



PRESCIENT

CABERNET  
SAUVIGNON  
REPORT 2020

Stellenbosch, South Africa.



# ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2020



Winemag.co.za is set to produce 12 category reports over the course of the year. Each report is based on the outcome of a blind tasting of wines entered within the specific category.

We will announce a Top 10 with the release of each successive report. Producers of these wines will be notified and are able to purchase newly designed Top 10 stickers while producers of the remaining wines may acquire regular rating stickers – consumers are encouraged to look out for these in the retail environment.

The programme culminates in a gala dinner where the individual best wine per category will receive an award and ratings on the 100-point quality scale for all the Top 10 wines will be revealed.

The Best of Category wines will subsequently be shown at tastings in both Johannesburg and London.

## 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*

# KEY FINDINGS

Whereas the best examples of modern-era South Africa Syrah are quickly coming to be associated with flair, beauty and emotion, top single-variety Cabernet Sauvignon rather provides a sense of solid viticulture and winemaking, thoroughness, and attention to detail. As such, Cab might not be the height of fashion among wine enthusiasts right now but based on the outcome of this year's Prescient Report tasting, it once again proves itself to be a blue-chip investment.

There were 100 entries from 78 producers, 55 wines rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. The 2017s on display easily lived up to the very high reputation of this vintage with five in the Top 10 and 26 out of the 43 entered or 60.5% rating 90-plus. What seems to set these wines apart is a density of fruit and firmness of structure without quite the unbridled power of the 2015s and the best should easily keep until 2027 (a decade from vintage) and probably quite a bit beyond that.

What is pleasing to note is the good showing of the 2018s, this vintage to date somewhat unheralded by commentators. There are four among the top 10 and out of the 37 entered in total, 24 or 65% rated 90-plus. Taken as a whole, they perhaps do not have quite the same concentration as the 2017s but make up for this in terms of a certain elegance.

As for 2016, we advised in last year's Report that it should be viewed not so much a "weak" vintage but rather one suited to earlier drinking and we would re-iterate this again now. If you have any in your cellar, time to start pulling some corks!

As might have been predicted, Stellenbosch dominates the Top 10 with eight wines, the other two being Babylonstoren 2018 from Simonsberg-Paarl and Diemersdal The Journal 2018 from Durbanville. The average cellar-door price of the Top 10, meanwhile, is R385 a bottle with Babylonstoren 2018 and Ernie Els Major Series 2017 jointly the most affordable, both selling for R200 a bottle.

Cabernet Sauvignon's precarious situation within the local industry is well documented (overall plantings decreased by 19.1% between 2009 and 2019 from 12 469ha to 10 087ha) but those top-end producers still inclined to work with it, continue to show great diligence and rigour – the panel noted that they were a lot fewer either overtly green examples or those showing clumsy oakings than they were not so long ago. Panel member Roland Peens made the observation that making great Cab is in large part about tannin management and he felt that winemaking was generally more sophisticated in this regard.

By way of a footnote, there is increasingly a sub-set of wines made in a lighter style and when tasting blind, it is a little difficult to know what to make of such examples. To their credit, they avoid the pitfalls of being too sweet, alcoholic or extracted but they typically show more red than black fruit character and moreover can present as quite "green" or herbaceous – where does entry-level easy drinking stop and radical New Wave thinking start? The predicament for the taster is not to over-reward a wine that is ultimately dilute and simple in seeking to recognise finesse.

# TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



## Babylonstoren 2018 R200

**Total production: 14 890 bottles Abv: 14.3%**

*Maiden vintage of a single-variety Cab from this property and it's very nicely judged. Matured for 18 months in 300-litre oak barrels, 40% new. The nose shows red and black berries, violets, some leafiness and vanilla while the palate is medium bodied with pure fruit, fresh acidity and ripe tannins, the finish long and savoury.*



## Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2018 R220

**Total production: 1 250 bottles Abv: 13.3%**

*Matured for 24 months in French oak, 60% new. The nose shows red and black fruit, some leafiness plus prominent but not unattractive oak-derived notes including vanilla and incense. The palate is quite chunky (despite the relatively low alcohol) with a good core of fruit to go with nicely grippy tannins. There's no shortage of freshness, however, and the finish is long and dry.*



## Diemersdal The Journal 2018 R320

**Total production: 2 700 bottles Abv: 14.39%**

*Matured for 22 months in 225-litre barrels, 100% new. Top notes of tea leaf and incense before red and black berries plus oak spice on the nose. The palate is full but balanced with a real succulence about it thanks to lovely pure fruit and fresh acidity. This has really good structure, the tannins firm but fine making for a finish that is long and dry.*





## Ernie Els Major Series 2017

R200

**Total production: 59 350 bottles Abv: 14.43%**

*92% Cabernet Sauvignon and 8% Petit Verdot. Matured for 20 months in French oak, 40% new. Aromatics of blue and black fruit, some attractive herbal character plus oak spice. Very rich and full yet still wonderfully detailed on the palate – this has a dense core of fruit to with smooth tannins and makes a big impression.*



## Le Riche Reserve 2017

R620

**Total production: 7 740 bottles Abv: 14.45%**

*Matured for 24 months in 225-litre barrels, 73% new. A complex nose showing cranberry and cassis, violets and some leafiness, vanilla and spice. The palate is full but balanced with pure fruit, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins. A South African classic.*



## Oldenburg Vineyards 2018

R245

**Total production: 7 592 bottles Abv: 14.31%**

*Matured for 18 months in 300-litre barrels, 42% new. Red and black fruit, an attractive leafy note plus pencil shavings on the nose. The palate is medium bodied with good fruit expression, bright acidity and a savoury finish. Carefully made with an admirable elegance about it.*





