



PRESCIENT

CHARDONNAY
REPORT 2020

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2020



Winemag.co.za is set to produce 14 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 the Top 10 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 an event 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 should Coronavirus regulations permit.

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

What constitutes typical South African Chardonnay? For this year's report sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient, there were 87 entries received from 66 producers – 59 examples or 68% of the line-up rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

Overall quality is therefore remarkably high but based on this tasting, the stylistic spectrum when it comes to local Chardonnay seems to be broadening rather than narrowing.

Chardonnay is of course particularly malleable in the cellar and there seem to be widely differing policies on the part of winemakers when it comes to matters like how much new oak to use when it comes to barrel fermentation and maturation, how much to allow or restrict the second, softening process of malolactic fermentation as well as how much lees stirring is appropriate.

Some producers aim to make a Chardonnay that is lighter in body and higher in acidity while others are gunning for something richer and fuller – both are entirely legitimate in principle. That said, in aiming for austerity, there is potential for wines to become rather too lean and reductive while should the goal be opulence, then the danger is wines that are oak dominated and listless.

Growing conditions are also a crucial determinant of outcome and it is interesting to note that out of the Top 10, five are from Stellenbosch, four are from Elgin and one from Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge. Broadly speaking, it would appear that Stellenbosch facilitates fruit density while cool-climate Elgin brings forth more arresting acidities.

The Chardonnay Report as convened by Winemag.co.za is now in its tenth year and it's been gratifying to see overall quality standards rise slowly but surely over that time – the panel, which has remained the same over the entire period, reflected that just as quality had trended up, judging standards had become stricter as well. "It's no longer sufficient to be merely technically correct," observed James Pietersen of Wine Cellar and panel member, "I'm looking for wines of personality, of intrigue, of place".

Finally, a word on price. There has been much speculation that as Coronavirus continues to impact just about every aspect of modern life, the bottom is going to fall out of the local wine market. Such gloomy predictions are, however, contradicted by this Report where the average cellar-door price of the Top 10 is certainly not cheap at R319 a bottle. That figure is skewed somewhat by Terraced Block Reserve 2018 from Delaire Graff at R785 and Seven Flags 2018 from Paul Cluver at R799.95 but it seems that these two brand owners at least are relatively bullish about the future...

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Almenkerk

2018

R240

Total production: 11 066 bottles and 30 magnums Abv: 13.24%

Spontaneous fermentation and maturation in barrel, 42% new – older barrels emptied after eight to nine months while new are left longer (11 months) for better integration. Some flinty reduction before citrus, green apple, vanilla, oak spice and a little leesy complexity on the nose. The palate shows pure fruit and racy acidity before a finish that is long and savoury. Elegant and complex.



Delaire Graff

Summercourt 2019

R185

Total production: 17 600 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Fermentation begun in tank and finished in older oak barrels. Left in barrel for two months before being transferred to tank for six months of further maturation. Top notes of blossom and herbs before citrus, apple and a hint of vanilla on the nose. The palate is clean-cut with good fruit concentration, bright acidity and a pithy finish. Has a lovely energy about it.



Delaire Graff

Terraced Block Reserve 2018

R785

Total production: 3 300 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Fermented and matured for 10 months in French oak, 40% new. The nose is marked by flinty reduction before pear, white peach, citrus and a touch of oatmeal. The palate has excellent fruit definition, racy acidity and a pithy finish. Tightly wound now, this will benefit from time in bottle.





La Vierge Jezebelle 2019

R150

Total production: 14 390 bottles Abv: 13.9%

Matured for eight months in 500-litre barrels, 20% new. A leesy note precedes lemon, orange and oatmeal on the nose while the palate is rich and round, creamy in texture and the tangy acidity nicely integrated. This is full but balanced, the finish long and savoury.



Meerlust 2019

R265

Total production: 39 000 bottles Abv: 13%

Fermented (half inoculated and the other half spontaneous) and matured for nine months in French oak, 56% new. Complex aromatics with notes of blossom, burnt match, citrus, apple, some yeasty complexity and oak spice. The palate is wonderfully harmonious with great fruit purity, punchy acidity and a savoury finish. Full of flavour and most engaging.



Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2019

R255

Total production: 5 200 bottles Abv: 13.49%

Matured for nine months in French oak, 31% new. A hint of reduction before pear, lime, herbs and sea breeze. The palate has a lovely clarity and energy about it – pure fruit, fresh acidity and a pithy finish. Precise and elegant.





Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2018

R799.95

Total production: 5 640 Abv: 13.15%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for nine months in French oak, 30% new. Lemon, bee's wax, vanilla and oak spice on the nose while the palate is rich and smooth textured – good depth of fruit, nicely integrated acidity and a savoury finish. Full and flavoursome.



Stellenbosch Reserve Moederkerk 2019

R135

Total production: 14 933 bottles Abv: 13.19%

Matured for six months in French oak, 13% new. Lots of flinty reduction to go with lime and lemon on the nose. The palate makes a big impression with dense fruit and driving acidity, the finish long and savoury – for all its intensity, it's also very nicely balanced.



Sutherland 2018

R165

Total production: 27 700 bottles Abv: 13%

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 25% new. A rather pronounced note of flinty reduction before lime and lemon and some yeasty character. The palate shows tremendous fruit concentration to go with vibrant acidity while the finish is long and salty. Most flavourful and assertive.





Tokara Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 2019

R210

Total production: 29 900 bottles Abv: 13.8%

Fermented and matured for nine months in French oak, 36% new. A super-complex nose with notes of burnt matchstick, lemon and orange plus attractive oak. The palate is rich and intensely flavoured but equally possesses a lovely line of acidity while the finish is long and saline. Powerful without sacrificing intricacy.



BUYING GUIDE CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Stellenbosch Reserve Moederkerk 2019	Top 10	R135
La Vierge Jezebelle 2019	Top 10	R150
Sutherland 2018	Top 10	R165
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2019	Top 10	R185
Tokara Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 2019	Top 10	R210
Almenkerk 2018	Top 10	R240
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2019	Top 10	R255
Meerlust 2019	Top 10	R265
Delaire Graff Terraced Block Reserve 2018	Top 10	R785
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2018	Top 10	R799.95
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2019	93	R114
La Motte Franschoek 2019	93	R140
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2019	93	R170
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2019	93	R270
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2019	93	R285
Paul Cluver Estate 2018	93	R285
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2018	93	R345
Bellingham Homestead 2019	92	R99
Zevenwacht 2019	92	R120
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cableway 2018	92	R160
Bartinney 2018	92	R190
Mulderbosch 2019	92	R190
Jordan Barrel Fermented 2019	92	R210
Whalehaven Conservation Coast 2016	92	R399
Paserene 2018	92	R435
Epicurean 2018	92	R500
Oak Valley Beneath the Clouds 2019	91	R130
Vergelegen 2019	91	R140
Môreson Dr Reason Why 2019	91	R150
Delheim Sur Lie 2019	91	R195
Canto Wooded 2018	91	R200
The Fledge & Co. 2019	91	R250
Highlands Road 2018	91	R260
Babylonstoren 2019	91	R295
Quoin Rock 2018	91	R350
Lanzerac Mrs. English 2019	91	R495
Capensis 2017	91	R895
Capensis Fijnbosch 2015	91	R1 400
Môreson Dr Reason Why 2019	91	R150
Durbanville Hills 2019	90	R75
Kruger Family Reserve 2017 (Stellenview Premium Wines)	90	R120
Simonsig 2018	90	R120
Kruger Family Wines Sans Chêne 2019	90	R125
David Finlayson 2019	90	R130

La Bri 2019	90	R140
Thelema 2017	90	R185
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2019	90	R209
Muratie Isabella 2019	90	R220
De Grendel Op die Berg 2020	90	R220
Paul Wallace Reflection 2019	90	R240
Idun Renaissance 2019	90	R255
Capensis Silene 2018	90	R275
Iona Elgin Highlands 2019	90	R290
Haute Cabrière The Haute Collection 2018	90	R290
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2019	90	R325
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2016	90	R345
Vergelegen Reserve 2018	90	R370
Warwick The White Lady 2019	90	R390
Jordan Nine Yards 2018	90	R425

