

Prescient

SIGNATURE RED BLEND
REPORT 2023

WINEMAG.CO.ZA



FAIRVIEW

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2023

Winemag.co.za is set to produce a series of 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.

ABOUT SIGNATURE RED BLENDS

Why should South Africa be bound by the Bordeaux model when it comes to creating great blended red wine? Perhaps the Rhône is a better reference point given local growing conditions while the so-called “Cape Blend” incorporating Pinotage potentially gives us a unique selling proposition. Then, of course, there are the red blends of yesteryear – Alto Rouge, Chateau Libertas and Rustenberg Dry Red to name but three – which conformed to no particular model but are revered for their complexity and longevity.

Once again, we called for wines which were “distinctive of their originators” and instead of the usual practice of dividing them into various sub-groups according to style (Pinotage-based vs Shiraz-based being the differentiation most usually made), we tasted them as one continuous line-up – the thinking being that the fundamentals of wine appreciation such as complexity and balance should apply when it came to making quality assessments.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely Francois Rautenbach, Singita Premier Wine Direct General Manager 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

KEY FINDINGS

Free of the strict appellation regulations that apply in Europe, South African wine producers can work with any combination of varieties they like with a view to creating a blend both inimitable by competitors and truly memorable among wine lovers but are they seizing this opportunity?

For this year's Signature Red Blend Report sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient, there were 60 entries from 46 producers with 35 (58%) rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

Over-all quality was thus high, but it must be said that the panel collectively found tackling the line-up a somewhat bemusing experience. "What is the quintessential South African red? Based on this tasting, nobody knows," observed Francois Rautenbach of Singita. Among the Top 10, there are four wines that might be said to have been Rhône-inspired, these being Fairview Goats Do Roam Red Blend 2021, Coterie by Wildeberg Grenache & Syrah 2022, Harry Hartman Finn 2022 and Strandveld The Navigator 2020; two see the Bordeaux varieties spiced up with Shiraz (Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2018 and Boschendal Black Angus 2019); two are properly eccentric in that they combine a wide range of seemingly disparate varieties (Babylonstoren Babel 2021 and Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2021); one is a riff on Rioja (Fairview Extraño 2020); and one might be termed old-school South African with Cinsault to the fore, namely Stellenzicht Thunderstone Red 2019.

It also seems that producers aren't entirely sure where to position these red blends, prices among the Top 10 ranging from R73 a bottle for the Fairview to R450 a bottle for Boschendal Black Angus. More generally, the old faithful that is Alto Rouge sells for R120 a bottle (both the 2020 and 2021 vintages rated 90 points in this tasting) while at the other end of the spectrum, the 2020 vintage of Leeu Passant Dry Red (this wine a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Cinsault specifically conceived by the respected Andrea and Chris Mullineux as a homage to the blends of yesteryear) goes for R1 820...

The definitive South African red blend of the modern era would therefore appear to be a work in progress. It's going to be fascinating to watch this collective project play out and, in the meantime, there are some interesting if not perfectly conceived wines to be drunk.

The average price of the 35 wines to rate 90-plus is R244 a bottle and of the Top 10 is R211. Offering the best quality relative to price is Koelenhof Koelenberg 2021 with a rating of 90 and selling for R65 a bottle.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2018

Price: R300

Total Production: 13 800 bottles Abv 14.31%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Shiraz, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec, 5% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot. Shiraz underwent partial whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 18 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. Black berries, violets, some leafiness, spice and pencil shavings on the nose. The palate is well balanced with good structure – dense fruit, bright acidity and tannins that are firm in the best sense, the finish possessing a slightly salty quality.



Fairview Goats Do Roam Red Blend 2021

Price: R73

Total Production: 600 000 litres split between bottles and bag-in-box for Scandinavia
Abv 13.76%

51% Shiraz, 15% Mourvèdre, 14% Grenache, 12% Cinsault, 5% Tempranillo and 3% Durif. Matured in a combination of tanks and barrels. A perfumed nose of red and black berries, lavender, fynbos and pepper. Pure fruit, bright acidity and powdery tannins – fleshy with lots of drive.



Babylonstoren Babel 2021

Price: R185

Total Production: 145 000 bottles Abv 14%

53% Shiraz, 19% Pinotage, 8% Cabernet Franc, 6% Merlot, 5% Malbec, 3% Petit Verdot, 3% Mourvèdre, 2% Grenache Noir and 1% Marselan. Matured for 12 months, 20% in new 300-litre barrels, 70% in older barrels and 10% in foudres. Red and black berries, herbs, vanilla and spice on the nose. Good fruit density but also not short of freshness – luscious upfront but ends dry.





Coterie by Wildeberg Grenache & Syrah 2022

Price: R181

Total Production: 5 987 bottles Abv 14%

67% Grenache, 33% Syrah. Partially whole-bunch fermented before maturation lasting 10 months in French and Austrian oak. Red and black berries plus fynbos on the nose. Good fruit concentration, bright acidity and powdery tannins. Tightly knit with plenty of verve.



