



— PRESCIENT —

W
MERLOT
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

It might be argued that the reason single-variety Merlot is popular with the average punter is precisely the same reason it is sometimes derided by the cognoscenti, namely that it's crucial characteristic is not its flavour but its texture which can be described in one word – smooth. It tends to be noticeably lower in tannins and acidity than Cabernet Sauvignon, and hence provides lots of fruity impact on the palate making for an easy but ultimately shallow drinking experience.

The tasting for the fourth annual Merlot Report convened by Winemag.co.za and sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient, suggests that the issue is a little more complicated than this. On the one hand, there were many wines which seemed to have been made to maximise the variety's fruity charm and priced to be fast moving in the retail environment. Such wines presented a bit of a mixed bag however with some succeeding because of how plump and juicy they are and others that falling down on account of being excessively sweet, soft and simple.

On the other hand, there is a relatively small sub-group of wines that seem very much intended as fine wines and here we see Merlot in all its glory, the resulting wines being intensely flavoured, luscious and velvety – it would seem that the variety on the right site and in the right hands can reach a very high standard but this is the exception rather than the rule.

As for the stats, there were 52 entries from 45 producers with 22 or 42% of these rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. Of the Top 10, five were from Stellenbosch, two from Durbanville, one each from Constantia and Elgin and one designated as W.O. Western Cape, this being the Boschendal 1685 2017 incorporating fruit from both Elgin and Stellenbosch. Average cellar-door price of the Top 10 was R215 a bottle with Le Bonheur The Manor Meander 2018 being the most affordable at R100 a bottle.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Boschendal 1685
2017
R140

Total production: 48 000 bottles Abv: 14%

Grapes from Elgin and Stellenbosch. Fermented in stainless steel tank and matured for 12 months in French oak, 20% new. Red and black berries, some floral perfume and a pleasant herbal note on the nose. The palate, meanwhile, is light and fresh with crunchy tannins.



De Grendel
2017
R160

Total production: 45 996 bottles Abv: 14%

Matured for 13 months in French oak, one-third new. Aromatics of plums and cassis to go with vanilla and a little earthiness while the palate rich and broad with a creamy texture - has a winning plushness about it.



Eagles' Nest
2015
R195

Total production: 27 500 bottles Abv: 14%

92% Merlot and 8% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 18 months in French oak, one third new. A complex nose with top notes of flowers and herbs before red and black berries plus a little earthiness. The palate is medium bodied with good fruit expression and fine tannins. Layered and long.





Glenelly Glass Collection 2018

R125

Total production: 42 257 bottles Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 12 months in French oak, 18% new. Aromatics of red and black berries, some leafiness and a little cocoa. Rich and round on the palate – concentrated fruit with firm but fine tannins, the finish long and very dry.



Le Bonheur The Manor Meander 2018

R100

Total production: 13 150 bottles Abv: 13.35%

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 20% new. Black berries, a hint of herbs and spice on the nose while the palate has lovely texture - good depth of fruit and fine, mouthcoating tannins.



Nitida 2018

R115

Total production: 8 900 bottles Abv: 14.7%

Matured for 13 months in French oak, 20% new. Top notes of floral perfume and fresh herbs before ultra-ripe dark fruit, attractive oak and earth. The palate is big and concentrated with fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins.





Remhoogte Aspect 2016

R190

Total production: 10 000 bottles Abv: 14.6%

Spontaneous fermentation in 7 000-litre foudre before maturation lasting 24 months in French oak, 30% new. A floral top note before cherries and plums plus a hint of vanilla. The palate is clean and juicy with good depth of fruit and fine tannins, the finish gently savoury.



Shannon Vineyards Mount Bullet 2017

R465

Total production: 7 245 bottles Abv: 15%

Incorporates five different clones. Matured for 20 months in French oak, 25% new. Dark fruit, earth, vanilla and spice on the nose while the palate is rich and broad with plenty of sweet, luscious fruit and smooth tannins, the finish long and dry. Plenty of wow factor.



