



— PRESCIENT —

CHARDONNAY
REPORT
2019



WINEMAG.CO.ZA

KEY FINDINGS

For this year's Prescient Chardonnay Report, 93 entries were received from 65 producers – 52 examples or 56% of the line-up rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

Which areas are to the fore? Out of the top 10 (five rating 93, four rating 94 and one rating 95), five are from Stellenbosch, three were from Elgin and one each from Ceres Plateau and Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge.

De Grendel was overall top performer with its Op Die Berg 2018 being the wine to pick up the highest rating of 95. The Durbanville cellar with Charles Hopkins as head winemaker is enjoying an impressive run of form, its Elim 2017 coming up trumps in the Shiraz Report and its Op Die Berg 2017 likewise in the Tonnellerie Saint Martin Pinot Noir Report earlier this year.

What does top Chardonnay go for these days? The average price of the 52 wines to rate 90-plus is R162 a bottle while the average price of the top 10 is R233 a bottle. Of particular interest to those wine lovers on a tight budget would be the Stellenbosch Vineyards Unwooded 2018, this wine selling for R90 a bottle and placing among the top 10 with a rating of 94. There were also another three wines under R100 that each scored a straight 90, these being Durbanville Hills 2018 at R69 a bottle, Meerhof 2018 at R70 and Nederburg The Winemasters 2018 at R75 (prices are ex-cellar and as supplied by the producer at the time of tasting).

Unwooded entries are not tasted separately as we believe fruit integrity rather than winemaking technique is what matters most when it comes to determining quality and in addition to the Stellenbosch Vineyards wine mentioned above, another example to catch the eye was the Sans Chêne 2018 from Kruger Family Wines with a rating of 92.

For the first time ever, there were two examples of bottle fermented sparkling wine entered

(the rules do not exclude this method of production so an entirely legitimate entry) and of these, the panel particularly liked the Blanc de Blancs 2016 from Durbanville Hills for its elegance and verve, rating it 91.

As for the general state of the category, the panel was concerned to note that quite a few of the 2018s looked unduly developed and it is hoped that we are not facing the "premature oxidation" phenomenon that beleaguered white Burgundy not so long ago. Over-ripe fruit due to drought/global warming, excessive stirring of the lees, lower levels of sulphur dioxide and poorly performing corks are all factors to consider in this regard. That said, they were also wines that were excessively reductive (exacerbated by being closed under screwcap in some instances) and once again, it is clear that achieving winemaking perfection is no easy matter.

One other explanation concerning how the 2018s showed might simply be vintage variation – it may be that growing conditions were a tad less favourable than they were in 2017 and there's nothing more to the matter than that. And before 2018 gets too bad a reputation, it's worth noting that seven of the top 10 are from this vintage so evidently some producers were able to work around whatever challenges the year posed.

More generally, Chardonnay is an extremely important category within the industry – it is the seventh most widely planted variety, total area under vineyard amounting to 6 660ha, the equivalent of 7.16% of the national vineyard and because of its well established credentials around the world, the best examples are able to demand a price premium and ensure profitability that so often eludes producers. The Chardonnay Report, now in its ninth year, hopefully helps steer the category in the right direction and in this regard, Prescient's involvement as sponsor is greatly appreciated.

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*

TASTINGS NOTES FOR TOP 10

95

De Grendel
Op die Berg 2018

R200

Total production: 8 100 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Fermented and matured for six months in French oak barrels, a third new. Some flinty reduction before lime and lemon and a little biscuit-like character. The palate, meanwhile, appears tightly coiled with a great core of fruit to go with an exhilarating line of acidity, the finish long and pithy. Classy stuff!



94

Delaire Graff
Banghoek Reserve 2018

R225

Total production: 22 000 bottles Abv: 13.5%

No malolactic fermentation. Matured for 10 months in French oak, 40% new. A hint of reduction before lime and lemon. The palate has great flavour intensity without being weighty - good depth of fruit and nicely coated acidity, the finish long and savoury. A wine of refinement that should mature with benefit.



94

Highlands Road 2017

R190

Total production: 4 000 bottles Abv: 14%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for 10 months in French oak barrels, one third new. 50% malolactic fermentation completed. Some struck-match reduction before citrus and oak-derived vanilla and spice. The palate is rich and full with a creamy texture, the acidity nicely coated, the finish long and savoury. Plenty of Wow! factor.



94

Paul Cluver Estate 2017

R275

Total production: 41 160 bottles Abv: 13.69%

Spontaneously fermented in barrel, 38% of the wine undergoing malolactic fermentation. Matured for nine months in French oak, 33% new. Some smoky reduction before pear, white peach and citrus on the nose. The palate is well balanced and nicely energetic with pure fruit and fresh acidity before a savoury finish. Carefully assembled as you'd expect from this cellar.



