



PRESCIENT
CAPE BORDEAUX
RED BLEND
REPORT 2020

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 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,
Editor, Winemag.co.za*

KEY FINDINGS

How magnificent 2017 is proving to be for South African fine wine with eight out of the Top 10 in this year's Cape Bordeaux Red Blend Report from this vintage. This is the sixth time that this report sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient has been compiled and it attracted 61 entries from 51 producers, with 33 or 54% rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

Of the Top 10, Stellenbosch was once again to the fore with seven wines, the other three being Org de Rac Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Reserve 2017 from Swartland, De Grendel Rubaiyat 2016 designated as W.O. Coastal Region (Durbanville and Stellenbosch) and Quest Bordeaux Style 2017 designated as W.O. Western Cape (Breedekloof, Darling and Paarl). The average cellar-door price of the Top 10, meanwhile, is R534 a bottle with Org de Rac the most affordable at R250 a bottle.

Many producers position their Cape Bordeaux Red Blends at the pinnacle of their range and these wines tend to be luxuriously styled with plenty of fruit concentration to go with a general plushness. There are a few wines still showing overt methoxy-pyrazine character (the chemical compound that gives wine herbaceous aromas and flavours) but these were very much in the minority. The market has decided that there is no place for thin, hard wines from under-ripe grapes and it is difficult to argue to the contrary. That said, the panel did sometimes wonder if a fixation with opulence was getting in the way of achieving real finesse and, similarly, if making wines instantly and easily accessible comes at the expense of age-worthiness. Oak, too, in quite a few instances is used as a signifier of costliness and the danger here is that the taste of timber obliterates the fruit.

In more technical terms, the panel noted some wines that seemed to have unfortunate acid additions, wines made from very ripe grapes and then freshened up in the cellar taking on a sweet 'n sour character. Even more concerning were a few wines that looked less than biologically stable – spoilage yeast Brett may not be quite as rampant as it once was but it surely hasn't gone away entirely, either.

The best wines, however, are more than just technically sound. They display both the weight and power to please the modernists but also the complexity and balance to gratify the classicists. All things to all people? The Top 10 in this report come very close.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



De Grendel Rubaiyat 2016

R375

Total production: 24 228 bottles Abv: 14.5%

51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Petit Verdot, 9% Merlot and 1% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 100% new. The nose shows black fruit, dried herbs, earth and tar while the palate is full bodied – dense with punchy acidity and grippy, mouth-coating tannins.



Dornier Donatus 2017

R350

Total production: 6 493 bottles Abv: 14.5%

67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11.5% Malbec, 11.5% Petit Verdot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 4% Merlot. Matured for 18 months in French oak, one-third new. Red and black fruit, dried herbs, some earthiness, incense and vanilla on the nose. The palate possesses huge intensity – concentrated and smooth textured yet not without freshness, the finish gently savoury. Both luscious and powerful.



Ernie Els Signature 2015

R740

Total production: 12 500 750ml bottles and 300 magnums Abv: 14.72%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec and 5% Petit Verdot. Matured for 20 months in 300-litre French oak barrels, 70% new. The nose shows red and black fruit, fresh herbs and attractive oak while the palate is marked by concentrated fruit, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins. Plenty of flavour and built to last.





Kaapzicht Steytler Pentagon 2017

R550

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 14.57%

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, 10% Merlot, 5% Malbec and 5% Petit Verdot. Matured in French oak for 18 months, 80% new. Red and black berries, some rose-like perfume, dried herbs and earth on the nose. The palate is big but balanced with impressive fruit density, fresh acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and dry.



MR de Compostella 2017

R1 500

Total production: 10 600 bottles Abv: 14.5%

43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc, 11% Merlot, 10% Malbec and 6% Petit Verdot. Matured for 24 months in French oak, 30% new. Red and black fruit, fresh herbs and pencil shavings on the nose. The palate, meanwhile, shows pure fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins. Relatively medium bodied and austere, this is as classy as ever.



Org De Rac Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Reserve 2017

R250

Total production: 1 200 750ml bottles, 1 000 magnums and 200 3L bottles Abv: 14.56%

Matured for 12 months in 100% new oak followed by another 12 months again in 100% new oak. 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 44% Merlot. A complex nose with red and black fruit, fresh herbs and attractive oak. Intense but not weighty with lovely fruit expression and freshness, the finish long and savoury.





Quest Bordeaux Style 2017 (Du Toitskloof)

R310

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 14.5%

88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot and 1% Petit Verdot. Matured for 15 months in French oak, 100% new. A complex nose with notes of red and black fruit, fresh herbs, tea leaf, earth and boot polish while the palate is plush and full with plenty of flavour and fine tannins.



Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2017

R400

Total production: 27 300 bottles Abv: 14.8%

73% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 9% Petit Verdot and 3% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 54% new. A wonderfully enticing nose with top notes of flowers and herbs before red and black fruit plus pencil shavings. The palate has great purity and freshness to go with fine tannins – poised and precise.



Warwick Trilogy 2017

R550

Total production: 17 600 bottles Abv: 14.27%

53% Cabernet Franc, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon and 9% Merlot. Matured for 24 months in French oak, 60% new. Aromatics of cassis, violets, fresh herbs and pencil shavings and a little earthiness. Full but well balanced and possessing great structure – pure fruit, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Excellent maturation potential.





