

10-YEAR-OLD WINE
REPORT 2025

— WINEMAG.CO.ZA —



INTRODUCTION

Just how well do modern-era South African wines perform as they get older? One of the most important measures of great wine is that it should be age-worthy, that is it should become more pleasurable and more interesting to drink with time in the bottle and the annual 10-Year-Old Wine Report sets out to examine precisely this.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel for white, sweet, and fortified wines was chaired by me and included James Pietersen, CEO of Wine Cellar – Cape Town merchants and cellarers of fine wine – and Francois Rautenbach, a wine and hospitality specialist. For red wines, the panel comprised me, Pietersen, and renowned critic Michael Fridjhon.

We tasted blind, ratings done according to the 100-point system. Final scores were awarded on the basis of discussion that involved retasting where necessary rather than relying solely on arithmetic averaging.

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KEY FINDINGS

The 2015 vintage is widely hailed as one of the greats. A cold, wet winter in 2014 allowed proper vine dormancy, followed by warm, dry conditions that led to an early harvest of exceptionally healthy grapes.

For this year's 10-year retrospective, 98 wines from 47 producers were assessed – up from 82 wines from 46 producers in last year's review of the 2014 vintage. Did the wines live up to the hype? The answer: “Yes and no.”

Of the entries, 69.4% (68 wines) rated 90 points or higher on the 100-point quality scale – significantly better than the 52.4% of 2014s that achieved the same score but on par with the 2013 and 2012 vintages (69.3% and 72.4%, respectively). However, what sets 2015 apart is its higher peaks of quality. Among the Top 12, one Port-style fortified wine earned 96 points, while three whites, two reds, and another fortified wine scored 95. By contrast, only three wines in the 2014 tasting rated 95-plus, none in 2023, and just one in 2022.

The breakdown of the 98 entries included two Cap Classiques, 18 whites, 75 reds, one straw wine, and two Port-style fortifieds. Cape Bordeaux Red Blends led the sub-categories with 18 entries, followed by 14 Cabernet Sauvignons. Taken together, 62% of these wines rated 90-plus – solid, but not spectacular.

While entries were limited, Sauvignon-Semillon blends impressed once again, reinforcing their reputation for age-worthiness. Notably absent was Chenin Blanc. A possible reason? The category is split: small-batch, highly investable wines versus larger-volume offerings marketed for early drinking, regardless of their aging potential. Neither group of producers stands to gain much from entering this report.

The best overall wine? De Krans Cape Vintage Reserve 2015. As a prize, the winemaking team receives a bottle of Barbeito Malvasia 40 Year Old Vinho do Reitor, courtesy of Amorim Cork.

TOP 12 TASTING NOTES WHITE



De Grendel Sauvignon Blanc 2015

Alc 13.67% RS 1.1g/l TA 6.3g/l pH 3.35

The nose presents a herbal top note, followed by white peach, citrus, apple, and blackcurrant. The palate is lean and youthful, offering strikingly pure, clean fruit balanced by fresh acidity. The finish is long and pithy, highlighting its precision.



Highlands Road Sine Cera 2015

Alc 14% RS 3.8g/l TA 6.7g/l pH 3.2

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon, blending occurring after six months on the lees, 10% of the Sauvignon Blanc component matured in barrel. Citrus, peach, hay, herbs, liquorice and some leesy complexity on the nose. The palate has weight but also drive – good fruit concentration, pleasantly thick textured, the acidity nicely integrated and the finish gently savoury.



Tokara Director's Reserve White 2015

Alc 14% RS 2.7g/l TA 6.5g/l pH 3.29

69% Sauvignon Blanc, 31% Semillon. Fermented and matured for nine months in barrels, 400L for the Sauvignon blanc and 225L for the Semillon, 28% new. Enticing aromatics of hay, lemon, stone fruit and cassis. The palate is rich and broad without sacrificing nuance or balance – the acidity subsumed into the whole of the wine, the finish gently savoury.





Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserve 2015

Alc 13.5% RS 2.7g/l TA 6.4g/l pH 3.27

69% Sauvignon Blanc, 31% Semillon. 30% fermented and matured for six months in barrel, 75% new. Some flinty reduction before potpourri, fynbos, citrus, stone fruit and blackcurrant. The palate is still very much intact with pure fruit and racy acidity before a persistent finish. Elegant and detailed.



RED



Jordan The Long Fuse Cabernet Sauvignon 2015

Alc 14.5% RS 2.8g/l TA 5.8g/l pH 3.72

Matured for 23 months in barrel, partially new. The nose reveals red and black berries, a touch of leafiness, vanilla, and appealing hints of evolution. The palate is beautifully balanced, showcasing vibrant fruit, fresh acidity, and already mellow tannins, the finish gently savoury. Wonderfully enjoyable right now.



Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2015

Alc 14.5% RS 2g/l TA 6.1g/l pH 3.59

67% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec. Matured for 22 months in barrel, 62% new. Complex aromatics of red and black berries, some attractive herbal character, oyster shell and pencil shavings. The palate is full but balanced – great fruit expression, lively acidity and fine, velvet-like tannins. Pure and focused.





Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2015

Alc 14.31% RS 1.5g/l TA 5.8g/l pH 3.59

64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Cabernet Franc, 11% Merlot, 8% Petit Verdot. Matured for 14 months in barrel, 73% new. Complex aromatics of cassis, some leafiness, violets, oystershell, earth, pencil shavings and boot polish. The palate is full but balanced – dense fruit and bright acidity, the tannins still firm, making for a resolutely dry finish.



Nederburg Auction Reserve Private Bin R163 Cabernet Sauvignon 2015

Alc 14.69% RS 1.89g/l TA 5.96g/l pH 3.51

Grapes from Paarl vineyards. Matured for 29 months in barrel, 100% new. Red and black berries, potpourri, vanilla and oak spice on the nose while the palate shows excellent structure with dense fruit, bright acidity and tightly packed, grippy tannins. Built for longevity, this should go for a good while longer.



Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2015

Alc 14.5% RS 2.08g/l TA 5.93g/l pH 3.62

Matured for 18 months in barrel, 100% new. Cassis, violets, vanilla and oak spice on the nose. The palate is sumptuous being concentrated and smooth textured in the best sense, the finish long and dry. Powerful but also has plenty of drive.





Rust en Vrede Estate 2015

Alc 14.6% RS 3.2g/l TA 5.8g/l pH 3.57

57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Syrah, 9% Merlot. Matured for 18 months in barrel. Complex aromatics of red and black berries, floral perfume, herbs, and spice. The palate is luscious and polished, with pure fruit, bright acidity, and fine tannins. Impressively youthful, with much still to offer.



FORTIFIED



BEST OVERALL

De Krans Cape Vintage Reserve 2015

Alc 19.03% RS 98.4g/l TA 5.52g/l pH 3.85

73% Touriga Nacional, 25% Tinta Roriz, 2% Tinta Barocca. Matured for 20 months in big vats. Red and black berries, some leafiness, Xmas cake and spice on the nose. The palate is pure and poised with great depth of fruit and bright acidity, the spirit addition handled exceptionally well.



Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2015

Alc 18.44% RS 105.8g/l TA 5.6g/l pH 3.6

60% Touriga Nacional, 30% Touriga Franca, 8% Tinta Barocca, 2% Souzao. Matured for 24 months in older, large-format barrels. Plums, blue and black berries, violets, chocolate and earth on the nose. The palate is rich, full and smooth textured. A powerful wine, the tannins still far from resolved.



