

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2020



Winemag.co.za has produced 14 category reports sponsored by multinational financial service company Prescient over the course of the year. Each report was based on the outcome of a blind tasting of wines entered within the specific category.

A Top 10 was announced with the release of each successive report. Producers of the Top 10 were able to purchase Top 10 stickers while producers of the remaining wines were able to acquire regular rating stickers – consumers are encouraged to look out for these in the retail environment.

The programme culminates with the announcement in early-December of the individual best wine per category plus ratings on the 100-point quality scale for all the Top 10 wines.

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



INTRODUCTION

The focus of the Minority Report (previously the Alternative Varieties Report) is on wines from varieties whose respective total plantings do not exceed 2 000ha. South Africa's nine most widely planted varieties (Chenin Blanc, Colombar, Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc, Shiraz, Chardonnay, Pinotage, Merlot and Ruby Cabernet in that order) all have plantings of over 2 000ha and together makeup 84% of the national vineyard – this is a chance for the more subordinate varieties to shine!



KEY FINDINGS

For this year's report sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient, there were 55 white wine entries and 60 red wine entries received, with 28 (or 51%) of the whites rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale and 27 (or 45%) of the reds.

As in previous years of this tasting, Semillon was the stand-out category among the white wines with eight examples in the Top 10 and a further two rating 90-plus. This variety seems to do well wherever it is planted with wines from Bot River, Elgin, Franschhoek, Stellenbosch, Sondagskloof and Walker Bay all scoring high.

Among the reds, there was a more diverse assortment of varieties in the Top 10 with three examples each of Cabernet Franc and Cinsault plus one each of Grenache, Mourvèdre, Tempranillo and Touriga Nacional.

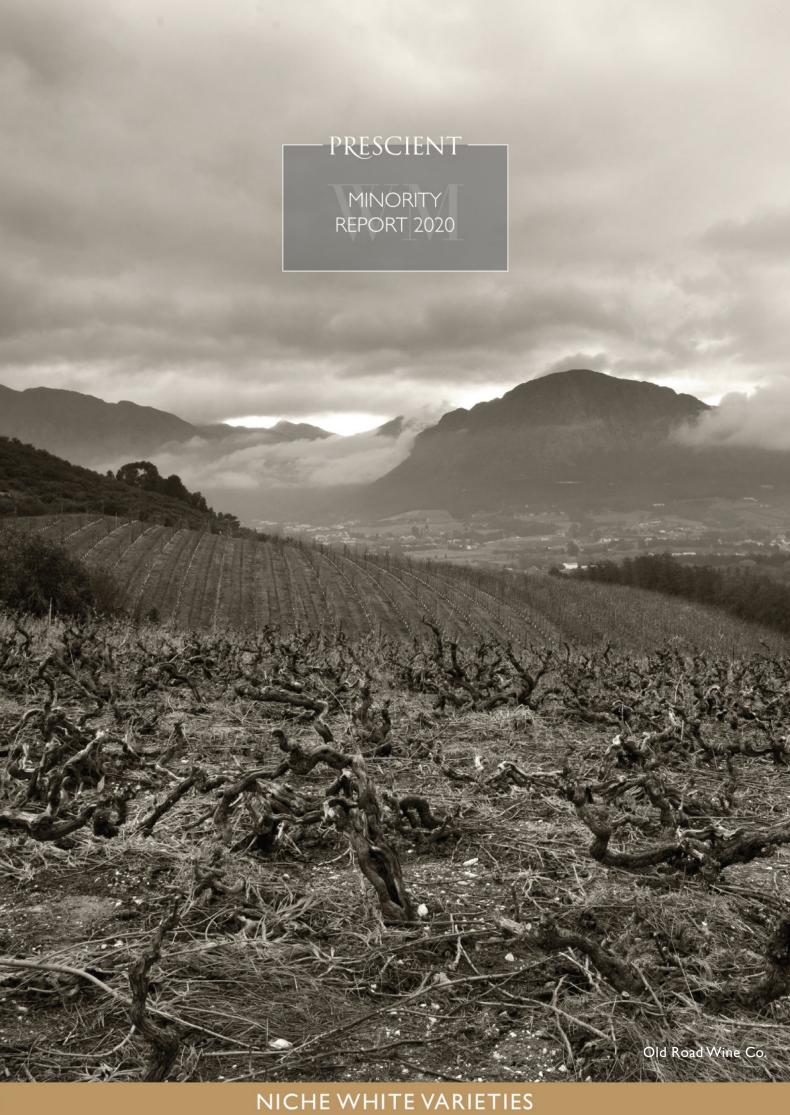
Some general comments about some of the bigger categories. Single-variety Viognier comes to market offering seductive perfume and body and while this may make it appealing to some consumers, this very obviousness makes it difficult to reward critically. The other two Rhône varieties of Grenache Blanc and Roussanne, meanwhile, seem to make more balanced wines but the resulting flavour profiles can be esoteric and the panel's feeling is that all three of the above varieties are better deployed in blends. Verdelho with its typically driving acidity also seems like it has more to offer when combined with other varieties rather than as a stand-alone wine.

