



Prescient

CHARDONNAY
REPORT 2022

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2022

Winemag.co.za produced a series of category reports over the course of the year with multinational financial services company Prescient as sponsor. Each report was 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.

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

Is the quality of Chardonnay in decline, even if only slightly? This year's category report sponsored by Prescient attracted 80 entries from 59 producers with 43 (54%) rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. Solid enough but in 2021, 55% of the line-up made the 90-point threshold and the year before, it was 68%.

It's somewhat difficult to make sense of this downward trend in quality. By far the most entries were from the 2021 vintage, cooler and later than usual, and generally considered good as a result but perhaps we are seeing the less easily measurable but nevertheless profound impact of climate change.

Without wishing to focus on the negatives too much, the Top 10 are outstanding with five wines on 94 and another five on 93. Elgin property Oak Valley boosts its already high reputation with no less than three wines featuring (and one just outside) while Franschoek fares well with three examples in the mix, followed by Constantia and Stellenbosch with two each.

What might the defining characteristics of the Top 10 be? The panel was looking to reward purity of fruit, crisp but not seering acidity, the qualities of barrel maturation not too much in evidence.

The less successful examples fall either side of this golden mean being either too neutral or too rich. Some producers are evidently attempting to make Chardonnay sappy and refreshing but end up with something that presents as lacking in concentration and rather nondescript. Others, meanwhile, appear to over-reach themselves – in attempting to achieve both weight and complexity, winemaking imposes itself too much. The clumsy use of oak, malolactic fermentation, and stirring of the lees lend all sorts of secondary character that obscures fruit and can make the resulting wine flabby and listless.

The average price of the 40 wines to rate 90-plus is R272 a bottle and of the Top 10 is R267. Offering the best quality relative to price is Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection Unoaked 2022 with a rating of 92 and selling for R77 a bottle.

Backsberg, as producer of the wine judged best overall, wins a 2BFermControl organic fermentation kit worth approximately R10 500.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Backsberg Smuggled Vines 2021

Price: R125

Total Production: 2 500 bottles Abv 13.5%

Grapes from Franschhoek. Fermentation started in stainless steel tanks and finished in barrel before maturation lasting 10 months. A top note of blossom before peach and citrus plus some intriguing leesy character on the nose. The palate, meanwhile, is wonderfully precise with a dense core of fruit, bright acidity and a finish that is long and savoury.



Delaire Graff Summercourt 2021

Price: R205

Total Production: 31 536 bottles Abv 13.6%

Fermentation started in stainless steel tanks and finished in older oak barrels before maturation lasting 10 months. Pear, citrus and some struck-match reduction on the nose. The palate has a good core of fruit matched by punchy acidity. Nice texture – not too greasy. Tightly wound with a savoury finish.



La Petite Ferme Barrel Fermented 2021

Price: R235

Total Production: 1 266 bottles Abv 12.37%

Fermented and matured for nine months in 228-litre French oak barrels, 20% new. A top note of honeysuckle before citrus, vanilla and some struck-match reduction on the nose while the palate is particularly vivid – great clarity of fruit and punchy acidity make for a dramatic wine.





Oak Valley Beneath The Clouds 2021

Price: R130

Total Production: 27 300 bottles Abv 13.8%

Matured for nine months in older oak. The nose shows citrus, green apple, fresh herbs and a hint of reduction while the palate has great fruit purity and freshness before a saline finish. Taut and focused.



Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2021

Price: R260

Total Production: 8 040 bottles Abv 13.26%

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 28% new. The aromatics include a flinty top note before citrus and Granny Smith apple while the palate is tightly wound – great fruit purity and zesty acidity before a savoury finish. This has plenty of reined-in power – good weight and texture but also plenty of detail.



Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2021

Price: R250

Total Production: 3 600 bottles Abv 13.42%

Fermented and matured for seven months in French oak barrels, 33% new. Citrus, vanilla and some buttery complexity on the nose. The palate is rich, round and thick-textured although bright acidity lends verve and the finish is nicely savoury.





