

Prescient

SWEET WINE &  
FORTIFIEDS  
REPORT 2021

WINEMAG.CO.ZA



Boplaas Family Vineyards

# ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2021



Winemag.co.za is set to produce 14 category reports over the course of the year. Each report will be based on the outcome of a blind tasting of wines entered within a specific category.

A report includes key findings, tasting notes for the top wines, buyer's guide and scores on the 100-point quality scale for all wines entered. Upon release, producers can purchase both Top 10 and regular rating stickers – consumers are encouraged to look out for these in the retail environment.

The year culminates in a gala event when the individual best wine in each category will be celebrated. These top-performing 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 James Pietersen and Jolette Steyn of Wine Cellar, Cape Town merchants and cellarers of fine wine. We tasted blind, labels out of sight. Ratings were done according to the 100-point system, final scores awarded on the basis of discussion that involved retasting where necessary rather than relying solely on arithmetic averaging.

*Christian Eedes,  
Editor, Winemag.co.za*

# ABOUT SWEET WINES & FORTIFIEDS

Though Natural Sweet, Noble Late Harvest and Straw Wines are all styles of sweet wines, their respective methods of production differ significantly.

Natural Sweet is the vaguest category, with the only requirement for wines to be classified as such being that they possess a minimum residual sugar level of 30g/l. This makes the category something of a catch-all, allowing for easy-drinking wines of no great complexity to wines of real profundity.

What gives Noble Late Harvest wines their hallmark of complexity is “noble rot” – the fungal growth *Botrytis cinerea*, which concentrates acid and sugar in grapes while also increasing the viscosity (due to the production of glycerol) and altering the aromas and flavours of the finished wine.

Finally, there is Straw Wine, which should be made from naturally desiccated grapes, either dried on mats or allowed to shrivel on the vine.

Another class of wine altogether are the sweet fortifieds. Muscat de Frontignan is the name by which Muscat à Petit Grains, the finest of many Muscat varieties, is known in South Africa. It is a white grape variety but a red mutation also occurs. The epithet of Muscadel applies to fortified wines – grape juice that has been fortified with grape spirit.

Hanepoot (or Muscat d’Alexandrie) is another principal Muscat variety and hence included in this tasting. Jerepigo is the generic name for “wines” that have been made by adding alcohol to juice, regardless of variety and were not included.

The Port-style wines are made according to the template of the famous wines from the Douro region of Portugal. Any varieties are permitted but those associated with the Douro typically make for the successful outcomes. The production process essentially involves the addition of flavourless, grape-distilled spirit to the fermenting must – this arrests further fermentation causing unfermented sugars to remain, giving Port a natural sweetness.

# KEY FINDINGS

Entries for this year's Sweet Wine & Fortifieds Report convened by Winemag.co.za and sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient were as follows: 1) Natural Sweet – two; 2) Noble Late Harvest – 15; 3) Straw – seven; 4) Hanepoot – four; 5) Muscadel – six; and 6) Port-style – nine. There was thus a total of 42 wines under review, six more than in 2020, but a dip in overall quality with 55% of the line-up rating 90 or higher on the 100-point quality scale compared to 75% last year.

Best Noble Late Harvest was the Boschendal Vin D'Or 2018 featuring the unusual but delicious combination of 50% Riesling and 50% Viognier. In general, it appeared to the panel that producers were struggling to manage how *Botrytis cinerea* manifested itself – some wines showing too little of the fungal growth character and hence very light and simple and others appearing unduly rich and unctuous.

The straw wines showed very well on the whole and this seems to be a category that producers are growing ever more proficient at. Local climate conditions may not generally favour the formation of *Botrytis cinerea* but the more predictable and controlled process of drying grapes on straw mats seems to have increasingly pleasing results.

The Hanepoot and Muscadels were generally sound enough although the De Krans Muscat Blanc 2020 made from grapes taken off a 1976 vineyard is a true beauty, destined to age with benefit for many years to come.