Congratulations to Piekenierskloof Wine Company which had two wines from its 1976 Cinsault vineyard in the Top 10, namely the standard-label 2019 and the reserve Heidedal 2018. In most cases, however, both Cinsault and Grenache Noir seem to make light reds that can be left to chill in an ice-bucket but nothing more.

The three examples of Cabernet Franc to place in the Top 10 (two from Raats and one from Stellenrust) were obviously very good but otherwise what was entered seemed to be a bit hit-and-miss and did not replicate the high quality that this category has shown in recent times. As for both Malbec and Petit Verdot, what was entered tended to be very much overdone and it is difficult to know what kind of target market producers have in mind when making these wines. Again, these two varieties surely have a much bigger role to play in Cape Bordeaux Red Blends.

Perhaps the most important take-out from this year's tasting however is that while the quality peaks were not necessarily exceedingly high, neither were the troughs very low. It has been argued that a more diverse national vineyard is highly unlikely given that planting fringe varieties that are not aligned with consumer demand does not make good business sense especially given an industry that is already under extreme duress. However, for all the economic pressures that pertain to wine production, the national vineyard has always been in a state of flux, plantings of various varieties waxing and waning over time. In particular, the impact of climate change cannot be ignored and the industry is compelled to respond to this challenge – experimentation with less conventional varieties that are more suited to a growing environment with increasing maximum temperatures and declining rainfall has to continue and the quality will surely come in due course.





NICHE WHITE VARIETIES TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Arcangeli Vesta Semillon 2017

R160

Total production: 2 900 bottles Abv: 12.32%

Approximately 25% skin fermented. Matured in old oak for six months. Amber in colour, the nose shows red apple, orange, dried apricot and a slight waxy note as well as potpourri, dried herbs and spice. The palate is deep and rich with tangy acidity and a finish that is long and savoury.





Bellingham The Bernard Series Whole Bunch Grenache Blanc With Viognier 2017 R250

Total production: 6 666 bottles Abv: I 4%

Matured for five months in French oak, 20% new. Includes 10% tank-fermented Viognier. The nose has reductive, somewhat leesy top notes before citrus, green apple and peach. The palate is full bodied and thick textured, with a good line of acidity and a very savoury finish — plenty of power on show.





Benguela Cove Catalina Semillon 2018 R650

Total production: I 500 bottles Abv: I3.6%

80% fermented and matured for nine months in 500-litre barrels (of which 50% were new) and 20% in tank. Top notes of hay and herbs before pear, white peach and citrus and spice. The palate is relatively lean with punchy acidity and a salty finish. A particular take on the variety.





Bosman Fides Grenache Blanc 2018 R240

Total production: 10 500 bottles and 20 magnums Abv: 13.15%

Skin macerated. Matured for six months in older Russian oak. Pale orange in colour, the nose shows attractive floral perfume, ginger and other spice before orange and dried apricot plus a slight oiliness. The palate shows pure fruit and punchy acidity with some tannic grip to the finish — rather striking.





Highlands Road Semillon 2018

Total production: 560 bottles Abv: 14.6%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for 19 months in 225-litre barrels, one first- and the other third-fill. An oxidative quality to the nose with notes of cut apple, marmalade, some pleasant nuttiness and bee's wax plus vanilla and oak spice. The palate, meanwhile, is rich and broad with plenty of flavour. Comforting and complex.