Groot Constantia 2021

Price: R285

Total Production: 24 911 bottles Abv 12.8%

30% fermented spontaneously. Matured for 10 months in French oak, 35% new. Aromatics of citrus, a hint of struck-match reduction and vanilla while the palate is rich and round with lots of flavour and well-integrated acidity.



La Motte 2020

Price: R159

Total Production: 39 600 bottles Abv 12.38%

Fermentation started in stainless steel tanks and finished in 300-litre barrels of which 20% were new, maturation subsequently lasting 12 months. Citrus, oatmeal, vanilla and some leesy complexity on the nose. The palate is rich and full with dense fruit matched by a good line of acidity and a savoury finish. Smooth in texture with layers of flavour.



Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY548 2020

Price: R700

Total Production: 660 bottles Abv 13.54%

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 50% new. A shy nose with subtle notes of pear, peach and citrus plus a little reduction while the palate has impressive fruit purity and a great line of acidity before a bone-dry finish – wonderfully focused and elegant.





Waterford Single Vineyard 2019

Price: R320

Total Production: 23 400 bottles Abv 12%

From a vineyard planted in 1988. Matured for 11 months in 300-litre French oak barrels, 14% new. Pear, peach, citrus and some smoky reduction on the nose while the palate has concentrated fruit and driving acidity before a saline finish. Well balanced and still very youthful.



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

Wine	Score	Price
Backsberg Smuggled Vines 2021	94	R125
Oak Valley Beneath The Clouds 2021	94	R130
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2021	94	R205
La Petite Ferme Barrel Fermented 2021	94	R235
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2021	94	R260
La Motte 2020	93	R159
Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2021	93	R250
Groot Constantia 2021	93	R285
Waterford Single Vineyard 2019	93	R320
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY548 2020	93	R700
Survivor 2021	93	R250
Thamnus 2021	93	R395
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY95 2020	93	R700
Delaire Graff Terraced Block 2021	93	R795
Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection Unoaked 2022	92	R77
Paul Cluver Village 2021	92	R125
Rickety Bridge 2021	92	R170
Bruce Jack Reserve Collection 2021	91	R105
Christiena Trouseu 2021 (Van Loveren)	91	R138
Zevenwacht 2021	91	R140
La Vierge Jezebelle 2021	91	R170
Nederburg The Manor House 2021	91	R175
Lozärn Sebastian 2021	91	R185
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2020	91	R220
Highlands Road 2020	91	R220
Gabriel & Gysbert Ijsland 2021	91	R250
Iona Elgin Highlands 2021	91	R330
Haute Cabrière Haut Collection 2020	91	R335
Doolhof Môrestond 2018	91	R420
Miss Molly Manor Born 2021 (Morêson)	90	R83.25
Zandvliet 2021	90	R126
DeMorgenzon DMZ 2022	90	R130
Zevenwacht 2020	90	R140
Neil Ellis Woolworths Barrel Fermented 2021	90	R149.99
Journey's End V1 2021	90	R177
Bruce Jack Hard Day 2020	90	R250
Delheim Sur Lie 2021	90	R250
Journey's End Destination 2019	90	R300
Focal Point Vermaaklikheid 2021 (Laarman Wines)	90	R315
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2021	90	R320
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2021	90	R360
Haskell Anvil 2021	90	R415
Warwick The White Lady 2021	90	R425

