

Prescient

PINOT NOIR
REPORT 2021

WINEMAG.CO.ZA



Paul Cluver.

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 James Pietersen and Jolette Steyn, both 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

There were 28 entries from 20 producers for this year's Prescient Pinot Noir Report compared to 30 from 28 in 2020 – because of the mystique that surrounds the variety, the category attracts a large amount of attention, but it must be remembered that plantings remain small with 1 198ha in the ground at the end of 2020, the equivalent of just 1.3% of the national vineyard. As the seventh most planted red variety, it comes in behind Cinsault and ahead of Cabernet Franc, with much of it utilised for Cap Classique. It also tends to be dominated by specialist producers making small volumes that sell out on release so getting a fix on the strengths and weaknesses of the category is more difficult than is the case with its bigger counterparts like Cabernet Sauvignon or Shiraz.

That said, overall quality is on the rise, this given credence by the fact that 18 wines in the line-up (64%) rated 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. Of the Top 10, five originated from Elgin, and one each from Bot River, Ceres Plateau, Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley and Stellenbosch. As for the average price of the Top 10, this is R326 a bottle.

What are producers getting right? Whereas local Pinot Noir of yesteryear was sometimes rather vapid, current wines tend to have a lot more charm, this in large part due to more astute handling in the cellar; winemakers much better able to tease out the haunting perfume and delicate fruit that makes the variety so seductive. The majesty that the Grands Crus of the Côte d'Or possess is probably still some way off, but the improvement gains are now happening fast – for those that are keen on the grape (and there's no devotee like a Pinot devotee) exciting times lie ahead.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Bosman
Upper Hemel en Aarde 2020
R215

Total production: 11 700 bottles Abv: 13.36%

10% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 10 months in French oak, 10% new. Aromatics are complex and enticing – a hint of smoky reduction before red cherry, musk, rose, herbs and cured meat. The palate, meanwhile, is pure and precise – good depth of fruit, racy acidity and fine tannins.



De Grendel
Op Die Berg 2019
R245

Total production: 6 372 bottles Abv: 14.2%

70% whole-bunch fermentation. Malolactic fermentation in new oak barrels before maturation lasting 13 months in older oak. Black cherry, musk and an attractive herbal note as well as vanilla and oak spice. Rich and full on the palate – great depth of fruit, fresh acidity and firm tannins. Good flavour intensity and structure.



Iona
Kroon 2018
R525

Total production: 1 390 bottles Abv: 13.63%

8% whole-bunch fermentation. Spontaneous fermentation before maturation lasting 12 months in 300- and 500-litre barrels, 30% new. Some smoky reduction before red and black cherry, some floral perfume and spice. The palate is medium bodied and well balanced – good fruit density, vibrant acidity and fine tannins.





David Finlayson Camino Africana 2019

R265

Total production: 1 500 bottles Abv: 13.9%

From an experimental block planted two decades ago to clone 667. Matured for 18 months in 300-litre barrels, 100% new. Red and black cherries, fresh herbs and musk as well as attractive oak and some earthiness on the nose. The palate is full and powerful with impressive fruit concentration, bright acidity and powdery tannins, the finish long and dry.



Jayne's 2019

R450

Total production: 600 bottles Abv: 11.8%

50% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 11 months in third-fill French oak barrels. Red and black cherry, rose and herbs on the nose while the palate is light in body but full of flavour – a delicate, nicely balanced wine with a great line of acidity and powdery tannins.



La Vierge Apogée 2016

R575

Total production: 600 bottles Abv: 13.85%

Matured for 10 months in new barrels before being transferred to third-fill for a further six months. Dark cherry, tobacco, some earthiness and spice on the nose while the palate is rich, broad and smooth textured – full of flavour, this is drinking very well right now.