Fairview Extraño 2020

Price: R150

Total Production: 10 400 bottles Abv 14.24%

86% Tempranillo, 13% Grenache. Fermented in open-top foudres, 20% of the Grenache with stems. Matured for 24 months in French and American oak, 20% new barrels used for the Tempranillo. Red and black berries, fynbos and earth on the nose while the palate is medium bodied with fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins. Taut with good drive, the finish very dry.



Harry Hartman Finn 2022

Price: R195

Total Production: 14 000 bottles Abv 13.6%

64% Syrah Cederberg and Stellenbosch, 19% Grenache from Piekenierskloof and 17% Cinsault from Swartland. Matured for 11 months in mostly 225-litre barrels. Red and black berries, fynbos, lavender and pepper on the nose. Good focus and drive – lovely fruit purity, fresh acidity and fine tannins.





Strandveld The Navigator 2020

Price: R250

Total Production: 11 653 bottles Abv 13.32%

69% Shiraz, 13% Grenache, 11% Mourvèdre and 7% Viognier. Matured for 20 months in 300-litre oak barrels, 30% new. Red berries, rose, fynbos and white pepper on the nose. The palate is light bodied with pure fruit, bright acidity and fine tannins, a brine-like quality to the finish. A charming, nicely understated wine.



Boschendal Black Angus 2019

Price: R450

Total Production: 17 800 bottles Abv 14%

53% Shiraz, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc and 9% Malbec. Matured for 14 months in 300-litre barrels before blending and being returned to foudres for some six to 10 months. Blue and black berries plus earth, pencil shavings and spice on the nose while the palate shows luscious fruit and smooth tannins – impressive density without sacrificing freshness.



Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2021

Price: R160

Total Production: 13 300 bottles Abv 14%

29% Shiraz, 22% Tinta Barocca, 27% Touriga Nacional 14.8% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Souzao, 2% Merlot, 1% Rouzanne, 1% Touriga Franca and 0,2% Chenin Blanc. Matured for 14 months in 300- and 500-litre barrels, first- and second-fill. The nose shows red and black berries, musk, some leafiness, vanilla and spice. The palate is medium bodied and well-balanced with juicy fruit, fresh acidity and fine tannins.





Stellenzicht Thunderstone Red 2019

Price: R165

Total Production: 26 400 bottles Abv 13.67%

40% Cinsault, 35% Syrah, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 18 months in French oak. Dark berries, some herbal character, earth and spice on the nose. Dense and smooth textured, this is powerful and polished.



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

Wine	Score	Price
Fairview Goats Do Roam Red 2021	94	R73
Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2018	94	R300
Fairview Extraño 2020	93	R150
Coterie by Wildeberg Grenache & Syrah 2022	93	R181
Babylonstoren Babel 2021	93	R185
Harry Hartman Finn 2022	93	R195
Strandveld The Navigator 2020	93	R250
Boschendal Black Angus 2019	92	R450
Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2021	91	R160
Stellenzicht Thunderstone Red 2019	91	R165
Thor Vintners Gentis Red 2021	91	R140
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine 2020	91	R150
Fairview Caldera 2021	91	R170
Organic Wine by Sophie Germanier Shiraz Mourvedre Viognier 2021	91	R190
Spier Creative Block 3 2019	91	R215
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2020	91	R220
Clos Malverne Reserve Aurret 2020	91	R275
Iona One Man Band 2019	91	R310
Quest Two 2020	91	R310
Carmen Stevens Nemrac 2020	91	R358
Koelenhof Koelenberg 2021	90	R65
Daschbosch The Gift 2020	90	R100
Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2020 (Koelenhof)	90	R115
Alto Rouge 2021	90	R120
Alto Rouge 2020	90	R120
Lynx SMG 2020	90	R160
Haute Cabrière Arnim Family Reserve 2020	90	R175
Boschendal Nicolas 2021	90	R200
Vigne d' Or Red Blend 2018 (Terre Paisible)	90	R210
La Cave Cape Blend 2020 (Wellington Wines)	90	R220
Zonneboem Shiraz Mourvèdre Viognier 2020	90	R253
Carmen Stevens Nemrac 2021	90	R394
Bellingham The Founders Series The Pod 2020	90	R500
Saronsberg Full Circle 2021	90	R660
Rietvallei Estate 2016	90	R800