93

Stellenbosch Vineyards Unwooded 2018

R90

Total production: 2 900 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Spontaneous fermentation, matured for six months on the lees. A pretty nose with notes of blossom, pear and citrus while the palate has a lovely vitality about it with lots of clean fruit and fresh acidity before a pithy finish.



93

Creation Reserve 2018

R310

Total production: 12 000 bottles Abv: 13.76%

Fermented and matured for 10 months in French oak, 40% new. A complex and subtle nose with notes of pear, citrus and herbs while the palate shows good fruit concentration, punchy acidity and a pithy finish. Possessing layers of flavour, this is elegant and composed.



93 Journey's End 2018

R165

Total production: 10 000 bottles Abv: 13.34%

Half of the must underwent spontaneous fermentation while the other half was inoculated. 20% malolactic fermentation. Matured for nine months in French oak, 30% new. A complex nose showing a herbal top note before pear, peach and citrus plus some leesy character. The palate has a great energy about it – lovely fruit purity and freshness before a finish that is long and pithy.



93 Kershaw Clonal Selection Elgin 2018

R570

Total production: 15 982 bottles & 70 magnums Abv: 13.5%

From four clones planted across nine different sites. Spontaneously fermented and matured for 11 months in French oak, 39% new. White flowers before citrus and some yeasty complexity on the nose. The palate balanced with good fruit concentration and nicely coated acidity, the finish long and savoury – precisely made and full of detail.



93 Simonsig 2017

R115

Total production: 33 400 bottles Abv: 13.76%

No malolactic fermentation. Matured for nine months in French oak, 40% new. A hint of reduction before lime and lemon on the nose while the palate shows plenty of juicy fruit and bright acidity. Clean and correct, this is well balanced and unshowy.



93

Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2018

R160

Total production: 6 794 bottles Abv: 13.4%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for 12 months in French oak, 30% new. The nose shows smoky reduction before lime and lemon plus some waxy complexity. The palate has plenty of fruit power to go with nicely tart acidity, providing a pleasantly sweet 'n sour drinking experience. A wine of particular richness.



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
De Grendel Op die Berg 2018	95	R200
Stellenbosch Vineyards Unwooded 2018	94	R90
Highlands Road 2017	94	R190
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2018	94	R255
Paul Cluver Estate 2017	94	R275
Simonsig 2017	93	R115
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2018	93	R160
Journey's End 2018	93	R165
Creation Reserve 2018	93	R310
Kershaw Clonal Selection Elgin 2018	93	R570
Kruger Family Wines Sans Chêne 2018	92	R135
Stellenbosch Vineyards Credo 2018	92	R150
Domaine des Dieux 2015	92	R170
Eikendal 2018	92	R190
Almenkerk 2018	92	R240
Haute Cabrière The Haute Collection 2017	92	R249
Kruger Family Wines Walker Bay 2018	92	R265
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2018	92	R275
Babylonstoren 2018	92	R295
DeMorgenzon Reserve 2018	92	R395
Boschendal 1685 2018	91	R105
Zevenwacht 2018	91	R105
Neil Ellis Woolworths Barrel Fermented Reserve Collection 2018	91	R114.99
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2018	91	R150
Sutherland 2018	91	R155
Durbanville Hills Blanc de Blancs 2016	91	R175
Groote Post Kapokberg 2018	91	R175
Haut Espoir 2018	91	R195
Tokara Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 2018	91	R200
Benguela Cove 2017	91	R220
Lothian Vineyards Vineyard Selection 2018	91	R240
Raised By Wolves 777 2018 (Yardstick)	91	R250
Iona Elgin Highlands 2018	91	R290
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2016	91	R395
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2017	91	R395
Delaire Graff Terraced Block Reserve 2018	91	R725
Durbanville Hills 2018	90	R69

Meerhof 2018	90	R70
Nederburg The Winemasters 2018	90	R75
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cableway 2018	90	R175
Julien Schaal Mountain Vineyards 2018	90	R185
Rustenberg Stellenbosch 2019	90	R190
De Grendel Op die Berg 2019	90	R200
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2018	90	R240
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2018	90	R245
Journey's End Destination 2018	90	R260
Kruger Family Wines Klipkop 2018	90	R265
Benguela Cove Vinography 2017	90	R380
Rustenberg Five Soldiers 2018	90	R410
Kershaw GPS Series Lower Duivenhoksriver 2018	90	R495
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2018	90	R795
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2014	90	R1000