The term “Port” has, of course, been precluded from appearing on any bottling destined for the local market from January 2012 as part of trade agreement between the South African government and the European Community but while a catchy generic name for this sub-category remains elusive, the inherent quality is extremely high indeed. Best overall was the Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve Port 2009 – this was the highest scoring wine in the 10-Year-Old Wine Report of 2019 with a rating of 95 and it only seems to be getting better, the panel settling on 96 this time around.



## TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



**Boplaas**  
**Cape Vintage Reserve Port 2009**  
**R750**

**Total production: 3 600 bottles Abv: 17.66%**

*70% Touriga Nacional, 20% Touriga Franca, 5% Tinta Barocca and 5% Souzau. Matured for 18 months in Portuguese “pipes”. Complex aromatics of black and blue berries, incense, dried herbs and spice. The palate is powerful yet wonderfully harmonious – super-dense and hugely tannic, the finish extremely long and dry. Still very little evolution in evidence.*



**Boplaas**  
**Cape Vintage Reserve 2015**  
**R550**

**Total production: 2 900 bottles Abv: 18.44%**

*60% Touriga Nacional, 20% Touriga Franca, 8% Tinta Barocca and 2% Souzao. Matured for 12 months in Portuguese “pipes”. Red and black berries, dried herbs and chocolate on the nose. The palate is intensely flavoured and well balanced – concentrated fruit and fresh acidity before a gently savoury finish. Shows remarkable finesse.*



**Delaire Graff**  
**Cape Vintage 2018**  
**R460**

**Total production: 1 700 bottles Abv: 20%**

*56% Touriga Nacional and 44% Tinta Barocca. Matured for 12 months in old French oak barrels. Black and blue berries, violets and an attractive herbaceous edge on the nose. The palate is massive – great depth of fruit but also no shortage of freshness, the tannins suitably firm. Immensely age-worthy.*





## De Krans Muscat Blanc 2020

R105

Total production: 2 142 bottles Abv: 15.22%

100% Muscat de Frontignan, grapes from a 1976 vineyard. Potpourri and rooibos tea on the nose before a palate showing great purity and clarity – weighty but not too much so, lovely creamy texture but also fresh acidity, the finish long and dry. Totally seductive.



## Allesverloren Fine Old Vintage 2014

R160

Total production: 78 792 bottles Abv: 19.27%

40% Tinta Barocca, 20% Souzao, 20% Touriga Nacional, 5% Pontac, 5% Tinta Amerella, 5% Tinta Francisca and 5% Touriga Francisca. Red and black berries, cola and spice on the nose while the palate shows good flavour intensity with a nice warmth to the finish. Sweet on entry but ends gently savoury.



## Boschendal Vin D'Or 2018

R410 per 375ml

Total production: 3 646 bottles Abv: 12.16%

50% Riesling and 50% Viognier. Orange, peach, a touch of mushroom plus some delicate spice on the nose. Great fruit density and bright acidity before a finish that is long and dry. Subtle and elegant.





## Meerhof Mooistrooi 2020

R300 per 500ml

Total production: 688 bottles Abv: 13.22%

100% Muscat D’Alexandrie. Dried on straw-line racks and matured for five months in new oak. Enticing aromatics of citrus, peach, floral perfume, hay and earth. The palate has good depth and texture matched by bright acidity, while there is some spice to the finish.



## Simonsig Cape Vintage Reserve 2015

R185

Total production: 5 866 bottles Abv: 19.2%

100% Shiraz. Matured for 32 months in older oak. Red and black berries, dried flowers, pine and cola on the nose. The palate is well balanced and nuanced, the finish gently savoury. Broad and already quite mellow.



## Villa Esposto Muscat D’Alexandrie 2018

R120 per 375ml bottle

Total production: 1 300 bottles Abv: 13.27%

100% Muscat D’Alexandrie. Grapes from a 1969 vineyard farmed by Basie van Lill on Skurfberg. Bunches dried on straw mats for two weeks until they reach a Balling of 40° or higher. Top notes of potpourri and Earl Grey tea before orange, apricot and spice. The palate is well balanced with good fruit concentration and punchy acidity before a savoury finish.







