



Prescient

CHARDONNAY
REPORT 2023

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

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.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely wine writer Malu Lambert 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 this year's Chardonnay Report sponsored by multinational financial services company Prescient, there were 80 entries from 61 producers with 43 (54%) rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

Wines from 2022 feature prominently in this Report with seven wines in the Top 10 from this vintage (alongside three from 2021) while there were a further 17 to score 90-plus.

As for provenance, Stellenbosch dominates the Top 10 with seven wines from this district followed by Elgin with three. The 2021/2022 growing season is generally viewed positively – above-average cold units in winter, delayed budding in spring and, in turn, a slow ripening process allowed optimal fruit quality (the exception being Swartland which experienced extremely hot weather during harvest but this, of course, not an area known for Chardonnay).

Looking at the line-up as a whole, the best examples show depth of fruit, intricacy of flavour and drive. Less successful are the wines that appear very primary – technically sound but lacking any great distinction. Some producers are clearly attempting to make wines of elegance but often these end up being simple and angular, instead.

Conversely, other wines appeared quite heavily worked. Chardonnay is not necessarily the most naturally expressive variety to be had but it is highly malleable in the cellar. Fermentation and maturation in different sorts of oak barrels; a second, softening malolactic fermentation; and different levels of stirring, or “batonnage”, of the lees at the bottom of the barrel are all important techniques applied by winemakers. A crucial part of assessing Chardonnay therefore becomes deciding when do these techniques superimpose themselves to just the right extent and when are they too much.

The average price of the 43 wines to rate 90-plus is R286 a bottle and of the Top 10 is R306. Offering the best quality relative to price is De Wet 2022 with a rating of 90 and selling for R69 a bottle.

Vriesenhof, as producer of the wine judged best overall, wins a 2BFermControl organic fermentation kit worth approximately R11 000.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Vriesenhof
2021

2BFermControl
Best Overall

Price: R240

Total Production: 1 650 bottles Abv 13.26%

Matured in French oak barrels for 13 month, 10% new. Some flinty reduction before lemon and a hint of vanilla. The palate is pure and focused – excellent depth of fruit matched by driving acidity, the finish possessing a wonderfully pithy quality. Layers of flavour and great length.



Blaauwklippen
2022

Price: R200

Total Production: 5 000 bottles Abv 13.5%

Matured for 11 months in a combination of 228- and 300-litre barrels, 22% new. Lemon, oatmeal plus some yeasty complexity on the nose. The palate is dense and satisfyingly thick textured, fresh acidity providing balance. Full of flavour, the finish long and savoury.



De laire Graff
Terraced Block 2022

Price: R915

Total Production: 4 460 bottles Abv 13.35%

Matured for 10 months in 225-litre barrels, 40% new. Lime, lemon and white peach, a little leesy complexity and spice on the nose. The palate is remarkably harmonious with good fruit weight and texture offset by racy acidity, the finish long and saline.





Lothian of Elgin 2021

Price: R370

Total Production: 10 000 bottles Abv 13.5%

Matured for 11 months in 228-litre barrels, 25% new oak. The nose shows lemon and orange plus some leesy complexity. The palate is forceful in the best sense – concentrated fruit matched by big acidity, the finish long and savoury. Just the right amount of weight and texture.



Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2022

Price: R280

Total Production: 9 400 bottles Abv 13.21%

Matured for 10 months in barrel, 29% new. Attractive aromatics with top notes of flowers and herbs before lime, lemon and green apple, a touch of vanilla and hint of reduction. Dense fruit matched by racy acidity, the finish long and dry. Taut and vibrant now, this should mature with benefit.



Paul Clüver Village 2022

Price: R125

Total Production: 66 000 bottles Abv 12.8%

50% fermented in 2 500-litre oak vats, 36% in older 300-litre barrels, 8% in tank and 6% in concrete egg. Matured for eight months. Lime, lemon, some leesy complexity plus traces of vanilla and spice. Great fruit integrity and punchy acidity before a savoury finish. Complex and balanced.