Vergelegen Reserve 2015

R260

Total production: 40 500 bottles Abv: 14.57%

Matured for 16 months in French oak, 50% new. Red and black berries, fresh herbs and earth on the nose while the palate has great fruit weight, an invigorating line of acidity and fine tannins. Elegant and detailed.





Vergelegen The Mistake 2015

R400

Total production: 2 130 bottles Abv: 14.56%

90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 50% new. Aromatics of plums, an attractive herbal note, vanilla and spice while the palate shows luscious fruit and fine tannins, the finish long and savoury.



BUYING GUIDE CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Le Bonheur The Manor Meander 2018	Top 10	R100
Nitida 2018	Top 10	R115
Glenelly Glass Collection 2018	Top 10	R125
Boschendal 1685 2017	Top 10	R140
De Grendel 2017	Top 10	R160
Remhoogte Aspect 2016	Top 10	R190
Eagles' Nest 2015	Top 10	R195
Vergelegen Reserve 2015	Top 10	R260
Vergelegen The Mistake 2015	Top 10	R400
Shannon Vineyards Mount Bullet 2017	Top 10	R465
Glenelly Glass Collection 2017	91	R125
Diemersdal 2018	90	R100
Dombeya 2017 (Haskell Vineyards)	90	R145
Vondeling Barrel Selection 2017	90	R150
Zorgvliet 2018	90	R150
Groote Post 2018	90	R157
Canto 2018	90	R160
De Grendel 2018	90	R160
Ridgeback 2017	90	R165
Emie Els Major Series 2018	90	R180
Fleur Du Cap Unfiltered Series Privee 2017	90	R200
Villiera Monro 2018	90	R215

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Alvi's Drift 2019	Western Cape	86
Bloemendal Waterlily 2017	Durbanville	89
Boschendal 1685 2017	Western Cape	Top 10
Bosman Family Vineyards Generation 8 2019	Wellington	87
Canto 2017	Durbanville	78
Canto 2018	Durbanville	90
Daschbosch 2017	Breedekloof	86
De Grendel 2017	Cape Town	Top 10
De Grendel 2018	Cape Town	90
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2017	Banghoek	88
Diemersdal 2018	Cape Town	90
Diemersdal 2019	Cape Town	88
Dieu Donné 2018	Franschhoek	78
Dombeya 2017 (Haskell Vineyards)	Stellenbosch	90
Dornier 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Lighthouse 2017	Durbanville Cape Town	88
Eagles' Nest 2015	Constantia	Top 10
Eikendal 2018	Stellenbosch	86
Emie Els Major Series 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Emie Els Major Series 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Fleur Du Cap Unfiltered Series Privée 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Glen Carlou The Glen Carlou Collection 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Glenelly Glass Collection 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Glenelly Glass Collection 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
GlenWood 2018	Franschhoek	87
Groote Post 2018	Darling	90
Jordan Black Magic 2017	Stellenbosch	88
La Petite Ferme 2018	Franschhoek	89
Lanzerac 2018	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	89
Le Bonheur The Manor Meander 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Meinert 2016	Devon Valley	87
Mischa 2019	Wellington	87
Mountain Ridge 2018	Breedekloof	89
Muratie Alberta Annemarie 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Nitida 2018	Durbanville Cape Town	Top 10
Oldenburg Vineyards 2017	Stellenbosch	88
Org de Rac Reserve 2017	Swartland	87
Rainbow's End 2017	Banghoek Stellenbosch	89
Rainbow's End 2018	Banghoek Stellenbosch	89
Remhoogte Aspect 2016	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	Top 10
Ridgeback 2017	Paarl	90
Shannon Vineyards Mount Bullet 2017	Elgin	Top 10
Stellenbosch Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenrust 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Tokara 2018	Western Cape	88

Vergelegen Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Vergelegen The Mistake 2015	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Villiera Monro 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Vondeling Barrel Selection 2017	Voor Paardeberg	90
Wild Card Queen of Hearts 2019 (Louis Van Der Riet)	Klein Karoo	87
Yonder Hill Ella 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Zorgvliet 2018	Banghoek	90

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