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Alto Rouge 2020	Stellenbosch	90
Alto Rouge 2021	Stellenbosch	90
Babylonstoren Babel 2021	Simonsberg-Paarl	93
Bellingham The Founders Series Pod 2020	Coastal Region	90
Benguela Cove Lighthouse Collection Moody Lagoon 2021	Walker Bay	89
Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2021	Western Cape	91
Boschendal Black Angus 2019	Stellenbosch	92
Boschendal Nicolas 2021	Cape Coast	90
Bruce Jack Reserve Collection Stream of Consciousness 2021	Western Cape	89
Carmen Stevens Nemrac 2020	Coastal Region	91
Carmen Stevens Nemrac 2021	Coastal Region	90
Charles Lang & Sons Carignan Shiraz Ruby Cabernet 2022	Stellenbosch	88
Clos Malverne Reserve Aurret 2020	Stellenbosch	91
Coterie by Wildeberg Grenache & Syrah 2022	Coastal Region	93
Daschbosch The Gift 2020	Western Cape	90
De Wet Cellar Vintage Mashup 2022	Worcester	88
Dornier The Pirate of Cocoa Hill Ruby Red 2021	Stellenbosch	86
Du Toitskloof Dimension 2018	Western Cape	87
Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2018	Stellenbosch	94
Fairview Caldera 2021	Paarl	91
Fairview Extraño 2020	Western Cape	93
Fairview Goats Do Roam Red Blend 2021	Western Cape	94
Fuselage Pilot and Navigator 2021	Paarl	89
Harry Hartman Finn 2022	Western Cape	93
Haute Cabrière Arnim Family Reserve 2020	Franschhoek	90
Iona One Man Band 2019	Elgin	91
Jakkalsvlei Mount Cuvée Cape Blend 2021	Western Cape	89
JAN 2019 (Zevenwacht)	Stellenbosch	88
Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2020 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	90
Koelenhof Koelenberg 2021	Stellenbosch	90
La Cave Cape Blend 2020 (Wellington Wines)	Wellington	90
Lynx SMG 2020	Franschhoek	90
Lynx The Tinto 2020	Franschhoek	89
Mary le Bow Red 2019 (Bruce Jack)	Western Cape	88
Nederburg Baronne 2022	Western Cape	89
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Motorcycle Marvel 2019	Western Cape	89
Nuiba Third Post 2018	Piekenierskloof	86
Organic Wine by Sophie Germanier Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Shiraz 2020	Voor-Paardeberg	89
Organic Wine by Sophie Germanier Shiraz Mourvedre Viognier 2021	Coastal Region	91
Plaisir Estate Red 2020	Simonsberg-Paarl	87
Quest Two 2020	Western Cape	91
Rietvallei Estate 2016	Robertson	90
Saronsberg Full Circle 2021	Tulbagh	90
Spier Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Shiraz 2022	Western Cape	89

Spier Creative Block 3 2019	Coastal Region	91
Stellenbosch Gold Red Blend 2020 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenzicht Acheulean Red 2018	Stellenbosch	87
Stellenzicht Thunderstone Red 2019	Coastal Region	91
Strandveld The Navigator 2020	Elim	93
The Drift Moveable Feast 2019	Overberg	87
Thor Vintners Gentis Red 2021	Coastal Region	91
Thor Vintners Wind Song 2022	Swartland	89
Vendome Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2020	Paarl	88
Vigne d' Or Red Blend 2018 (Terre Paisible)	Coastal Region	90
Vrede en Lust Artisan Range Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2019	Simonsberg-Paarl	88
Vrede en Lust Ella Grenache Syrah Viognier 2021	Simonsberg-Paarl	89
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2020	Stellenbosch	91
Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2020	Stellenbosch	89
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine 2020	Stellenbosch	91
Zonneboem Shiraz Mourvèdre Viognier 2020	Stellenbosch	90

CONTACT DETAILS

Editorial

Christian Eedes
christian@winemag.co.za
+27 83 454 3644
@ChristianEedes

Business Director

Jacqueline Lahoud
jax@winemag.co.za
+27 83 654 7721
@JaxLahoud



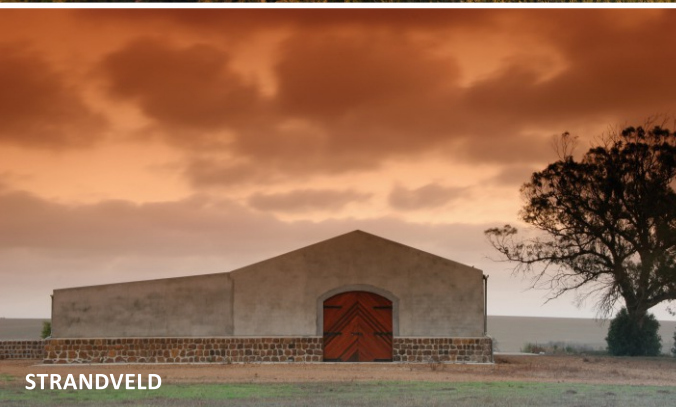
STELLENZICHT



BABYLONSTOREN



ERNIE ELS



STRANDVELD



BOSCHENDAL



BOPLAAS



WILDEBERG