THE BENCHMARK

The Paul Sauer Bordeaux-style red blend from Stellenbosch's Kanonkop is widely regarded as a benchmark of the exceptional 2015 vintage. Co-owner Johann Krige generously provided a bottle for comparison, and it very much lived up to expectations. Tasting note and panel rating as follows:



Kanonkop Paul Sauer 2015

Alc 14.47% RS 2.8g/l TA 6.3g/l pH 3.53

70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc, 15% Merlot. Matured for 24 months in barrel, 100% new. Fragrant notes of crushed leaves, violets, and incense lead into cranberry, cassis, earth, and a hint of shoe polish. The palate is seamlessly composed, showcasing pure fruit, fresh acidity, and firm yet refined tannins, while the finish is long and dry. Complex and yet still possessing lots of youthful energy.



COMPLETE SCORES A - Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
CAP CLASSIQUE		
JC Le Roux Scintilla 2015	Western Cape	91
Pongrácz Desiderius 2015	Western Cape	88
CHARDONNAY		
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2015	Elgin	92
Delaire Graff Banghoek Reserve 2015	Banghoek	92
Neil Ellis Whitehall 2015	Elgin	92
Tokara Reserve Collection 2015	Stellenbosch	93
Vriesenhof 2015	Stellenbosch	90
SAUVIGNON BLANC		
De Grendel 2015	Durbanville	95
De Grendel Koetshuis 2015	Coastal Region	91
Delaire Graff Coastal Cuvée 2015	Coastal Region	93
Neil Ellis Wild Ferment Amica 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	89
Tokara Reserve Collection Elgin 2015	Elgin	92
SAUVIGNON BLANC-SEMILLON BLENDS		
Delaire Graff White Reserve 2015	Coastal Region	92
Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserv 2015	Elim	94
Gabriëlskloof Magdalena 2015	Western Cape	90
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2015	Elgin	95
Tokara Director's Reserve White 2015	Stellenbosch	95
Zorgvliet Simoné 2015	Banghoek	92
SEMILLON		
Opstal The Barber 2015	Slanghoek	90
Thorne & Daughters Old Vine Paper Kite 2015	Franschhoek	90
VERDELHO		
Thelema 2015	Stellenbosch	93
BARBERA		
The Drift Gift Horse 2015	Overberg	90
CABERNET FRANC		
Gabriëlskloof The Landscape Series 2015	Western Cape	91
Villion 2015	Bot River	91
Warwick 2015	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	91
CABERNET SAUVIGNON		
Alto 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Cederberg Five Generations 2015	Cederberg	92
Ecology 2015 (Paardenkloof)	Bot River	89
De Trafford 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Ernie Els 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Fleur du Cap Series Privée 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Jordan The Long Fuse 2015	Stellenbosch	95
Nederburg Auction Reserve Private Bin R163 2015	Western Cape	94
Nederburg The Manor House 2015	Western Cape	89
Nederburg Two Centuries 2015	Paarl	89

Neil Ellis Jonkershoek Valley 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	94
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch Cabernet Sauvignon 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Stark-Condé Three Pines 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	93
Tokara Reserve Collection 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Warwick Blue Lady 2015	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	92
Waterford 2015	Stellenbosch	93
CAPE BORDEAUX RED BLENDS		
Alto M.P.H.S. 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Beyerskloof Field Blend 2015	Stellenbosch	91
De Grendel Rubaiyat 2015	Coastal Region	90
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Durbanville Hills The Tangram Red 2015	Durbanville Cape Town	93
Eikendal Classique 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Ernie Els Signature 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Fleur du Cap Laszlo 2015	Coastal Region	93
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2015	Constantia	94
Idiom Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Petit Verdot Malbec 2015	Stellenbosch	87
La Bri Affinity 2015	Franschhoek	89
Morgenster The Reserve Red 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Overgaaouw Tria Corda 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Stark-Condé Oude Nektar 2015	Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch	92
Super Single Vineyards The King and I 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2015	Stellenbosch	95
Warwick Trilogy 2015	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	92
Zorgvliet Richelle 2015	Banghoek	87
GRENACHE		
Neil Ellis 2015	Piekeniers-kloof	92
MERLOT		
De Trafford 2015	Stellenbosch	87
La Bri 2015	Franschhoek	89
Nederburg Auction Reserve Private Bin R181 2015	Coastal Region	91
Overgaaouw 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Thelema 2015	Stellenbosch	87
PINOTAGE		
Flagstone Writer's Block 2015	Breedekloof	91
Fleur du Cap Unfiltered 2015	Western Cape	90
PINOT NOIR		
The Drift There Are Still Mysteries 2015	Napier	92
PaardenKloof The Kiss 2015	Bot River	90
Vriesenhof 2015		88
SHIRAZ		
Alto 2015	Stellenbosch	88

