



Prescient

CABERNET SAUVIGNON
REPORT 2021

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

Rust en Vrede.

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2021



Winemag.co.za is set to produce 14 category reports over the course of the year with multinational financial services company Prescient as sponsor. 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 Roland Peens and James Pietersen 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*

KEY FINDINGS

For the 10th annual Cabernet Sauvignon Report currently sponsored by Prescient, 86 entries were received from 71 producers with 38 (44%) rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

It was an extraordinary showing from Stellenbosch with nine of the Top 10 from this district, the only exception being Paserene Midnight 2019, consisting of 50% Elgin and 50% Tulbagh fruit. Cabernet Sauvignon is South Africa's third most planted variety making up 9 920ha (10.8%) of the area currently under vine and of that, a quarter is planted in Stellenbosch.

Regarding vintage, five of the Top 10 were from 2018, two each from 2017 and 2019 and one from 2015, that being the highly anticipated Reserve from Vergelegen. The 2018 vintage now features prominently on the market and while it doesn't necessarily have the profundity of 2017, the best examples are generally well resolved, tannins not too hard or astringent – set to offer good drinking but at an earlier stage than either the aforementioned 2017 or the equally celebrated 2015.

Looking at the category as a whole, any overt “green” character (due to the group of chemical compounds known as methoxypyrazines) seems to be largely a thing of the past – leafroll virus used to be a major cause of compromised ripeness but producers are apparently finding ways to work around it, if not completely eradicate it. It must be said that some wines still display a “leafiness” but this usually manifests itself in addition to plenty of ripe fruit character and most wine enthusiasts will perceive it as positive.

Tannin management also continues to become more and more sophisticated with few examples looking over-extracted. That said, there appear to be two separate approaches with some producers set on making lush, opulent wines where the tannins are as soft and smooth as possible while others are prepared to fashion something tauter and more austere. The one is not necessarily better than the other, but consumers should take a view on what resulting style of wine they prefer.

As has been mentioned in previous reports, there is a curious sub-group of wines that tend to show more red fruit character while appearing rather light in body – these wines are often perfectly well made and not unappealing but frankly lack the density and structure that defines great Cabernet Sauvignon.

The average price of the 38 wines to rate 90-plus is R309 a bottle and of the Top 10 is R340. Offering the best quality relative to price is Neethlingshof 2017 with a rating of 92 and selling for R120 a bottle.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Brampton Roxton Black 2017

R170

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 14%

From Heldeberg vineyards. Matured for some 16 months in French oak, 30% new. Cassis and some leafiness on the nose while the palate is deep and sumptuous – concentrated fruit, bright acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and dry.



Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2019

R220

Total production: 40 828 bottles Abv: 14%

86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Petit Verdot and 2% Malbec. Matured for 18 months in French oak, 25% new. Cassis, a touch of leafiness, pencil shavings and some flinty reduction on the nose. The palate is powerful yet balanced – excellent depth of fruit, bright acidity and pleasantly firm tannins, the finish long and dry.



Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2018

R980

Total production: 2 644 bottles Abv: 14.78%

From a block planted in 2000 to two clones, namely 46C and CS163. Matured for 22 months in 300-litre French oak barrels, 50% new. Red and black berries, violets, some leafiness and pencil shavings on the nose. The palate has wonderful intensity and structure – great purity of fruit, lovely freshness and firm but fine tannins, the finish long and dry. A wine with plenty of energy and detail for all its depth.





Warwick The Blue Lady 2017

R400

Total production: 10 066 bottles Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 27 months in French oak, 25% new. Cassis, a hint of mint, tilled earth and pencil shavings on the nose while the palate is plush and opulent - dense fruit, bright acidity and nicely firm tannins.



Kruger Family Reserve 2018 (Stellenview Premium Wines)

R205.60

Total production: 18 500 bottles Abv: 14.63%

Matured for 16 months in 225-litre French oak barrels, 30% new. Red and black berries, tea leaf, pencil shavings and earth on the nose while the palate is full bodied and smooth textured in the best sense. Impressive structure, layers of flavour and a long finish.



Paserene Midnight 2019

R205

Total production: 5 089 bottles Abv: 14.08%

50% Elgin and 50% Tulbagh grapes. Matured for 22 months in French oak, 50% new. Blue and black fruit, dried herbs, earth, vanilla and oak spice on the nose. The palate is full but balanced – good fruit density, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins, the finish long and savoury.





Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2018

R290

Total production: 59 965 bottles Abv: 14%

85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petit Verdot, 2% Malbec, 2% Petite Sirah and 1% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 20 months in 300-litre French oak barrels, 30% new. Cassis, pencil shavings and earth on the nose while the palate shows a dense core of fruit, bright acidity and firm tannins – great structure and balance.



Stellenbosch 1679 2018 (Koelenhof)

R375

Total production: 2 716 bottles and 86 magnums Abv: 14.19%

Matured for 24 months in French oak, 100% new. Floral fragrance before red and black berries plus vanilla and some flinty reduction on the nose while the palate is medium bodied with fresh acidity and fine tannins. Intricate and long.



Vergelegen Reserve 2015

R390

Total production: 24 643 bottles Abv: 14.73%

86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Merlot and 1% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 16 months in French oak, 40% new. Complex aromatics with top notes of violets and some leafiness before red and black berries, pencil shavings, earth and spice. The palate shows pure fruit, vibrant acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and savoury. Full bodied yet elegant, this has both intensity and intricacy of flavour.





Zorgvliet 2018

R160

Total production: 9 713 bottles Abv: 14.19%

Matured for 18 months in French oak, 33% new. Dark berries, some attractive herbal character, pencil shavings and earth on the nose while the palate is sleek and powerful – dense fruit and smooth tannins play off against vibrant acidity.