Zorgvliet Richelle 2017

R315

Total production: 5 892 750ml bottles and 100 magnums Abv: 14.66%

43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Cabernet Franc, 14% Merlot and 14% Petit Verdot. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 60% new. Aromatics of red and black berries, some leafiness, tilled earth and pencil shavings. Extraordinary fruit purity, bright acidity and fine tannins make for a wonderfully focused, well-structured wine.



BUYING GUIDE CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Org De Rac Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Reserve 2017	Top 10	R250
Quest Bordeaux Style 2017 (Du Toitskloof)	Top 10	R310
Zorgvliet Richelle 2017	Top 10	R315
Dornier Donatus 2017	Top 10	R350
De Grendel Rubaiyat 2016	Top 10	R375
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2017	Top 10	R400
Kaapzicht Steytler Pentagon 2017	Top 10	R550
Warwick Trilogy 2017	Top 10	R550
Ernie Els Signature 2015	Top 10	R740
MR de Compostella 2017	Top 10	R1 500
Vergelegen DNA 2015	92	R285
Franschhoek Cellar The Last Elephant 2017	92	R410
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2018	92	R540
Vondeling Philosophie 2015	92	R855
Laibach The Ladybird 2018	91	R120
Diemersdal Private Collection 2018	91	R165
Stellenrust Timeless 2017	91	R175
DeMorgenzon Maestro Red 2016	91	R230
Laibach Friedrich Laibach 2018	91	R310
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2018	91	R325
Remhoogte Sir Thomas Cullinan 2016	91	R340
Oldenburg Vineyards Rondekop Rhodium 2018	91	R390
Glenelly Lady May 2014	91	R570
Ernie Els Signature 2016	91	R740
Ernie Els Meritage Reserve 2018	90	R150
La Bri Affinity 2016	90	R170
Rustenberg John X Memman 2017	90	R200
Raats Jasper Red Blend 2017	90	R250
Klein Roosboom My Way Barrel Selection 2018	90	R285
Zorgvliet Richelle 2018	90	R315
Eikendal Classique 2018	90	R357
Peter Falke Kanoa 2016	90	R365
Schultz Family Wines Boneyards 2016	90	R550

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Allee Bleue L'Amour Toujours 2016	Banghoek	87
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2018	Simonsberg-Paarl	92
Bellevue The Reserve Collection Tumara 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Blaauwklippen De Blaauwe Klip 2017	Stellenbosch	86
Cavalli Warlord 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Coterie by Wildeberg Cabernet Franc & Malbec 2018	Coastal Region	89
De Grendel Rubaiyat 2016	Coastal Region	Top 10
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2018	Stellenbosch	91
DeMorgenzon Maestro Red 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Diemersdal Private Collection 2018	Durbanville	91
Domier Donatus 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Eikendal Classique 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Ernie Els Meritage Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Ernie Els Signature 2015	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Ernie Els Signature 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Franschhoek Cellar The Last Elephant 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Glen Carlou Grand Classique 2018	Coastal Region	88
Glenelly Lady May 2014	Stellenbosch	91
Goedverwacht Family Wines Great Expectations Triangle 2018	Robertson	84
Holden Manz Big G 2016	Franschhoek	88
Kaapzicht Steytler Pentagon 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Klein Roosboom My Way Barrel Selection 2018	Durbanville Cape Town	90
La Bri Affinity 2016	Franschhoek	90
Laibach Friedrich Laibach 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Laibach The Ladybird 2017	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	89
Laibach The Ladybird 2018	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	91
Landskroon Paul de Villiers Reserve 2018	Paarl	88
Le Bonheur Estate Barrel Selection 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Le Bonheur The Trading Post Red Blend 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Louisvale The Boris 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Meerlust Rubicon 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Mooiplaas Merlot Cabernet Franc 2017	Stellenbosch	88
Mooiplaas Rosalind 2017	Stellenbosch	89
MR de Compostella 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Mulderbosch Faithful Hound 2016	Stellenbosch	86
Muratie Ansela van de Caab 2017	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	88
Nitida Calligraphy 2018	Durbanville Cape Town	89
Oldenburg Vineyards Rondekop Rhodium 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Org De Rac Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Reserve 2017	Swartland	Top 10
Overgaauw Tria Corda 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Peter Falke Kanoa 2016	Stellenbosch	90

Quest Bordeaux Style 2017 (Du Toitskloof)	Western Cape	Top 10
Raats Jasper Red Blend 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Rainbow's End Family Reserve 2017	Stellenbosch	87
Remhoogte Sir Thomas Cullinan 2016	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	91
Ridgeback Journey 2017	Paarl	89
Rustenberg John X Merriman 2017	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	90
Schultz Family Wines Boneyards 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Simonsig Tiara 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenrust Timeless 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Vergelegen DNA 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Vondeling Philosophie 2015	Voor Paardeberg	92
Vriesenhof Kallista 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Warwick Trilogy 2017	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	Top 10
Winshaw Cabernet Franc Blend 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Winshaw Cabernet Sauvignon Blend 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Winshaw Merlot Blend 2017	Stellenbosch	88
Yonder Hill Ankole 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Zorgvliet Richelle 2017	Banghoek	Top 10
Zorgvliet Richelle 2018	Banghoek	90

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