## Reyneke Reserve 2017

R850

**Total production: 3 000 bottles Abv: 14.1%**

*Matured for 20 months in 100% new, light-toast 225-litre barrels. A brooding nose with notes of cassis, tea leaf, earth and oak. The palate, meanwhile, is monumental – super-dense fruit with firm tannins, the finish very long and dry. Compelling in its boldness.*



## Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2017

R275

**Total production: 49 200 bottles Abv: 14%**

*85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Petit Verdot, 4% Petite Sirah, 2% Malbec and 1% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 20 months in 300-litre barrels, 30% new. Red and black berries, violets and some leafiness plus a little reduction on the nose while the palate gives a sense of both poise and tightness thanks to pure fruit, bright acidity and firm but fine tannins. Comes across as entirely seamless.*



## Stellenrust Douwe steyn 2015

R590

**Total production: 3 213 bottles Abv: 14.3%**

*Grapes from 1972 bushvine vineyard. Matured for 24 months in 225-litre barrels, 62% new. Red and black fruit, dried herbs, earth, vanilla and liquorice on the nose. Rich and broad on the palate but not short of freshness, the tannins fine and mouth-coating. Old school in style but immensely satisfying.*





Tokara  
Reserve Collection 2017  
R330

Total production: 21 000 bottles Abv: 14.86%

*Beautiful aromatics of red and black berries, some pleasant herbal character and a hint of vanilla. The palate is full bodied with dense fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins. Possessing layers of flavour, the finish long and dry, this is a very stylish offering.*





# COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Allesverloren 2017	Swartland	88
Alto 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Babylonstoren 2018	Simonsberg-Paarl	<b>Top 10</b>
Bartiney Skyfall 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2018	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Benguela Cove Estate 2018	Walker Bay	90
Bergsig 2015	Breedekloof	88
Blaauwklippen 2018	Stellenbosch	83
Boplaas Family Reserve 2017	Stellenbosch	85
Boschendal 1685 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Boschendal 1685 2017	Stellenbosch	93
Cavalli Colt 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Croydon Vineyards Covenant 2018	Stellenbosch	88
David Finlayson 2018	Stellenbosch	93
David Finlayson GS 2017	Stellenbosch	86
Delaire Graff Reserve 2018	Banghoek	91
Delheim 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Diemersdal The Journal 2018	Durbanville	<b>Top 10</b>
Dieu Donné 2018	Franschhoek	86
Domier Equanimity 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Castle of Good Hope 2018	Durbanville-Cape Town	90
Eikendal 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Ernie Els Major Series 2017	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Ernie Els Proprietor's 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Glen Carlou Gravel Quarry Single Vineyard 2017	Simonsberg-Paarl	90
Glenelly Glass Collection 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Guardian Peak 2019	Western Cape	88
Holden Manz 2018	Franschhoek	88
Joostenberg Philip Albert 2017	Paarl	92
Jordan The Long Fuse 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Kaapzicht 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Kunjani 2017	Stellenbosch	87
La Bri Limited Release 2017	Franschhoek	92
La Cave 2018 (Wellington Wines)	Wellington	92
La Petite Ferme 2018	Franschhoek	90
Laibach 2018	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	91
Lanzerac 2017	Jonkershoek Valley-Stellenbosch	93
Le Bonheur 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Le Bonheur Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Le Riche 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Le Riche Reserve 2017	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Leipzig 2017	Stellenbosch	82



Lievland 2018	Coastal	90
Maastricht 2018	Cape Town	90
MAN Family Wines Ou Kalant 2018	Coastal	89
Mariëtte 2016 (La Belle Rebelle)	Breedekloof	87
Meerhof 2018	Swartland	89
Meerhof 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Meinert 2017	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Mischa Estate 2018	Wellington	84
Mischa Estate 2019	Wellington	86
Muratie Martin Melck Family Reserve 2017	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	93
Nederburg Manor House 2017	Western Cape	87
Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Oldenburg Vineyards 2018	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Oldenburg Vineyards Per Se Rondekop 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Org de Rac Cabernet Sauvignon 2018	Swartland	91
Org de Rac Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2018	Swartland	91
Org de Rac Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2017	Swartland	88
Pella Granietbult 2014	Stellenbosch	87
Peter Falke Kailani 2017	Stellenbosch	93
Peter Falke PF 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Rainbow's End 2018	Banghoek-Stellenbosch	88
Remhoogte Reserve 2017	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Reyneke Reserve 2017	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve 2017	Franschhoek	84
Rickety Bridge The Bridge 2017	Franschhoek	88
Roxton Black by Brampton 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Rust en Vrede Estate Vineyards 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Rustenberg Peter Barlow 2017	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Saxenburg Private Collection 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Saxenburg Private Collection 2017	Stellenbosch	88
Simonsig Labyrinth 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Spier 21 Gables 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2017	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Stark-Condé Three Pines 2017	Jonkershoek Valley	93
Stellenbosch Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenrust Douwe Steyn 2013	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenrust Douwe Steyn 2014	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenrust Douwe Steyn 2015	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Stellenrust Douwe Steyn 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenrust Douwe Steyn 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Strydom Rex 2017	Stellenbosch	92
The Fledge & Co Stellenbosch 2017	Stellenbosch	86
Thelema 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Tokara Reserve Collection 2017	Stellenbosch	<b>Top 10</b>
Usana The Fox 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Van Loveren Christina 2018	Robertson	88

Vergelegen Reserve 2014	Stellensbosch	90
Villion 2017	Bot River	91
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Napoleonsberg 2015	Elgin	83
Warwick Blue Lady 2017	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	90
Waterford 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Zevenwacht 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Zevenwacht Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	86
Zorgvliet 2018	Banghoek	91

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