De Grendel 2015	Coastal Region	92
De Trafford Blueprint Syrah 2015	Stellenbosch	86
Ecology Shiraz 2015 (Paardenkloof)	Bot River	88
Flagstone Dark Horse 2015	Western Cape	89
Groot Constantia 2015	Constantia	90
Leeuwenkuil Heritage Syrah 2015	Swartland	93
Nicolas van der Merwe Syrah 2015	Stellenbosch	87
Stark-Condé Stellenbosch Syrah 2015	Stellenbosch	90
Stark-Condé Three Pines Syrah 2015	Jonkershoek Valley	89
Sutherland Syrah 2015	Elgin	89
Thelema 2015	Stellenbosch	86
Tokara Reserve Collection Syrah 2015	Stellenbosch	91
SIGNATURE RED BLENDS		
Bellingham Pod 2015	Coastal Region	90
Beyerskloof Faith Cape Blend 2015	Stellenbosch	88
Boschendal Black Angus 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Glenelly Estate Reserve 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Idiom Cape Blend 2015	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom Shiraz Mourvèdre Viognier 2015	Stellenbosch	91
Mas Nicolas 2015	Stellenbosch	92
Meinert Synchronicity 2015	Devon Valley	91
Neil Ellis Rodanos 2015	Western Cape	90
Rust en Vrede Estate 2015	Stellenbosch	94
Sijnn Red 2015	Malgas	86
The Drift Moveable Feast 2015	Overberg	92
STRAW		
Meinert Semillon 2015	Devon Valley	91
PORT-STYLE		
Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2015	Western Cape	95
De Krans Cape Vintage Reserve 2015	Calitzdorp	96

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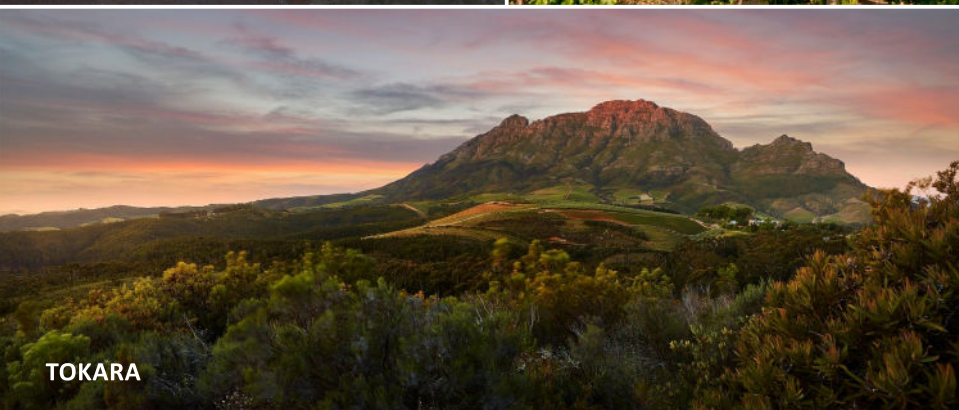
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FLAGSTONE



RUST EN VREDE



TOKARA



NEDERBURG



DE KRANS



HIGHLANDS ROAD



NEIL ELLIS



BOPLAAS



JORDAN