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SAUV-SEM BLEND /
WOODED SAUVIGNON
BLANC REPORT 2019

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

KEY FINDINGS

The number of Sauvignon Blanc-Semillon blend entries was relatively small – 29 wines from 24 producers compared to 41 wines from 37 producers the year before – but overall quality was as high as ever, with 20 wines rating 90 or above on the 100-point quality scale, the average cellar-door price of these top performers being R254 a bottle.

In the case of the Wooded Sauvignon Blanc category, there were 23 entries from 21 producers with 12 wines rating 90 or higher, average cellar-door price R192 a bottle.

Looking at what growing areas predominated, Elgin enjoyed a tremendously good showing with four wines among the top 10 Sauv-Sem blends and two among the top five of wooded Sauvignon Blanc. In terms of winemaking, it is striking that there is no set approach with all manner of maturation vessels being employed.

Some general observations. This tasting is always one of the most challenging of the year; the wines often quite unapproachable. If inoculated, tank-fermented Sauvignon Blanc is so commercially successful on account of its fruit purity and primacy of flavour which makes it relatively easy to understand, the use of oak and the addition of Semillon as a blending component both serve the purpose of building layers of flavour and adding complexity.

The resulting wines don't always succeed. Some are too light bodied and lacking in detail – they don't sufficiently deviate from middle-of-the-road unwooded Sauvignon Blanc. If a winemaker is going to bother to employ oak and further add Semillon, especially if this is done in the hope of charging a premium, then the end-product shouldn't come up short on intrigue...

Other wines, meanwhile, seem overdone – fruit picked relatively late and hence presenting as sweet and then treatment in oak resulting in a more or less oxidative character, which is to say what's in the glass lacks fruit definition and comes across as flat, broad and overly evolved.

The best examples, however, make for some of the most remarkable wines to be had from South Africa. Super-concentrated fruit matched by attention-grabbing acidities and possessing both great intensity and intricacy of flavour. They're probably not everyday drinking but pair them with the right food and some memorable experiences are sure to be had.

As producer of the best blend overall, Cape Point Vineyards won a new 225-litre barrel from Tonnellerie Sylvain.

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 retasting where necessary rather than relying solely on arithmetic averaging.

*Christian Eedes,
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TASTINGS NOTES FOR TOP 10 BLENDS

95 Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2018

R350

Total production: 4 800 bottles Abv: 14%

75% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Semillon. The Sauvignon Blanc matured for 10 months in 600-litre French oak barrels, 40% new and the Semillon in amphorae before six months in tank. A complex and compelling nose with notes of peach, blackcurrant, flowers, fynbos and some leesy character. The palate shows excellent fruit concentration and punchy acidity, the finish extraordinarily long and saline.



93 Elgin Ridge Chaos White 2018

R350 per 500ml bottle

Total production: 5 300 bottles Abv: 14.04%

68% Sauvignon Blanc, 32% Semillon. Some skin contact before maturation in older oak. The nose shows top notes of potpourri and spice before cut apple and orange. Good fruit expression, bright acidity and a pithy finish. Rich and textured, this is wonderfully complex.



93 Highlands Road Sine Cera 2017

R190

Total production: 3 100 bottles Abv: 14%

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon. 10% fermented spontaneously in barrel, rest in tank and matured for 14 months. A shy nose with subtle notes of thatch, citrus, white peach and black currant to go with some leesy complexity. The palate is well balanced with pure fruit, racy acidity and a pithy finish. Tightly wound, this will benefit from time in bottle.



93

Trizanne Signature Wines
Reserve Semillion Sauvignon Blanc 2017

R190

Total production: 5 000 bottles Abv: 13.25%

52% Semillon, 48% Sauvignon Blanc. Fermented and matured for 11 months in old oak. An intriguing waxy note to go with green bean, citrus, white peach and vanilla. Rich and thick textured – good depth of fruit and a savoury finish.



92

Constantia Glen
Two 2018

R290

Total production: 18 284 bottles Abv: 14%

68% Sauvignon Blanc, 32% Semillon. Matured for seven months in a combination of 600-litre French oak barrels, Austrian oak, French acacia and clay amphorae. Citrus, white peach, herbs and vanilla on the nose. The palate is marked by good fruit concentration and coated acidity – gives the sense of being tightly coiled and needing time in bottle.