Old Road Wine Co. Grand-Mére Semillon 2017 R535

Total production: 2 000 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Grapes from a Franschhoek vineyard planted in 1936. 50% inoculated and 50% undergoing spontaneous fermentation. Matured for 12 months, 80% in mostly older oak and 20% in clay amphorae. A waxy note presents first before hints of citrus and peach as well as spice while the palate is rich and thick textured – this has good depth of fruit and nicely coated acidity before a savoury finish.







Rickety Bridge The Pilgrimage Semillon 2018 R450

Total production: I 200 Abv: I2.31%

Grapes from a Franschhoek vineyard planted in 1905. Spontaneously fermented in foudre and concrete. Matured for 10 months in older oak. A waxy note before citrus, cut apple, peach, dried herbs and spice plus some yeasty complexity. The palate is rich and broad with seemingly quite moderate acidity before a gently savoury finish.





Shannon Vineyards Triangle Block Semillon 2017 R250

Total production: 2 381 bottles Abv: 13.63%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for 11 months in French oak, 30% new. Complex aromatics including citrus, peach and blackcurrant as well as thatch and some nuttiness. The palate is marked by dense fruit and bright acidity — layers of flavour, lovely weight and texture.





Shannon Vineyards Triangle Block Semillon 2018 R250

Total production: 2 600 bottles Abv: 13.7%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for 11 months in French oak, 30% new. Citrus, peach, yellow apple, thatch and a hint of lanolin on the nose. The palate is rich and broad, slightly greasy in texture, the acidity nicely integrated and the finish possessing a saline quality.





Vergelegen Reserve Semillon 2018 R325

Total production: 6 142 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Fermented and matured for eighth months in 225-litre barrels, 35% new. Floral perfume, hay and some attractive herbal character before citrus and peach on the nose. The palate has wonderfully pure fruit with bright acidity, while there is some peppery bite to the finish. Precisely made, this has lovely energy and balance.



NICHE WHITE VARIETIES BUYING GUIDE: CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Arcangeli Vesta Semillon 2017	Top 10	R160
Highlands Road Semillon 2018	Top 10	R220
Bosman Fides Grenache Blanc 2018	Top 10	R240
Shannon Triangle Block Semillon 2017	Top 10	R250
Shannon Triangle Block Semillon 2018	Top 10	R250
Vergelegen Reserve Semillon 2018	Тор 10	R325
Bellingham The Bernard Series Whole Bunch Grenache Blanc 2017	Top 10	R250
Rickety Bridge The Pilgrimage Semillon 2018	Тор 10	R450
Old Road Wine Co. Grand-Mére Semillon 2017	Top 10	R535
Benguela Cove Catalina Semillon 2018	Top 10	R650
Org De Rac Roussanne 2019	91	R80
Underworld Grenache Blanc 2019 (Strange Kompanjie)	91	R85
Painted Wolf Paarl Roussanne 2014	91	R150
Zorgvliet Semillon 2019	91	R150
Brunia Semillon 2018	91	R210
Jailbreak Viognier 2019 (Mountain Ridge)	90	R65
Marras Was Jou Hannepoot 2020	90	R75
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection Grenache Blanc 2020	90	R80
Babylonstoren Viognier 2019	90	R145
Ridgeback Viognier 2019	90	R175
Painted Wolf Roussanne 2018	90	R180
Idiom Viognier 2018	90	R200
Botanica Flower Girl Albariño 2020	90	R200
Lanzerac Keldermeester Versameling Bergpad Pinot Blanc 2018	90	R200
Le Belle Rebelle Mariëtte Pinot Blanc 2019	90	R360
Donkiesbaai Grenache Blanc 2020	90	R275
Ken Forrester Roussanne 2019	90	R275
Stellenbosch Vineyards Limited Release Verdelho 2019	90	R275