## Villa Esposto Muscat D'Alexandrie 2019

R120 per 375ml bottle

**Total production: 2 533 bottles Abv: 12.89%**

*100% Muscat D'Alexandrie. Grapes from a 1969 vineyard farmed by Basie van Lill on Skurfberg. Bunches dried on straw mats for two weeks until they reach a Balling of 40° or higher. Lovely aromatics of citrus, flowers, herbs and spice. The palate is rich and thick textured with concentrated fruit matched by vibrant acidity before a savoury finish. Layers and layers of flavour.*



# COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
<b>NATURAL SWEET</b>		
Groot Constantia Grand Constance 2017	Constantia	<b>89</b>
Laibach Natural Sweet 2018	Stellenbosch	<b>86</b>
<b>NOBLE LATE HARVEST</b>		
Benguela Cove Sauvignon Blanc 2020		<b>88</b>
Bizoe Tiny 2017	Western Cape	<b>91</b>
<b>Boschendal Vin D'Or 2018</b>	<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>92</b>
De Grendel Sauvignon Blanc 2019	Cape Town	<b>88</b>
Delaire Graff Sunburst 2015	Western Cape	<b>87</b>
Diemersdal Sauvignon Blanc 2020	Durbanville	<b>86</b>
Durbanville Hills Cape Honey Bee 2018	Durbanville Cape Town	<b>90</b>
Joostenberg Chenin Blanc 2019	Paarl	<b>90</b>
Lothian Vineyards 2018	Elgin	<b>85</b>
Nederburg 2019	Western Cape	<b>89</b>
Nederburg 2020	Western Cape	<b>87</b>
Neil Ellis Semillon Elgin 2016	Elgin	<b>88</b>
Paul Cluver Riesling 2020	Elgin	<b>91</b>
Paul Wallace The Nix 2017	Elgin	<b>90</b>
Tokara Sauvignon Blanc 2019	Elgin	<b>89</b>
<b>STRAW</b>		
Donkiesbaai Hooiwijn 2020	Piekenierskloof	<b>85</b>
<b>Meerhof Mooistrooi 2020</b>	<b>Swartland</b>	<b>92</b>
Meinert Semillon 2015	Devon Valley	<b>90</b>
Quoin Rock Vine Dried 2019	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	<b>91</b>
Tierhoek NV	Piekenierskloof	<b>88</b>
<b>Villa Esposto Muscat D'Alexandrie 2018</b>	<b>Olifants River</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Villa Esposto Muscat D'Alexandrie 2019</b>	<b>Olifants River</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>HANEPOOT</b>		
Boplaas Hanepoot 2019	Calitzdorp	<b>89</b>
Daschbosch Gevonden Hanepoot 2016	Breedekloof	<b>90</b>
Du Toitskloof hanepoot Jerepigo 2016	Western Cape	<b>88</b>
Peter Falke Signature Leilani Muscat d' Alexandrie NV	Stellenbosch	<b>90</b>
<b>MUSCADEL</b>		
Allesverloren Red Muscadel 2020	Swartland	<b>89</b>
Boplaas Muscadel 2019	Calitzdorp	<b>91</b>
Conradie Family Vineyards Muskadel NV	Nuy	<b>89</b>
Du Toitskloof Red Muscadel 2019	Western Cape	<b>90</b>
<b>De Krans Muscat Blanc 2020</b>	<b>Klein Karoo</b>	<b>93</b>
Olivedale Mystery of Nature Rouge Muscat 2017	Swellendam	<b>85</b>
<b>PORT-STYLE</b>		
<b>Allesverloren Fine Old Vintage 2014</b>	<b>Swartland</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve Port 2009</b>	<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2015</b>	<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>94</b>

Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2019	Calitzdorp	<b>87</b>
De Krans Cape Vintage Reserve 2017	Calitzdorp	<b>91</b>
<b>Delaire Graff Cape Vintage 2018</b>	<b>Stellenbosch</b>	<b>94</b>
Du Toitskloof Cape Ruby 2013	Western Cape	<b>91</b>
Landskroon Cape Vintage 2019	Paarl	<b>87</b>
<b>Simonsig Cape Vintage Reserve 2015</b>	<b>Stellenbosch</b>	<b>92</b>

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