92

Durbanville Hills
The Tangram 2018

R375

Total production: 2 200 bottles Abv: 13.52%

76% Sauvignon Blanc, 24% Semillon. Fermentation begun in tank before being transferred to barrel. Maturation lasted 10 months in a combination of 300-, 500- and 600-litre barrels, partially new. The nose shows blossom, lime, white peach and pepper while the palate is lean and fresh, the finish long and saline. Pure fruit and plenty of zip make for a very elegant wine.



92 Highlands Road Sine Cera 2016

R190

Total production: 4 800 bottles Abv: 13.8%

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon. 15% fermented spontaneously in barrel, rest in tank and matured for 18 months. A pronounced waxy character to the nose to go with citrus. The palate is rich and smooth textured with coated acidity and a savoury finish. Layered and long.



92 Vrede en Lust Barrique 2018

R150

Total production: 5 066 bottles Abv: 13%

90% Semillon, 10% Sauvignon Blanc. Matured for nine months in French oak. A top note of floral perfume before citrus and stone fruit plus some vanilla on the nose. The palate is well balanced with pure fruit, coated acidity and a savoury finish. Flavourful and nicely textured.



91 Delaire Graff White Reserve 2017

R385

Total production: 5 000 bottles Abv: 14.38%

59% Sauvignon Blanc from Darling and Stellenbosch, 41% Semillon from Franschoek. Fermented and matured for five months in barrel before blending and further maturation in tank lasting eight months. A herbal top note before lime, white peach and green melon plus a hint of vanilla. The palate shows good fruit concentration and bright acidity with a little white pepper bite to the finish.



91

The Smuggler's Boot SBS 2018

R210

Total production: 7 280 bottles Abv: 13%

46% Sauvignon Blanc, 54% Semillon, the former fermented in tank and the latter in oak barrels, two-thirds new, maturation lasting four months. The nose shows some smoky reduction before lime, peach, black currant and a hint of vanilla while the palate appears sweet, rich and smooth textured – very polished.



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2018	95	R350
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2017	93	R190
Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2017	93	R190
Elgin Ridge Chaos White 2018	93	R350 (per 500ml)
Vrede en Lust Barrique 2018	92	R150
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2016	92	R190
Constantia Glen Two 2018	92	R290
Durbanville Hills The Tangram 2018	92	R375
Zorgvliet Simoné 2018	91	R170
Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2018	91	R190
The Smuggler's Boot SBS 2018 (Richard Kershaw Wines)	91	R210
The Smuggler's Boot SBS 2017 (Richard Kershaw Wines)	91	R210
Iona One Man Band White 2017	91	R290
Delaire Graff White Reserve 2017	91	R385
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve White 2017	91	R462
Villiera Down to Earth White 2019	90	R61
GlenWood Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2018	90	R130
Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserve 2018	90	R135
Hazendal Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc 2017	90	R295
Warwick Professor Black 2018	90	R350

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Bizoe Henrietta 2018	Western Cape	89
Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2018	Cape Town	95
Constantia Glen Two 2018	Constantia	92
Delaire Graff White Reserve 2017	Western Cape	91
Durbanville Hills The Tangram 2017	Durbanville	88
Durbanville Hills The Tangram 2018	Durbanville, Cape Town	92
Elgin Ridge Chaos White 2018	Elgin	93
Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserve 2018	Elim	90
GlenWood Grand Duc Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2017	Franschhoek	81
GlenWood Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2018	Franschhoek	90
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve White 2017	Constantia, Cape Town	91
Hazendal Semillon-Sauvignon Blanc 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2016	Elgin	92
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2017	Elgin	93
Iona One Man Band White 2017	Elgin	91
Morgenster White Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Nitida Coronata Integration 2017	Durbanville, Cape Town	88
Rickety Bridge The Printer's Devil The Gremlin 2018	Franschhoek	89
Ruyters Bin 2019 (Stellenrust)	Stellenbosch	89
Simonsig 2019	Western Cape	89
Strandveld Adamastor 2017	Elim	89
The Smuggler's Boot SBS 2017 (Richard Kershaw Wines)	Western Cape	91
The Smuggler's Boot SBS 2018 (Richard Kershaw Wines)	Western Cape	91
Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2018	Elim	91
Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2017	Elim	93
Villiera Down to Earth White 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Vrede en Lust Barrique 2018	Elgin	92
Warwick Professor Black 2018	Western Cape	90
Zorgvliet Simoné 2018	Banghoek	91

TASTINGS NOTES FOR TOP 5 WOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC

94 Rousseau Sacharia Wooded 2018

R150

Total production: 2 750 bottles Abv: 14.16%

Fermented and matured for nine months in older oak barrels. A complex nose with notes of lime, peach, blackcurrant, fresh herbs and sea spray while the palate has excellent fruit concentration and lively acidity, the finish long and saline. Impressive flavour intensity.