NICHE WHITE VARIETIES COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
GRENACHE BLANC		
Bellingham The Bernard Series Whole Bunch Grenache Blanc With Viognier 2017	Paarl	Тор 10
Bosman Fides 2018	Wellington	Top 10
Donkiesbaai 2020	Piekenierskloof	90
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection 2020	Western Cape	90
Underworld 2019 (Strange Kompanjie)	Western Cape	91
ROUSSANNE		
Bellingham The Bernard Series Whole Bunch Limited Release 2020	Coastal Region	89
Ken Forrester Barrel Selection 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Org De Rac 2019	Swartland	91
Painted Wolf Paarl 2014	Paarl	91
Painted Wolf 2018	Paarl	90
SEMILLON		
Arcangeli Vesta 2017	Botrivier	Top 10
Benguela Cove Catalina 2018	Walker Bay	Top 10
Bizoe Morningstar 2019	Darling	89
Brunia 2018	Sondagskloof	91
Domier 2019	Stellenbosch	89
Highlands Road 2018	Elgin	Top 10
Idiom Semillon 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Le Belle Rebelle A Bird in the Hand 2019	Breedekloof	88
Old Road Wine Co. Grand-Mére 2017	Franschhoek	Top 10
Rickety Bridge The Pilgrimage 2018	Franschhoek	Top 10
Rickety Bridge The Pilgrimage 2019	Franschhoek	88
Shannon Triangle Block 2017	Elgin	Top 10
Shannon Triangle Block 2018	Elgin	Top 10
Thor Vintners Age of the Rebel 2019	Franschhoek	87
Vergelegen Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Zorgyliet 2019		91
VERDELHO		<u> </u>
Arcangeli Feiteiras 2017	Botrivier	89
Boplaas Cape Portuguese White Blend 2019 (Verdelho)	Calitzdorp	89
Cavalli The Foal 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Org De Rac 2019	Swartland	89
Stellenbosch Vineyards Limited Release 2019	Stellenbosch	90
VIOGNIER		
Abingdon 2019	Lions River Kwazulu-Natal Midlands	89
Babylonstoren 2019	Simonsberg-Paarl	90
Idiom 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Jailbreak 2019 (Mountain Ridge)	Western Cape	90
Koueberg 2020	Cape Agulhas	88

La Petite Ferme 2020	Franschhoek	89
Painted Wolf Penny 2018	Breedekloof	88
Ridgeback 2019	Paarl	90
Six Hats 2019 (Piekenierskloof Wine Company)	Western Cape	89

OTHER		
Bergsig Gewürztraminer 2020	Breedekloof	88
Bergsig Weisser Riesling 2020	Breedekloof	88
Botanica Flower Girl Albariño 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Daschbosch Avon Clairette Blanche 2019	Breedekloof	89
Delheim Gewürztraminer 2019	Stellenbosch	89
Groote Post Riesling 2019	Darling	88
Koueberg Nouvelle 2020	Cape Agulhas	88
Lammershoek's Mysteries Die Harde Blaar Harslevelu 2017	Swartland	89
Lanzerac Keldermeester Versameling Bergpad Pinot Blanc 2018	Stellenbosch	90
Le Belle Rebelle Mariëtte Pinot Blanc 2019	Breedekloof	90
Marras Was Jou Hannepoot 2020	Piekenierskloof	90
Stellenbosch Vineyards Limited Release Therona 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Usana Luck of the Gambler Pinot Gris 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Usana The Queen's Horses Pinot Gris 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Usana The Runaway Pinot Gris 2019	Stellenbosch	89





NICHE RED VARIETIES TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Beaumont Mourvèdre 2017 R315

Total production: 2 220 bottles and 25 magnums Abv: 13.89%

30% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 24 months in French oak, I 2.5% new. Red and black berries, dried herbs, spice and earth on the nose. The palate shows pure fruit, racy acidity and nicely grippy, chewy tannins. Poised and intricate.





De Krans Touriga Nacional 2018

Total production: 13 000 bottles Abv: 14%

Matured for 12 months in older oak. A floral top note before black and blue berries, dried herbs, spice and earth. The palate is full but balanced with plenty of sweet, dense fruit offset by fresh acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and savoury.





Dornier Tempranillo Reserve 2016 R225

Total production: I 316 bottles Abv: I4.5%

Matured for 44 months in barrel - 12 months in new and second-fill French oak, 12 months in new and second-fill American and then 20 months in second-fill French. Black berries, a whisky-like malty quality and spice on the nose. The palate is big and bold - sweet on entry, the finish however is very dry.