Bellingham Homestead 2021

Price: R110

Total Production: 20 000 bottles Abv 13%

60% fermented in older 500-litre barrels and 40% in stainless steel tank. Some struck-match reduction before lemon, orange and pineapple while the palate is juicy, rich and round – has a particular brightness about it.



Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2022

Price: R410

Total Production: 8 020 bottles Abv 13.48%

Matured for 10 months in 225-litre barrels, 40% new. Some struck-match reduction before peach, citrus and dried herbs on the nose. The palate, meanwhile, has lovely clarity of fruit – pure and fresh with a finish that is long and dry.



Journey's End V1 2022

Price: R195

Total Production: 19 200 bottles Abv 13.5%

Matured for nine months, 80% in barrel, 12% in concrete eggs and 8% in amphorae. Complex aromatics of citrus, oatmeal and earth with notes of flowers and herbs in the background while the palate shows pure fruit and bright acidity before a pithy finish. Nicely understated.





Cavalli Reserve 2022

Price: R210

Total Production: 6 752 bottles Abv 13%

Matured for 10 months in 225-litre barrels, 25% new. A hint of flinty reduction before citrus, oatmeal and a little nuttiness on the nose. The palate has a nice poise about it with clean fruit, racy acidity and a chalky finish.



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

Wine	Score	Price
Vriesenhof 2021	95	R240
Paul Claver Village 2022	94	R125
Blaauwklippen 2022	94	R200
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2022	94	R280
Lothian of Elgin 2021	94	R370
Delaire Graff Terraced Block 2022	94	R915
Bellingham Homestead 2021	93	R110
Journey's End V1 2022	93	R195
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2022	93	R410
Cavalli Reserve 2022	92	R210
La Bri 2022	92	R180
Vriesenhof 2022	92	R240
Lelie van Saron 2022 (Natasha Williams Signature Wines)	92	R295
Baleia Limitados 2021	92	R300
La Vierge Apogée 2021	92	R305
Almenkerk 2021	92	R310
St Leger 2022 (Le Marais)	92	R350
Brink Family Vineyards Barrel Fermented 2021	91	R100
Allée Bleue Isabeau 2021	91	R170
La Motte 2022	91	R170
Vigne d'Or 2021 (Terre Paisible)	91	R200
Waterford Single Vineyard 2020	91	R245
Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2022	91	R250
Kershaw Clonal Selection Elgin 2019	91	R370
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2021	91	R450
Warwick The White Lady 2022	91	R475
De Wet 2022	90	R69
Oak Valley Beneath the Clouds 2022	90	R140
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2022	90	R148
Nederburg The Manor House 2021	90	R165
Rickety Bridge 2022	90	R190
Groote Post Kapokberg 2021	90	R231
Eikendal 2021	90	R270
Kruger Family Wines Old Vines 2021	90	R275
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2021	90	R325
Journey's End De Wet on 2022	90	R330
Delheim Sur Lie 2022	90	R330
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2022	90	R340
Goedverwacht Maxim Limited Release 2022	90	R350
Babylonstoren 2022	90	R355
Quoin Rock 2022	90	R400
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2020	90	R450
Thamnus 2021	90	R450

