

Prescient

CHARDONNAY
REPORT 2021

WINEMAG.CO.ZA



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

This year's Prescient Chardonnay Report attracted 93 entries from 67 producers. With 51 or 55% of the line-up rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale, this was a good showing for the category but not quite as good as last year where 68% of the line-up were 90-points or above. This time around most entries were from 2020 whereas last year, it was 2019 to the fore and the panel's feeling was that 2020 is a slightly lesser vintage when it comes to Chardonnay, the wines not having the same fruit concentration that marked 2019.

As is well-known, Chardonnay is highly malleable in the cellar and responds well to a variety of winemaking techniques. That said, some of the more premium examples in this tasting often looked a little overdone, clean fruity aromas and flavours replaced by honeyed, waxy characters – the suspicion being that in attempting to build in extra complexity to justify a higher price tag, elegance and freshness are being lost. Wines that ought to be capable of maturing over at least a five-year period already show signs of tiring and it is hoped that the vexed issue of premo (premature oxidation) that dogged Burgundy not so long ago is not starting to feature here.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were some rather plain wines, not commercially unacceptable but certainly lacking any real distinction. Chardonnay is, of course, nothing if not adaptable and it can make pleasant enough wine under all sorts of growing conditions.

Generally, however, local Chardonnay seems to achieve the best fruit expressions from vineyards planted in cooler areas. Out of this year's Top 10, three examples were from famously cool Elgin and one was a Stellenbosch-Elgin blend. In addition, Ceres Plateau, Constantia and Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge, which again might all be considered cool climate growing areas, also featured.

The average price of the 51 wines to rate 90-plus is R266 a bottle and of the Top 10 is R273. Offering the best quality relative to price is Franschoek Cellar Our Town Hall Unoaked 2021 with a rating of 91 and selling for R72.50 a bottle.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2020

R250

Total production: 3 000 bottles Abv: 12.41%

Fermented and matured in 600-litre barrels, 10% new. The nose shows a hint of struck-match reduction before citrus, red apple and fynbos as well as a touch of vanilla. Extraordinary depth to the palate - super-concentrated fruit, big acidity and a dry finish.



Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2020

R325

Total production: 15 500 bottles Abv: 14.25%

Matured for 10 months in 225-litre barrels, 40% new. No malolactic fermentation. Citrus, some leesy complexity and vanilla on the nose while the palate is rich but balanced – dense fruit and well-integrated acidity before a savoury finish. A powerful wine with layers of flavour that's also thick textured in the best sense.



Neil Ellis Whitehall Elgin 2020

R295

Total production: 12 212 bottles Abv: 13%

Fermented and matured for nine months in 228-litre barrels, 30% new. 30% went through malolactic fermentation. Flowers, herbs, peach and citrus on the nose while the palate shows good fruit concentration and bright acidity before a savoury finish. Well balanced with plenty of detail.





Paul Cluver Village 2020

R120

Total production: 40 740 bottles Abv: 12.5%

Fermented and matured for seven months in a combination of 2 500-litre foudre, older barrels and tank. The nose shows some struck-match reduction before pear, peach, citrus and herbs while the palate is lean, fresh and very dry. Pure and precise.



De Grendel Op die Berg 2020

R300

Total production: 13 400 bottles Abv: 13.02%

Fermented and matured for five months in 225-litre barrels, one-third new. A hint of reduction before peach, citrus and herbs on the nose while the palate shows pure fruit and zippy acidity before a long, dry finish. Plenty of depth but equally wonderfully poised.



Eikendal 2019

R225

Total production: 6 000 bottles Abv: 12.5%

40% own grapes, 20% Lyndedoch and 40% Elgin. Spontaneous fermentation begun in tank and finished in barrel. Matured for some 12 months in 500-litre barrels, 30% new. Complex aromatics with yeasty, waxy notes preceding pear, peach and lemon as well as some oak spice. The palate is medium bodied and well balanced. Carefully assembled, this is layered and long.





La Vierge Jezebel 2020

R158

Total production: 14 382 bottles Abv: 13.9%

Matured for eight months in 500-litre barrels, 20% new. A hint of reduction before citrus and vanilla plus flowers and herbs in the background while the palate shows great depth of fruit matched by bright acidity, the finish long and dry. Harmonious and detailed.