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Abingdon 2021	Lions River	87
Allée Bleue Isabeau 2021	Franschhoek	89
Almenkerk 2019	Elgin	89
Babylonstoren 2021	Simonsberg-Paarl	89
Backsberg Smuggled Vines 2021	Coastal Region	94
Badsberg Sur Lie 2021	Breedekloof	88
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2020	Stellenbosch	91
Benguela Cove Estate 2022	Walker Bay	87
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2020	Elgin	90
Bruce Jack Hard Day 2020	Elgin	90
Bruce Jack Reserve Collection 2021	Breedekloof	91
Christiena Trousseau 2021 (Van Loveren)	Robertson	91
Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2021	Constantia	93
David Finlayson 2021	Stellenbosch	89
De Grendel Op Die Berg 2021	Ceres Plateau	88
De Grendel Op Die Berg 2022	Ceres Plateau	89
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2021	Banghoek	90
Delaire Graff Summercourt 2021	Stellenbosch	94
Delaire Graff Terraced Block 2021	Banghoek	93
Delheim Sur Lie 2021	Stellenbosch	90
DeMorgenzon DMZ 2022	Stellenbosch	90
DeMorgenzon Reserve 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Doolhof Môrestond 2018	Stellenbosch	91
Fleur du Cap Unfiltered 2021	Cape Town	88
Focal Point Vermaaklikheid 2021 (Laarman Wines)	Cape South Coast	90
Gabriel & Gysbert Ijsland 2021	Bonnievale	91
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2021	Stellenbosch	90
Groot Constantia 2020	Constantia Cape Town	88
Groot Constantia 2021	Constantia Cape Town	93
Groote Post Kapokberg 2021	Darling	88
Hasher Family Vineyards Marimist 2020	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	89
Haskell Anvil 2021	Stellenbosch	90
Haute Cabrière Haut Collection 2020	Franschhoek	91
Haute Cabrière Réserve 2021	Franschoek	89
Highlands Road 2020	Elgin	91
Iona Elgin Highlands 2021	Elgin	91
Journey's End Destination 2019	Stellenbosch	90
Journey's End V1 2021	Stellenbosch	90
Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection Unoaked 2022	Western Cape	92
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2022	Western Cape	88
Kruger Family Reserve 2021 (Stellenvue)	Stellenbosch	89
La Bri 2021	Franschhoek	89
La Motte 2020	Franschhoek	93

La Petite Ferme Barrel Fermented 2021	Franschhoek	94
La Vierge Jezebel 2021	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge	91
Lelie van Saron 2021	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	90
Lozärn Sebastian 2021	Robertson	91
Miss Molly Manor Born 2021 (Morêson)	Franschhoek	90
Nederburg The Manor House 2021	Western Cape	91
Nederburg The Winemasters 2021	Western Cape	88
Neil Ellis Woolworths Barrel Fermented 2021	Elgin	90
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2020	Elgin	89
Oak Valley Beneath The Clouds 2021	Elgin	94
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2021	Elgin	94
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY548 2020	Elgin	93
Oak Valley Tabula Rasa CY95 2020	Elgin	93
Paul Cluver Estate 2020	Elgin	89
Paul Cluver Village 2021	Elgin	92
Peter Falke PF 2021	Stellenbosch	88
Rhebokskloof 2021	Paarl	88
Rhebokskloof Black Marble Hill 2021	Paarl	89
Rickety Bridge 2020	Franschhoek	86
Rickety Bridge 2021	Franschhoek	92
Rietvallei Classic 2021	Robertson	88
Rietvallei JMB 2022	Robertson	88
Seven Oaks Unwooded 2022	Breedekloof	88
Spier Seaward 2021	Coastal Region	88
Survivor 2021	Elgin	93
Thamnus 2021		93
Ujva 2021	Western Cape	88
Van Loveren 2022	Robertson	89
Vigne d' Or 2021	Coastal Region	86
Warwick The White Lady 2021	Stellenbosch	90
Waterford Single Vineyard 2019	Stellenbosch	93
Weltevrede Calcrete 2022	Robertson	89
Weltevrede Place of Rocks 2021	Robertson	86
Weltevrede Poet's Prayer 2021	Robertson	89
Zandvliet 2021	Robertson	90
Zevenwacht 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Zevenwacht 2021	Stellenbosch	91

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LA MOTTE



BACKSBERG



OAK VALLEY



CONSTANTIA UITSIG



WATERFORD