93 Cape Point Vineyards Reserve 2018

R199

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 13.88%

97% Sauvignon Blanc, 3% Semillon. Partial spontaneous fermentation, the Sauvignon Blanc matured for 15 months in old oak, the Semillon in amphorae before a further month in tank. An attractive nose with notes of blackcurrant, peach, nectarine, herbs and flowers. The palate is super-rich but balanced thanks to punchy acidity. Layers of flavour and great length.



92 Iona Elgin Highlands Wild Ferment 2018

R189

Total production: 2 460 bottles Abv: 13.55%

Spontaneous fermentation and maturation lasting 11 months in old oak. Yellow apple, hay, buchu and spice on the nose. The palate is rich and round with nicely coated acidity, the finish long and savoury. Has a pleasant oxidative quality to it.



92

Nederburg The Young Airhawk Wooded 2018

R180

Total production: 4 266 bottles Abv: 14.13%

From Darling grapes. Fermented and matured for nine months in tank as well as a combination of new and older 300- and 500-litre barrels. Green pepper, peach, vanilla and spice on the nose. Super-rich and thick-textured on the palate with nicely coated acidity. Flavourful and long.



91

Rietvallei Estéanna 2018

R185

Total production: 4 000 bottles Abv: 14.18%

Fermentation begun in tank and finished in second-fill French oaks before maturation lasting nine months. A herbal top note before yellow peach and apricot. Full bodied and powerful with coated acidity and a savoury finish.



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Rousseau Sacharia Wooded 2018	94	R150
Cape Point Vineyards Reserve 2018	93	R199
Nederburg The Young Airhawk Wooded 2018	92	R180
Iona Elgin Highlands Wild Ferment 2018	92	R189
Groote Post Seasalter 2019	91	R145
Rietvallei Estéanna 2018	91	R185
The Giant Periwinkle Blanc Fumé 2018	91	R200
Villiera Bush Vine Blanc Fumé 2018	90	R150
Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve Blanc Fume 2019	90	R160
De Grendel Koetshuis 2019	90	R175
Neil Ellis Amica Jonkershoek Valley, Stellenbosch 2018	90	R250
Highlands Road White Reserve 2017	90	R350

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Benguela Cove Estate 2018	Walker Bay	89
Cape Point Vineyards Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2018	Cape Town	93
D'Aria The Following 2016	Durbanville	87
De Grendel Koetshuis 2019	Western Cape	90
Groote Post Seasalter 2019	Darling	91
Highlands Road White Reserve 2017	Elgin	90
Iona Elgin Highlands Wild Ferment 2018	Elgin	92
Jordan The Outlier 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Mellish Family Vineyards Bakenkop Blanc Fumé 2018	Durbanville, Cape Town	88
Nederburg The Young Airhawk Wooded 2018	Western Cape	92
Neil Ellis Amica 2017	Jonkershoek Valley	88
Neil Ellis Amica Jonkershoek Valley, Stellenbosch 2018	Jonkershoek Valley	90
Nitida Wild Child 2019	Durbanville, Cape Town	83
Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve Blanc Fume 2019	Franschhoek	90
Ridgeland Sandstone 2019 (Elgin Vintners)	Elgin	89
Rietvallei Estéanna 2018	Robertson	91
Rousseau Sacharia Wooded 2018	Elgin	94
Rustenberg Wild Ferment 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2018	Stellenbosch	88
The Giant Periwinkle Blanc Fumé 2018	Cape South Coast	91
The Giant Periwinkle Blanc Fumé 2019	Cape South Coast	89
Villiera Bush Vine Blanc Fumé 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Blanc Fumé 2018	Elgin	89

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