Môreson FYM 2020

R390

Total production: 1 200 bottles Abv: 12.49%

Grapes from a 0.28ha block planted to the rare CY18 clone. Matured for 11 months in 300-litre barrels, a third new. A floral top note before lime and lemon on the nose while the palate is lean with racy acidity and a pithy finish. A wine of particular vibrancy.



Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2020

R255

Total production: 7 000 bottles Abv: 13.41%

Fermented and aged for 10 months in 300-litre barrels, 25% new. Attractive aromatics of pear, white peach and citrus plus herbs and some light reduction. The palate is tightly wound with good fruit concentration, bright acidity and a dry finish.





Warwick The White Lady 2020

R390

Total production: 25 000 bottles Abv: 13.5%

Grapes from three vineyards, two on the Helderberg and one on the Simonsberg. Matured for nine months in 228-litre barrels, 23% new. A hint of reduction before citrus, almond and vanilla on the nose. The palate is rich but balanced – clean fruit and a good line of acidity before a deeply savoury finish.



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

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
Paul Cluver Village 2020	94	R120
Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2020	94	R250
Neil Ellis Whitehall Elgin 2020	94	R295
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2020	94	R350
La Vierge Jezebelle 2020	93	R158
Eikendal 2019	93	R225
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2020	93	R255
De Grendel Op die Berg 2020	93	R300
Môreson FYM 2020	93	R390
Warwick The White Lady 2020	93	R390
Cape of Good Hope Serruira 2019	93	R205
Tokara Reserve Collection 2020	93	R230
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY95 South Ridge 2018	93	R700
Fleur du Cap Essence du Cap 2020	92	R85
Bellingham Homestead 2020	92	R95
Stellenzicht Thunderstone 2020	92	R105
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2020	92	R185
Jordan Barrel Fermented 2020	92	R210
Lelie van Saron 2020	92	R260
Babylonstoren 2020	92	R325
David Finlayson Camino Africana Shale Terraces 2020	92	R365
La Vierge Apogée 2018	92	R575
Franschhoek Cellar Our Town Hall Unoaked 2021	91	R72.50
Durbanville Hills 2020	91	R80
Nederburg 2020	91	R85
Laibach The Ladybird Organic 2020	91	R95
Groote Post Unwooded 2020	91	R112
La Bri 2020	91	R150
Nederburg Manor House 2020	91	R170
Journey's End VI 2019	91	R177
Le Riche 2020	91	R280
Journey's End Destination 2019	91	R300
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2019	91	R355
Iona Kloof Limited Release 2018	91	R525
Delaire Graff Terraced Block 2020	91	R785
Rhebokskloof 2019	90	R105
Zevenwacht 2020	90	R125
Stellenbosch Reserve 2020	90	R135
Mt Vernon 2015	90	R140
La Motte Franschhoek 2020	90	R149
Vrede en Lust Marguerite 2020	90	R160
Fleur du Cap Unfiltered 2020	90	R165
Usana Gold Dust to Grapes 2020	90	R180

Benguela Cove Estate 2020	90	R250
Delheim Sur Lie 2020	90	R250
Môreson Mercator 2020	90	R299
Vergelegen Reserve 2020	90	R370
Haskell Anvil 2020	90	R385
DeMorgenzon Reserve 2019	90	R430
Stellenzicht Acheulian 2020	90	R450
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY548 South Ridge 2018	90	R700

COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

NAME	WINE OF ORIGIN	SCORE
Aaldering 2020	Stellenbosch	87
Allée Bleue Isabeau 2020	Franschhoek	87
Avontuur Luna De Miel Reserve 2021	Stellenbosch	87
Babylonstoren 2020	Simonsberg Paarl	92
Backsberg 2020	Simonsberg Paarl	89
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2019	Stellenbosch	89
Bellingham Homestead 2020	Stellenbosch	92
Benguela Cove Estate 2020	Walker Bay	90
Blue Owl 2021 (Allée Bleue)	Coastal Region	86
Boschendal 1685 2020	Cape Coast	89
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2019	Elgin	91
Cape of Good Hope Serruira 2019	Elands Kloof	93
Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2020	Constantia	94
Constitution Road 2020 (Robertson)	Robertson	89
David Finlayson 2020	Stellenbosch	88
David Finlayson Camino Africana Shale Terraces 2020	Stellenbosch	92
De Grendel Op die Berg 2020	Ceres Plateau	93
De Wet 2020	Worcester	89
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2020	Banghoek	94
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2020	Stellenbosch	92
Delaire Graff Terraced Block 2020	Banghoek	91
Delheim Sur Lie 2020	Stellenbosch	90
DeMorgenzon Reserve 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Douglas Green 2021	Western Cape	89
Durbanville Hills 2020	Durbanville	91
Durbanville Hills The Cableway 2019	Durbanville Cape Town	89
Eikendal 2019	Western Cape	93
Elgin Vintners 2021	Elgin	88
Esona Single Vineyard 2018	Robertson	88
Ex Oppido Uitsig 2021 (Constantia Uitsig)	Western Cape	89
Fat Bastard 2021	Robertson	87
Fleur du Cap Essence du Cap 2020	Western Cape	92
Fleur du Cap Unfiltered 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Franschhoek Cellar Our Town Hall Unoaked 2021	Western Cape	91
Groote Post Kapokberg 2020	Darling	88
Groote Post Unwooded 2020	Darling	91
Haskell Anvil 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Haute Collection 2019 (Haute Cabrière)	Franschhoek	89
Iona Kloof Limited Release 2018	Elgin	91
Jacques Mouton Madeleine 2020 (La Couronne)	Western Cape	88
Jan Harmsgat 2020	Robertson	87
Jordan Barrel Fermented 2020	Stellenbosch	92
Jordan Nine Yards 2020	Stellenbosch	88
Journey's End Destination 2019	Stellenbosch	91
Journey's End VI 2019	Stellenbosch	91

Kruger Family Reserve 2017 (Stellenview Premium Wines)	Stellenbosch	86
Kruger Family Wines Klipkop 2020	Piekenierskloof	88
Kruger Family Wines Old Vines 2020	Stellenbosch	88
Kruger Family Wines Sans Chêne 2020	Piekenierskloof	88
La Bri 2020	Franschhoek	91
La Couronne Franschhoek 1688 2020	Franschhoek	89
La Motte Franschhoek 2020	Franschhoek	90
La Vierge Apogée 2018	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	92
La Vierge Jezebelle 2020	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	93
Laibach The Ladybird Organic 2020	Western Cape	91
Lanzerac Mrs English Single Vineyard 2020	Jonkershoek Valley, Stellenbosch	88
Le Riche 2020	Stellenbosch	91
Lelie van Saron 2020	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	92
MAN Family Wines Padstal 2021	Coastal Region	87
Meerhof 2021	Swartland	84
Môreson FYM 2020	Franschhoek	93
Môreson Mercator 2020	Franschhoek	90
Mt Vernon 2015	Simonsberg Paarl	90
Napier Saint Catherine Single Vineyard 2018	Wellington	88
Nederburg 2020	Western Cape	91
Nederburg Manor House 2020	Western Cape	91
Neil Ellis Whitehall Elgin 2020	Elgin	94
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2020	Elgin	93
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY548 South Ridge 2018	Elgin	90
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY95 South Ridge 2018	Elgin	93
Paserene 2019	Elgin	89
Paul Cluver Estate 2019	Elgin	89
Paul Cluver Village 2020	Elgin	94
Peter Falke 2020	Stellenbosch	89
Rhebokskloof 2019	Paarl	90
Rhebokskloof Black Marble Hill 2020	Paarl	89
Robertson 2021	Robertson	86
Saxenburg Private Collection 2020	Polkadraai Hills Stellenbosch	89
Stellenbosch Reserve Moederkerk 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenzicht Acheulian 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenzicht Thunderstone 2020	Stellenbosch	92
Tokara Reserve Collection 2020	Stellenbosch	93
Usana Gold Dust to Grapes 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Van Loveren 2021	Robertson	87
Van Loveren Christiena Trousseau 2020	Robertson	88
Van Loveren Christiena Trousseau 2021	Robertson	86
Vergelegen Reserve 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Vergelegen Reserve 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Vondeling Barrel Selection 2020	Voor Paardeberg	88
Vrede en Lust Marguerite 2020	Simonsberg Paarl	90
Warwick The White Lady 2020	Stellenbosch	93
Zandvliet 2021	Robertson	87
Zevenwacht 2020	Stellenbosch	90

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