



— PRESCIENT —

SIGNATURE
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.

ABOUT SIGNATURE RED BLENDS

Why should South Africa be bound by the Bordeaux model when it comes to creating great blended red wine? Perhaps the Rhône is a better reference point given local growing conditions while the so-called “Cape Blend” incorporating Pinotage potentially gives us a unique selling proposition. Then, of course, there are the red blends of yesteryear – Alto Rouge, Chateau Libertas and Rustenberg Dry Red to name but three – which conformed to no particular model but are revered for their complexity and longevity.

Once again, we called for wines which were “distinctive of their originators” and instead of the usual practice of dividing them into various sub-groups according to style (Pinotage-based vs Shiraz-based being the differentiation most usually made), we tasted them as one continuous line-up – the thinking being that the fundamentals of wine appreciation such as complexity and balance should apply when it came to making quality assessments.

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

45 entries were received from 39 producers for this year's Signature Red Blend Report sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient, 27 wines rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. Of the Top 10, three were from Stellenbosch, two from Swartland (both from Org de Rac), one each from Calitzdorp, Paarl, Piekenierskloof plus one designated as W.O. Coastal Region, this being the Nicolas 2017 from Boschendal (mainly Stellenbosch but also Elgin). The average price of the Top 10 is R212,90 with Org de Rac Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2019 the most affordable at R95 a bottle.

The idea behind the Signature Red Blend Report is ultimately to gauge if a wine of different component parts might emerge that is authentically "South African" rather than derivative of something already established elsewhere in the world of wine. It must be said, however, that based on this and previous tastings, any overarching sense of wines possessing some kind of inimitable national identity still seems a way off. No problem with overall quality but the panel got the impression that anything still goes and discerning what combination of varieties works best is therefore difficult.

One definite sub-category of wines is what might be understood as Bordeaux blends enhanced with Shiraz. Of course, in earlier centuries Syrah from the Northern Rhône was sometimes used to strengthen the lighter reds of Bordeaux, the thinking as to why this came about being that the affinity between the two regions was unmatched. Of the Top 10, Rust en Vrede, the two Boschendal wines and the Org de Rac Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2019 are examples of this practice. Joostenberg Bakermat 2017, consisting of 43% Shiraz, 37% Cabernet Sauvignon as well as 20% of the typically potent Mourvèdre might be considered a variation on the theme.

Another sub-category is what are broadly referred to "Rhône-style", wines made with varieties associated with the famous winemaking valley in south-east France. Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah do seem to combine well, whatever the proportions, Guardian Peak SMG 2017, Org de Rac Die Waghuis Red 2018 and Tierhoek Grenache Syrah Mourvèdre 2019 all being examples of this approach in the Top 10.

The Tritonia 2017 from De Krans, also in the Top 10, is altogether something different. The cellar bills this wine as a "Calitzdorp Blend" but they are needless to say famed for their Port-style blends and in coming up with this wine must have taken at least some inspiration from the highly regarded table wines of the Douro that have emerged in the last couple of decades.

Lastly among the Top 10 is the Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2017 which sees Pinotage combined with Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and thus qualifies as a so-called Cape Blend on account of the inclusion of the Pinotage portion – this concept has never really caught on but this offering from Warwick suggests that it might not be completely dead just yet.

In conclusion, then, the Signature Red Blend Report suggest that the experimental mood in the South African wine industry prevails as much as ever – the results may be sometimes be bemusing but they are certainly not boring.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Boschendal Black Angus 2017

R320

Total production: 2 222 bottles Abv: 14.2%

64% Shiraz, 19% Merlot, 10% Malbec and 7% Petit Verdot. Matured for 14 months in 300-litre barrels, 40% new before being returned to foudre for six months. Aromatics of red and black berries, fynbos, earth and spice while the palate shows dense fruit, fresh acidity and firm tannins. Full bodied and super-tasty.



Boschendal Nicolas 2017

R199

Total production: 2 222 bottles Abv: 14.5%

41% Shiraz, 30% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Petit Verdot and 3% Malbec. Matured for 16 months in French oak, 30% new. A leafy top note before dark berries, earth and spice on the nose. Good fruit density, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Luscious and smooth textured, this comes across as most stylish.



De Krans Tritonia Calitzdorp Blend 2017

R195

Total production: 3 396 Abv: 13.71%

68% Touriga Nacional, 28% Tinta Roriz, 2% Tinta Barocca and 2% Tinta Amarella. Matured for 12 months in older oak. An exotic nose with notes of red and black berries, incense, dried herbs and some earthiness while the palate shows good depth of fruit, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins.





Guardian Peak SMG 2017

R160

Total production: 7 192 bottles Abv: 14.5%

64% Syrah from Stellenbosch, 31% Mourvèdre from Breedekloof and 5% Grenache from Piekenierskloof. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 30% new. The nose shows red berries, floral perfume, herbs and white pepper. The palate is medium bodied with pure fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and dry. Elegant and detailed.



Joostenberg Bakermat 2017

R250

Total production: 2 880 bottles Abv: 14.5%

43% Shiraz, 37% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Mourvèdre, the latter two varieties undergoing partial whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 20 months in French oak, 13% new. Red and black berries, lavender, fynbos and spice on the nose while the palate is medium bodied with bright acidity and a salty finish. Elegant and all of a piece.