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Allée Bleue Isabeau 2021	Franschhoek	91
Almenkerk 2021	Elgin	92
Arbeidsgenot 2023	Swartland	88
Babylonstoren 2022	Simonsberg-Paarl	90
Baleia Limitados 2021	Lower Duiwenshok River	92
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2021	Stellenbosch	89
Bellevue The Reserve Collection 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Bellingham Homestead 2021	Stellenbosch	93
Bergsig Tant Anna Reserve Collection 2021	Breedekloof	87
Blaauwklippen 2022	Stellenbosch	94
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2020	Elgin	90
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2021	Elgin	91
Bosman Family Vineyards Upper Hemel en Aarde Valley 2022	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	88
Brink Family Vineyards Barrel Fermented 2022 (Pulpit Rock)	Swartland	89
Brink Family Vineyards Unwooded 2023 (Pulpit Rock)	Swartland	91
Cavalli Reserve 2022	Stellenbosch	92
Christiana Trousseau 2022 (Van Loveren)	Robertson	89
Constantia Uitsig Reserve 2022	Constantia	91
David Finlayson Camino Africana Shale Terraces 2022	Stellenbosch	89
De Grendel Op die Berg 2022	Ceres Plateau	89
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2022	Banghoek	93
Delaire Graff Terraced Block 2022	Banghoek	94
Delheim Sur Lie 2022	Stellenbosch	90
De Wet 2022	Klein Karoo	90
Eikendal 2021	Western Cape	90
Gecko Ridge 2023 (Thor Vintners)	Western Cape	87
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2022	Stellenbosch	90
Goedverwacht Great Expectations 2023	Robertson	86
Goedverwacht Maxim Limited Release 2022	Robertson	90
Groot Constantia 2022	Constantia, Cape Town	92
Groote Post Kapokberg 2021	Darling	90
Haute Cabrière Reserve 2022	Franschhoek	89
Haute Collection 2020 (Haute Cabrière)	Franschhoek	88
Journey's End Deception 2022	Stellenbosch	90
Journey's End V1 2022	Stellenbosch	93
Kershaw Clonal Selection Elgin 2019	Elgin	91
Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection Unoaked 2023	Western Cape	87
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2022	Western Cape	90
Kruger Family Reserve 2021 (Stellenview Premium Wines)	Stellenbosch	87
Kruger Family Wines Klipkop 2021	Piekenierskloof	89
Kruger Family Wines Old Vines 2021	Stellenbosch	90
La Bri 2022	Franschhoek	92

La Motte 2022	Franschhoek	91
La Petite Ferme Barrel Fermented 2022	Franschhoek	87
La Vierge Apogée 2021		92
Lelie van Saron 2022 (Natasha Williams Signature Wines)	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	92
Le Pommier Summercourt Limited Release 2023	Banghoek	86
Lothian of Elgin 2021	Elgin	94
Nederburg The Manor House 2021	Western Cape	90
Nederburg The Winemasters 2022	Western Cape	87
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2021	Elgin	90
Niel Joubert Reserve 2019	Paarl	84
Oak Valley Beneath the Clouds 2022	Elgin	90
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2022	Elgin	94
Paul Clüver Estate 2020	Elgin	89
Paul Clüver Village 2022	Elgin	94
Peter Falke PF 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Pierre DuMont 2023	Western Cape	88
Plaisir 2022	Simonsberg-Paarl	89
Plaisir Grand Plaisir White 2022	Simonsberg-Paarl	88
Quoin Rock 2020	Western Cape	88
Quoin Rock 2021	Western Cape	88
Quoin Rock 2022	Western Cape	90
Rickety Bridge 2022	Franschhoek	90
Spier Seaward 2022	Coastal Region	89
St Leger 2022 (Le Marais)	Elgin	92
Thamnus 2021	Overberg	90
The Pledge Our Barrels 2022 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	88
Van Loveren VRL Calcrete 2023	Robertson	87
Vigne d' Or 2021 (Terre Paisible)	Coastal Region	91
Vriesenhof 2021	Stellenbosch	95
Vriesenhof 2022	Stellenbosch	92
Vriesenhof Unwooded 2023	Stellenbosch	87
Walker Bay Vineyards 2022	Walker Bay	88
Warwick The White Lady 2022	Stellenbosch	91
Waterford Single Vineyard 2020	Stellenbosch	91
Whalehaven Sandstone Strata Terroir 2020	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	88
Whalehaven Seascape Reserve 2020	Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley	89
Zandvliet 2022	Robertson	87
Zevenwacht Estate 2022	Polkadraai Hills	88

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CAVALLI



JOURNEY'S END



BLAAUWKLIPPEN



PAUL CLÜVER



OAK VALLEY