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Aaldering 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Almenkerk 2018	Elgin	92
Babylonstoren 2018	Simonsberg-Paarl	92
Benguela Cove 2017	Walker Bay	91
Benguela Cove Vinography 2017	Walker Bay	90
Bloemendal Limited Edition 2015	Durbanville	89
Boschendal 1685 2018	Western Cape	91
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2016	Elgin	91
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2017	Elgin	91
B Vintners Fire Heath 2017	Walker Bay	89
Creation The Art of Chardonnay 2017	Walker Bay	89
Creation The Art of Chardonnay 2018	Walker Bay	89
Creation Reserve 2018	Walker Bay	93
De Grendel Op die Berg 2018	Ceres Plateau	95
De Grendel Op die Berg 2019	Ceres Plateau	90
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2018	Banghoek	94
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2018	Western Cape	91
Delaire Graff Terraced Block Reserve 2018	Banghoek	91
DeMorgenzon Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Domaine des Dieux 2015	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	91
Durbanville Hills 2018	Durbanville, Cape Town	90
Durbanville Hills Blanc de Blancs 2016	Durbanville, Cape Town	91
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cableway 2018	Durbanville, Cape Town	90
Eikendal 2018	Western Cape	92
Eikendal Janina Unwooded 2019	Western Cape	89
Elgin Vinters 2018	Elgin	84
Esona Single Vineyard 2015	Robertson	89
Esona Single Vineyard 2016	Robertson	88
Fairview 2018	Coastal Region	89
Fleur Du Cap Series Privée 2018	Western Cape	89
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	90
GlenWood Grand Duc 2017	Franschhoek	84
GlenWood Vigneron's Selection 2018	Franschhoek	84
Groot Constantia 2018	Constantia, Cape Town	88
Groote Post Kapokberg 2018	Darling	91
Haute Cabrière The Haute Collection 2017	Franschhoek	92
Haut Espoir 2018	Franschhoek	91

Highlands Road 2017	Elgin	94
Iona Elgin Highlands 2018	Elgin	91
Jordan Barrel Fermented 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Jordan Nine Yards 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Journey's End 2018	Stellenbosch	93
Journey's End Destination 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Julien Schaal Mountain Vineyards 2018	Cape South Coast	90
Kershaw Clonal Selection Elgin 2018	Elgin	93
Kershaw GPS Series Lower Duivenhoksriver 2018	Lower Duivenshok River	90
Kruger Family Wines Klipkop 2018	Piekenierskloof	90
Kruger Family Wines Sans Chêne 2018	Piekenierskloof	92
Kruger Family Wines Walker Bay 2018	Walker Bay	92
Laarman Focal Point Vermaaklikheid 2018	Cape South Coast	89
La Bri 2018	Franschhoek	89
La Motte 2018	Franschhoek	89
Lanzerac 2019		89
Lanzerac Mrs English 2017	Jonkershoek Valley	89
Lanzerac Mrs English 2018	Jonkershoek Valley	84
La Vierge Jezebelle 2018	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	89
Le Belle Rebelle Mariëtte 2018	Breedekloof	88
Lothian Vineyards Vineyard Selection 2018	Elgin	91
Meerhof 2018	Swartland	90
Meerlust 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Nederburg The Winemasters 2018	Western Cape	90
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2018	Elgin	92
Neil Ellis Woolworths Barrel Fermented Reserve Collection 2018	Elgin	91
Nelson Family Vineyards 2018	Paarl	85
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2018	Elgin	90
Paul Cluver Estate 2018	Elgin	94
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2018	Elgin	90
Paul Wallace Reflection 2018	Elgin	88
Pongrácz Blanc De Blancs NV	Western Cape	89
Raised By Wolves 777 2017 (Yardstick)	Piekenierskloof	88
Raised By Wolves 777 2018 (Yardstick)	Piekenierskloof	91
Rickety Bridge 2018	Franschhoek	89
Rietvallei JMB 2018	Robertson	88
Rustenberg Five Soldiers 2018	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	90
Rustenberg Stellenbosch 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Rustenberg Stellenbosch Unwooded 2019	Stellenbosch	89

Saxenburg Private Collection 2017	Stellenbosch	84
Simonsig 2017	Stellenbosch	93
Stellenbosch Vineyards Credo 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Stellenbosch Vineyards Unwooded 2018	Stellenbosch	94
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2014	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2018	Stellenbosch	93
Stonebird 2017	Cape South Coast	85
Sutherland 2018	Elgin	91
Thelema 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Tokara Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Usana Gold Dust to Grapes 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Vondeling Barrel Selection 2018	Voor-Paardeberg	89
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range 2018	Elgin	89
Warwick The White Lady 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Waverley Hills 2018	Tulbagh	89
Welmoed 2019 (Stellenbosch Vineyards)	Western Cape	89
Zevenwacht 2018	Stellenbosch	91

CONTACT DETAILS

Editorial

Christian Eedes
christian@winemag.co.za
+27 83 454 3644
@ChristianEedes

Business Director

Jacqueline Lahoud
jax@winemag.co.za
+27 83 654 7721
@JaxLahoud