Org de Rac Die Waghuis Red 2018

R150

Total production: 8 904 bottles Abv: 14.5%

43% Shiraz, 30% Mourvèdre, 26% Grenache and 1% Verdelho. Red berries, floral perfume and white pepper on the nose while the palate is medium-bodied with a good line of acidity and fine tannins, the finish particularly savoury.





Org de Rac Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2019

R95

Total production: 75 000 Abv: 14%

37% Shiraz, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Merlot. A pretty nose with notes of red and black berries, fynbos, pepper and other spice. The palate meanwhile shows lovely poise with a good core of fruit, fresh acidity and fine yet grippy tannins.



Rust en Vrede Estate 2017

R450

Total production: 61 156 bottles Abv: 14.8%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Syrah and 10% Merlot. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 40% new. Beguiling aromatics of red and black berries, some leafiness, violets, earth, vanilla and spice while the palate displays dense fruit, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins – succulent on entry before a finish is long and dry. Great richness without sacrificing balance.



Tierhoek Grenache Syrah Mourvedre 2019

R120

Total production: 15 270 bottles Abv: 13.21%

43% Grenache, 38% Syrah and 18% Mourvèdre. Spontaneously fermented. Matured for eight months in older oak. Attractive aromas of red berries, wildflowers, herbs, pepper and other spice while the palate shows pure fruit, racy acidity and powdery tannins. Intense but not weighty, this gives plenty of pleasure.





Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2017

R190

Total production: 65 000 bottles Abv: 14.47%

66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 22% Pinotage and 12% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 27 months in French oak, 10% new. Red and black berries, some floral perfume, tilled earth and attractive oak spice. Rich and full with plenty of upfront sweet fruit but the finish is long and savoury. Full of flavour.



BUYING GUIDE CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Org de Rac Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2019	Top 10	R95
Tierhoek Grenache Syrah Mourvèdre 2019	Top 10	R120
Org de Rac Die Waghuis Red 2018	Top 10	R150
Guardian Peak SMG 2017	Top 10	R160
Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2017	Top 10	R190
De Krans Tritonia Calitzdorp Blend 2017	Top 10	R195
Boschendal Nicolas 2017	Top 10	R199
Joostenberg Bakermat 2017	Top 10	R250
Boschendal Black Angus 2017	Top 10	R320
Rust en Vrede Estate 2017	Top 10	R450
Alto Woolworths "1693" 2018	91	R109,99
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine 2017	91	R110
Fairview Extraño 2017	91	R110
Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2017	91	R130
Le Riche Richesse 2018	91	R160
Fairview Caldera 2018	91	R170
Emie Els Proprietor's Blend 2016	91	R300
Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2017	91	R550
Leeuwenkuil Reserve Red 2018	90	R125
Eikendal Charisma 2019	90	R126
Underworld Blend 3 2019 (Strange Kompanjie)	90	R130
Alto Rouge 2018	90	R100
Babylonstoren Babel 2018	90	R165
Meerhof Shiraz/Grenache Noir 2018	90	R180
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2017	90	R200
Vondeling Monsonia 2017	90	R245
Simonsig Frans Malan 2016	90	R295

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Alto Rouge 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Alto Woolworths "1693" 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Babylonstoren Babel 2018	Western Cape	90
Boplaas Gamka Reserve 2017	Western Cape	88
Boplaas Ring of Rocks Family Reserve 2017	Western Cape	91
Boschendal Black Angus 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Boschendal Nicolas 2017	Coastal Region	Top 10
Cavalli Roan Horse 2016	Stellenbosch	89
De Krans Tritonia Calitzdorp Blend 2017	Calitzdorp	Top 10
Delheim Iconoclast 2012	Stellenbosch	89
Donkiesbaai Rooiwijn 2018	Piekenierskloof	87
Du Toitskloof Dimension 2017	Western Cape	91
Eikendal Charisma 2019	Western Cape	90
Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Fable Mountain Vineyards Night Sky 2017	Tulbagh	88
Fairview Caldera 2018	Western Cape	91
Fairview Extraño 2017	Coastal Region	91
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2014	Stellenbosch	89
Guardian Peak SMG 2017	Western Cape	Top 10
Joostenberg Bakermat 2017	Paarl	Top 10
Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Lammershoek's Red Mysteries 2017	Swartland	88
Le Riche Richesse 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Leeuwenkuil Reserve Red 2018	Swartland	90
Pieter and the Jackal 2016 (Maree Family Wines)	Stellenbosch	89
Meerhof Shiraz Grenache Noir 2018	Swartland	90
Olifantsberg Silhouette 2016	Breedekloof	88
Org de Rac Die Waghuis Red 2018	Swartland	Top 10
Org de Rac Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2019	Swartland	Top 10
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Joseph's Legacy 2017	Coastal Region	89
Plaisir de Merle Grand Plaisir 2015	Simonsberg Paarl	88
Post House Missing Virgin 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Rust en Vrede Estate 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Simonsig Frans Malan 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Strandveld The Navigator 2017	Elim	89
The Fledge & Co. Red Blend 2017	Western Cape	89
The Giant Periwinkle Baardbek 2018	Western Cape	86
Thelema The Abbey 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Tierhoek Grenache Syrah Mouvedre 2019	Piekenierskloof	Top 10
Underworld Blend 3 2019 (Strange Kompanjie)	Coastal Region	90
Vondeling Monsonia 2017	Voor Paardeberg	90
Vrede en Lust Ella 2018	Western Cape	87
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine 2017	Stellenbosch	91

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