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Brampton Roxton Black 2017	94	R170
Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2019	94	R220
Warwick The Blue Lady 2017	94	R400
Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2018	94	R980
Zorgvliet 2018	93 (Top 10)	R160
Paserene Midnight 2019	93 (Top 10)	R205
Kruger Family Reserve 2018 (Stellenview Premium Wines)	93 (Top 10)	R205.60
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2018	93 (Top 10)	R290
Stellenbosch 1679 2018 (Koelenhof)	93 (Top 10)	R375
Vergelegen Reserve 2015	93 (Top 10)	R390
Benguela Cove Estate 2018	93	R290
Neethlingshof 2017	92	R120
Jordan The Long Fuse 2018	92	R210
Stellenzicht Tristone 2018	92	R225
Alto 2017	92	R275
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2017	92	R425
Peter Falke Kailani 2017	92	R750
Le Riche Reserve 2018	92	R780
Jakkalsvlei Barrel Selected 2019	91	R160
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2018	91	R162
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2019	91	R162
Boschendal Stellenbosch 2017	91	R170
Sutherland 2017	91	R170
Lanzerac 2018	91	R190
Ernie Els Majors Series 2018	91	R225
Stellenview 2018	91	R238.95
Oldenburg 2019	91	R270
Schultz Family Wines Dungeons 2018	91	R300
Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch 2018	91	R500
Delaire Graff Reserve 2018	91	R850
Kaapzicht 2018	91	R250
Spier Seaward 2019	90	R120
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Castle of Good Hope 2018	90	R140
Ridgeback 2017	90	R180
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2019	90	R220
Rust en Vrede Estate Vineyards 2019	90	R295
Ernie Els Proprietor's 2017	90	R300
Waterford 2017	90	R356

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Allesverloren 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Alto 2017	Swartland	92
Anthonij Rupert 2016	Coastal Region	88
Babylonstoren 2019	Paarl	88
Bartinney 2016	Banghoek Stellenbosch	89
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Benguela Cove Estate 2018	Walker Bay	93
Boschendal Stellenbosch 2017	Stellenbosch	91
Brampton Roxton Black 2017	Stellenbosch	94
Cape Collective STaunCH Stellenbosch 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Cavalli Colt 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Conradie Family Vineyards Barrel Selection Reserve 2018	Nuy	86
Croydon Covenant 2018	Stellenbosch	88
David Finlayson 2019	Stellenbosch	88
David Finlayson GS 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Delaire Graff Reserve 2018	Banghoek	91
Delheim 2018	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	88
De Wet 2018	Worcester	88
Diemersdal The Journal 2019	Durbanville	87
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Castle of Good Hope 2018	Durbanville Cape Town	90
Du Toitskloof 2017	Western Cape	88
Ernie Els Big Easy 2018	Western Cape	89
Ernie Els Majors Series 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Ernie Els Proprietor's 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Fat Bastard 2019	Robertson	88
Glenelly Glass Collection 2019	Stellenbosch	87
Jail Break 2019 (Mountain Ridge)	Western Cape	88
Jakkalsvlei Barrel Selected 2019	Western Cape	91
Jakob's Vineyards Single Vineyard 2016	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	89
Jason's Hill 2016	Breedekloof	88
Jordan The Long Fuse 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Kaapzicht 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2019	Stellenbosch	91
Kruger Family Reserve 2018 (Stellenview Premium Wines)	Stellenbosch	93
Laibach 2019	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	86
Landskroon Paul de Villiers 2018	Paarl	88
Lanzerac 2018	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	91
Le Bonheur Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Le Bonheur The Canaan 2019	Stellenbosch	87
Le Riche 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Le Riche Reserve 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Leipzig 2018	Stellenbosch	86

Lievland 2019	Coastal Region	88
Louisvale 5 Barrels 2019	Stellenbosch	87
MAN Family Wines Ou Kalant 2019	Coastal Region	86
Meerhof 2019	Swartland	85
Mischa La Famille 2019	Western Cape	87
Montpellier 2014	Tulbagh	84
Napier Saint Michael Single Vineyard 2016	Wellington	86
Neethlingshof 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Neil Ellis Stellenbosch 2019	Stellenbosch	94
Nuy Mastery 2018	Nuy	86
Oldenburg 2019	Stellenbosch	91
Oldenburg Rondekop Per Se 2019	Stellenbosch	87
Org de Rac Reserve 2019	Swartland	88
Paserene Marathon 2018	Western Cape	88
Paserene Midnight 2019	Western Cape	93
Peter Falke Kailani 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Peter Falke PF 2018	Stellenbosch	88
Rickety Bridge Paulina's Reserve 2018	Franschhoek	87
Rickety Bridge The Bridge 2019	Franschhoek	86
Ridgeback 2017	Paarl	90
Robertson Winery 2020	Robertson	88
Rust en Vrede Estate Vineyards 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Rust en Vrede Single Vineyard 2018	Stellenbosch	94
Schultz Family Wines Dungeons 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Simonsig Labyrinth 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Spier 21 Gables 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Spier Seaward 2019	Coastal Region	90
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch 2018	Jonkershoek Valley	93
Stellenbosch 1679 2018 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	93
Stellenbosch Reserve Ou Hoofgebou 2019	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenview 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Stellenzicht Tristone 2018	Stellenbosch	92
Sutherland 2017	Elgin	91
Thelema 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Tokara Reserve Collection 2018	Stellenbosch	89
Vergelegen Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	93
Villion 2018	Bot River	88
Villion 2019	Bot River	87
Warwick The Blue Lady 2017	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	94
Waterford 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Zorgvliet 2018	Banghoek	93

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