Old Road Wine Co. Pardonnez Moi Cinsault 2019

Total production: 20 000 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Tank fermented/no oak maturation. A subtle nose with hints of red cherry, rose and dried herbs while the palate is clean and juicy with bright acidity and fine tannins. Has a pleasing modesty about it.





Piekenierskloof Cinsault 2019

Total production: 3 000 bottles Abv: 14.79%

From a vineyard planted in 1976. Matured for 12 months, 50% in older 500-litre barrels and 50% in foudre. Aromatics of candyfloss, cherries, plums, fynbos and spice. The palate is juicy and deep with lively acidity and fine tannins, the finish nicely savoury.





Piekenierskloof Heidedal Old Vine Cinsault 2018 R450

Total production: 400 bottles Abv: 13.89%

A barrel selection from the standard-label production. An alluring nose of red and black fruit, flowers and fynbos plus a little earthiness while the palate is rich and round with a good core of fruit, bright acidity and fine tannins.





Raats Dolomite Cabernet Franc 2018 R175

Total production: 15 067 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Matured for 14 months in older French oak. Subtle aromatics of dark berries, violets, fresh herbs, pencil shavings and some earthiness. Good fruit purity, bright acidity and just the right amount of tannic grip. Balanced and savoury.





Raats Family Cabernet Franc 2017

Total production: 9 150 bottles Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 25% new. A pretty nose with notes of red and black berries, some floral perfume, a subtle herbal note and some oak spice. The palate is wonderfully poised with dense fruit counterbalanced by fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins. Just so elegant.





Stellenrust Barrel Selection Cabernet Franc 2017 R170

Total production: I 860 bottles Abv: I4.2%

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 27% new. Charming aromatics of red berries, flowers and fresh herbs while the palate is particularly elegant, being light-bodied and fresh, the finish gently savoury.







Welgegund Grenache Noir 2019 R375

Total production: 2 620 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Matured for 14 months, 50% in second-fill 500-litre barrels and 50% unoaked. Red and black berries, a touch of mint and other herbs plus some earthiness. The palate is medium bodied with fresh acidity and chalky tannins, the finish particularly dry but not astringent.



NICHE RED VARIETIES BUYING GUIDE: CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
De Krans Touriga Nacional 2018	Top 10	RII5
Old Road Wine Co. Pardonnez Moi Cinsault 2019	Top 10	RII5
Piekenierskloof Cinsault 2019	Top 10	RI35
Stellenrust Barrel Selection Cabernet Franc 2017	Top 10	R170
Raats Dolomite Cabernet Franc 2018	Top 10	R175
Dornier Tempranillo Reserve 2016	Top 10	R225
Beaumont Mourvedre 2017	Top 10	R315
Welgegund Grenache Noir 2019	Top 10	R373.75
Piekenierskloof Heidedal Old Vine Cinsault 2018	Top 10	R450
Raats Family Cabernet Franc 2017	Top 10	R600
Stellenbosch Reserve Stadsaal Cinsault 2019	91	R160
Tierhoek Grenache 2019	91	R170
D.A. Hanekom Familie Wyn Langrug Malbec 2018	91	R185
Ridgeback Cabernet Franc 2017	91	R200
Mellasat VineyardsTempranillo 2017	91	R250
Boplaas Touriga Nacional 2019	90	R84
Piekenierskloof Grenache Noir 2019	90	R135
Caravel 2nd Chamber Carignan 2019	90	R140
Stellenrust Barrel Selection Cabernet Franc 2016	90	R170
Boplaas Family Reserve Touriga Nacional 2017	90	R180
Whalehaven Cabernet Franc 2015	90	R198
Idun Confession Grenache 2019	90	R240
Donkiesbaai Grenache Noir 2019	90	R275
Bosman Nero 2017	90	R300
Mischa Estate Reserve Petite Sirah 2018	90	R350
Benguela Cove Vinography Petit Verdot 2017	90	R600
Stellenbosch Vineyards The Flagship Petit Verdot 2015	90	R650