Paul Cluver Village 2019

R120

Total production: 36 000 bottles Abv: 13.18%

Fermented in a combination of barrels, stainless steel tank and 5 000-litre wooden vats. Partially matured in French oak for nine months. Very primary on the nose with notes of red cherry, musk and spice while the palate is light, fresh and savoury. Pure and energetic.



Catherine Marshall Pinot Noir on Sandstone Soils 2019

R250

Total production: 7 694 bottles Abv: 13.45%

Partial spontaneous fermentation before maturation lasting between nine and 12 months in a combination of new and older oak. Red and black cherry, a hint of musk and oak spice on the nose while the palate is seamless with good weight and texture – substantial fruit, bright acidity and fine tannins.



Catherine Marshall Pinot Noir on Clay Soils 2020

R270

Total production: 4 317 bottles and 88 magnums Abv: 13.87%

Partial spontaneous fermentation before maturation lasting 11 months in a combination of new and older oak. Slightly subdued aromatics with hints of red berries, musk and some spice. The palate is medium bodied with good fruit concentration, bright acidity and powdery tannins. Tightly wound, this needs some time to settle down.





Shannon Vineyards Rockview Ridge 2019

R345

Total production: 3 197 bottles Abv: 14.5%

Matured for 12 months in 228-litre barrels, 20% new. Cranberry, raspberry and red cherry as well as musk and spice on the nose while the palate shows good fruit purity, fresh acidity and crunchy tannins, the finish long and dry. Appears particularly youthful and should benefit from time in bottle.



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Bosman Upper Hemel en Aarde 2020	94	R215
De Grendel Op Die Berg 2019	93	R245
Iona Kroon 2018	93	R525
Paul Cluver Village 2019	92	R120
Catherine Marshall Pinot Noir on Sandstone Soils 2019	92	R250
David Finlayson Camino Africana 2019	92	R265
Jayne's 2019	92	R450
La Vierge Apogée 2016	92	R575
Catherine Marshall Pinot Noir on Clay Soils 2020	91	R270
Shannon Rockview Ridge 2019	91	R345
David Finlayson 2020	90	R160
Kara-Tara 2020	90	R200
Bruce Jack Heartbreak Grape 2019	90	R235
Benguela Cove Estate 2020	90	R250
La Vierge Noir 2017	90	R250
Paul Cluver Estate 2020	90	R275
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2020	90	R355
Bosman Magnum Opus 2018	90	R400

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Benguela Cove Estate 2020	Walker Bay	90
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2020	Elgin	90
Bosman Magnum Opus 2018	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	90
Bosman Upper Hemel en Aarde 2020	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	94
Bruce Jack Heartbreak Grape 2019	Cape South Coast	90
Catherine Marshall Pinot Noir on Clay Soils	Cape South Coast	91
Catherine Marshall Pinot Noir on Sandstone Soils	Elgin	92
David Finlayson 2020	Coastal Region	90
David Finlayson Camino Africana 2019	Stellenbosch	92
De Grendel Op Die Berg 2019	Ceres Plateau	93
Iona Kroon 2018	Elgin	93
Jan Harmgat 2021	Robertson	87
Jayne's 2019	Bot River	92
Kara-Tara 2020	Western Cape	90
Kruger Family Wines Pearly Gates 2020	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	88
Kruger Family Wines Western Cape 2020	Western Cape	88
La Vierge Apogée 2016	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	92
La Vierge Noir 2017	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	90
Lothian of Elgin Vineyard Selection 2020	Elgin	88
Maastricht 2020	Cape Town	87
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa Fynbos Gorge PNI 14 2017	Elgin	89
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa South Ridge PNI 15 2017	Elgin	89
Old Road Wine Co. Elgin 2019	Elgin	89
Paul Cluver Estate 2020	Elgin	90
Paul Cluver Seven Flags 2018	Elgin	88
Paul Cluver Village 2019	Elgin	92
Shannon Rockview Ridge 2019	Elgin	91
The Mary Delany Collection 2018 (Botanica)	Western Cape	88

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