerlust 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Meerlust 2018	Stellenbosch	86
Mooiplaas Watershed 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Nitida 2017	Durbanville, Cape Town	88
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2018	Elgin	92
Paul Cluver Estate 2017	Elgin	92
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2017	Elgin	90
Paul Wallace Brave Heart 2017	Elgin	88
Plaisir de Merle Estate 2018	Simonsberg-Paarl	91
Ridgeland 2018 (Elgin Vintners)	Elgin	89
Shannon 2018	Elgin	88
Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2017	Elgin	92
Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2018	Elgin	91



South Hill 2017	Elgin	84
Stellar Organics The River's End 2017	Koekenaap	84
Sutherland 2017	Elgin	89
The Fledge & Co. Katvis 2017	Western Cape	91
The Fledge & Co. Katvis 2018	Western Cape	91

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