NICHE RED VARIETIES COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
CABERNET FRANC	C	
Avontuur Legal Eagle Reserve Cabernet Franc 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Botanica Big Flower Cabernet Franc 2017	Stellenbosch	86
Mischa Limited Edition Cabernet Franc 2019	Groenberg, Wellington	89
Raats Dolomite Cabernet Franc 2018	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Raats Family Cabernet Franc 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Ridgeback Cabernet Franc 2017	Paarl	91
Stellenrust Barrel Selection Cabernet Franc 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenrust Barrel Selection Cabernet Franc 2017	Stellenbosch	Top 10
Thor Vintners The Mule Run Cabernet Franc 2018	Franschhoek	89
Whalehaven Cabernet Franc 2015	Coastal Region	90
Zorgvliet Cabernet Franc 2018	Banghoek	89
CINSAULT	<u>'</u>	
Bosman Twyfeling Cinsault 2018	Wellington	89
Eenzaamheid Cinsaut 2019	Agter-Paarl	89
Old Road Wine Co. Pardonnez Moi Cinsault 2019	Western Cape	Top 10
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection Cinsault 2019	Coastal Region	88
Piekenierskloof Cinsault 2019	Piekenierskloof	Top 10
Piekenierskloof Heidedal Old Vine Cinsault 2018	Piekenierskloof	Top 10
Stellenbosch Reserve Stadsaal Cinsault 2019	Stellenbosch	91
Stellenbosch Vineyards Limited Release Cinsault 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenrust Stellenbosch Manor Cinsault 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Welgegund Old Vine Cinsault 2019	Wellington	89
GRENACHE		
Baboon Rock Grenache 2019 (La Petite Ferme)	Franschhoek	87
Baboon Rock Grenache Rosé 2020 (La Petite Ferme)	Franschhoek	89
Bosman Nature & Sun Grenache Noir 2020	Wellington	88
Donkiesbaai Grenache Noir 2019	Piekenierskloof	90
Idun Confession Grenache 2019	Bot River	90
Painted Wolf Lycaon Grenache 2015	Swartland	83
Piekenierskloof Carel van Zyl Grenache 2018	Piekenierskloof	87
Piekenierskloof Grenache Noir 2019	Piekenierskloof	90
Tierhoek Grenache 2019	Piekenierskloof	91
Welgegund Grenache Noir 2019	Wellington	Top 10
MALBEC		
Benguela Cove Estate Malbec 2018	Walker Bay	89
Bizoe Idioglossia Malbec 2018	Western Cape	86
D.A. Hanekom Familie Wyn Langrug Malbec 2018	Durbanville	91
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection Malbec 2019	Paarl	88
PETIT VERDOT	,	
Benguela Cove Vinography Petit Verdot 2017	Walker Bay	90
Dornier Petit Verdot 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenbosch Vineyards The Flagship Petit Verdot 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Zorgyliet Petit Verdot 2017	Banghoek	88

OTHER		
Allesverloren Tinta Barocca 2017	Swartland	89
Allesverloren Touriga Nacional 2016	Swartland	89
Arcangeli Romulus Nebbiolo 2017	Western Cape	89
Beaumont Mourvèdre 2017	Bot River	Top 10
Boplaas Family Reserve Touriga Nacional 2017	Calitzdorp	90
Boplaas Touriga Nacional 2019	Calitzdorp	90
Bosman Nero 2017	Wellington	90
Caravel 2nd Chamber Carignan 2019	Breedekloof	90
De Krans Touriga Nacional 2018	Klein Karoo	Top 10
Domier Moordenaarskloof Tinta Barocca 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Domier Tempranillo Reserve 2016	Stellennbosch	Top 10
Idiom 900 Series Barbera 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom 900 Series Nebbiolo 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom Sangiovese 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Idiom Zinfandel 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Lowerland Tolbos Tannat 2019	Prieska	89
Mellasat Vineyards Tempranillo 2017	Paarl	91
Mischa Estate Reserve Petite Sirah 2018	Groenberg, Wellington	90
Painted Wolf Mourvèdre 2019	Swartland	89
Piekenierskloof Tannat 2019	Piekenierskloof	89
Wandering Beeste Petite Sirah 2019 (Strange Kompanjie)	Coastal Region	89



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