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Almenkerk 2018	Elgin	Top 10
Babylonstoren 2019	Simonsberg-Paarl	91
Bartinney 2018	Banghoek	92
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Bellingham Homestead 2019	Stellenbosch	92
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2016	Elgin	90
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2018	Elgin	93
Canto Wooded 2018	Durbanville	91
Canto Wooded 2019	Durbanville	88
Capensis 2017	Western Cape	91
Capensis Fijnbosch 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Capensis Silene 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Chamonix 2018	Franschhoek	89
David Finlayson 2019	Stellenbosch	90
De Grendel Op die Berg 2020	Ceres Plateau	90
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2019	Banghoek	90
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2019	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Delaire Graff Terraced Block Reserve 2018	Banghoek	Top 10
Delheim Sur Lie 2019	Stellenbosch	91
Dieu Donné 2019	Franschhoek	89
Durbanville Hills 2019	Durbanville Cape Town	90
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cableway 2018	Durbanville Cape Town	92
Epicurean 2018	Western Cape	92
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2019	Stellenbosch	93
GlenWood Vigneron's Selection 2018	Franschhoek	87
Goudini Unwooded 2020	Goudini	87
Haute Cabrière The Haute Collection 2018	Franschhoek	90
Hazendal 2018	Bottelary	88
Highlands Road 2018	Elgin	91
Holden Manz Reserve 2018	Western Cape	88
Idun Renaissance 2019	Elgin	90
Iona Elgin Highlands 2019	Elgin	90
Jordan Barrel Fermented 2019	Stellenbosch	92
Jordan Nine Yards 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection Unoaked 2019	Western Cape	89
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2019	Western Cape	93
Kruger Family Reserve 2017 (Stellenview Premium Wines)	Stellenbosch	90
Kruger Family Wines Klipkop 2019	Piekenierskloof	88
Kruger Family Wines Old Vines 2019	Swartland	89
Kruger Family Wines Sans Chêne 2019	Piekenierskloof	90
Kruger Family Wines Walker Bay 2019	Walker Bay	88
La Bri 2019	Franschhoek	90
La Motte Franschhoek 2019	Franschhoek	93
La Vierge Jezebelle 2019	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	Top 10
Lammershoek's Mysteries Die Ounooi 2018	Swartland	78

Lanzerac 2020	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	89
Lanzerac Mrs. English 2019	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	91
Lelie van Saron 2018	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	89
Longridge 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Meerhof 2020	Swartland	87
Meerlust 2019	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Mont Blois Hoog en Laag 2018	Robertson	85
Mont Blois Kweekkamp 2018	Robertson	88
Môreson Dr Reason Why 2019	Franschhoek	91
Mulderbosch 2019	Stellenbosch	92
Muratie Isabella 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2019	Elgin	93
Oak Valley Beneath the Clouds 2019	Elgin	91
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2019	Elgin	Top 10
Org De Rac Reserve 2018	Swartland	89
Paserene 2018	Elgin	92
Paserene Bright 2019	Western Cape	86
Paul Cluver Estate 2018	Elgin	93
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2018	Elgin	Top 10
Paul Wallace Reflection 2018	Elgin	89
Paul Wallace Reflection 2019	Elgin	90
Peter Falke PF 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Quoin Rock 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Robertson 2020	Robertson	89
Robertson Constitution Road 2019	Roberston	87
Saxenburg Private Collection 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Simonsig 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenbosch Reserve Moederkerk 2019	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Stellenrust Barrel Fermented 2019	Stellenbosch	93
Sutherland 2018	Elgin	Top 10
The Fledge & Co. 2019	Elgin	91
Thelema 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Tokara Reserve Collection Stellenbosch 2019	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Vergelegen 2019	Stellenbosch	91
Vergelegen Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Vigne d' Or 2020	Franschhoek	85
Vriesenhof 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Vriesenhof 2018	Stellenbosch	86
Vriesenhof Unwooded 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Warwick The White Lady 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Whalehaven Conservation Coast 2016	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	92
Zevenwacht 2019	Stellenbosch	92

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