



NEXT GENERATION
AWARDS 2025

— WINEMAG.CO.ZA —

ABOUT THE iTOO NEXT GENERATION AWARDS 2025

The modern era of South African wine, now three decades in, has delivered remarkable gains in quality – but who will drive the next wave of progress?

The Next Generation Awards, proudly sponsored by special risks insurance brand iTOO, aim to spotlight the country's most promising young winemaking talent. A condition of entry was that entrants should be 35 or younger on the date of the awards ceremony, 20 June.

There were 51 entries received from 32 different individuals, with 43 (84%) rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale. Below are the Top 10 participants. Barbara Melck, as the winemaker responsible for the best wine overall, receives a prize of R10,000 and a further R2,500 for being first runner-up while Jamie Williams also receives R2,500 for being second runner-up.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of Spencer Fondaumiere, outgoing chairman of the South African Sommelier Association, and Jolette Steyn-Prior 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

MEET THE TOP 10



Barbara Melck

Age: 32 years, 11 months

Place of birth: Cape Town, Western Cape

Qualification: BScAgric, Viticulture and Oenology,
Stellenbosch University, 2014

**What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently
– and what did it teach you?**

Nederburg Cabernet Sauvignon 1980. I was lucky to taste a bottle from my grandmother's cellar and was struck by its density and freshness – even at just 12.5% alcohol.

It reminded me how winemakers often overwork Cabernet Sauvignon. The grape naturally has the intrinsic qualities to age well. The key, then, is to understand and respect that, without needing to apply fancy tricks.



Reyneke Sauvignon Blanc 2024

Best Overall

Price: R350

Wine of Origin: Polkadraai Hills

Abv: 13.5%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for nine months in 300-litre barrels, partially new. Exuberant aromatics of floral perfume, peach, citrus and a touch of blackcurrant. The palate is poised and flavour-packed – superb clarity of fruit and racy acidity before a saline finish. Light in frame but intense in delivery, a deeply engaging wine.



Barbara Melck



Reyneke
Syrah
2023

First Runner-Up

Price: R450

Wine of Origin: Polkadraai Hills

Abv: 13.5%

30% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 16 months in older barrels and 2,500-litre foudre. The nose shows red and black berries, olive, fynbos, cured meat, earth and pepper. Dense fruit, good freshness and nicely grippy tannins making for a finish that's long and dry. Impressive depth and structure.



Jamie Williams

Age: 32 years, nine months

Place of birth: Cape Town, Western Cape

Qualification: BSc Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Stellenbosch University, 2014

What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently – and what did it teach you?

Nederburg The Anchorman Old Vine Chenin Blanc. For Mother's Day, I had lunch with my mom to celebrate and opened a bottle.

Even though I made the wine and have tasted it countless times at work, it surprised me – fresher, more complex, more structured than I remembered.

That moment reminded me: wine isn't meant to be drunk alone (as we so often do after a tough workday). It's meant to be shared – with people you love and over a good meal.



Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Anchor Man Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2024

Second Runner-Up

Price: R225

Wine of Origin: Swartland

Abv: 13.71%

A portion was fermented in 300- and 500-litre barrels, partially new, and another portion in amphorae, with maturation lasting seven months. Potpourri, hay, herbs, guava, citrus and peach on the nose. The palate shows weightless intensity – pure and fresh with a pithy finish. Linear and energetic with near-perfect balance.



Sebastian Worthington-Fitnum

Age: 29 years, four months

Place of birth: Cape Town, Western Cape

Qualification: BScAgric, Viticulture and Oenology,
Stellenbosch University, 2018

**What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently
– and what did it teach you?**

Nederburg Cabernet Sauvignon 1976. Amazingly fresh, with vibrant red and dark fruit.

It was a reminder of the importance of creating wines that offer early enjoyment but also reward patience over decades. I love tasting older wines as they always bring perspective.



Anwilka 2021

Price: R425

Wine of Origin: Stellenbosch

Abv: 14.5%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Syrah. Matured for 16 months in 400-litre barrels, 60% new. Red and black berries, a leafy note, earth, some meatiness and pepper on the nose. The palate shows good fruit depth and well-handled tannins, resulting in a wine that's luscious and smooth-textured without tipping into excess. Layered and long, with admirable poise.



Megan van der Merwe

Age: 33 years, one month

Place of birth: Paarl, Western Cape

Qualification: BScAgric in Viticulture and Oenology, Stellenbosch University, 2014; class medal, PGDip in The Business of Wine, UCT Graduate School of Business, 2019

What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently – and what did it teach you?

Memento Grenache Blanc 2023. This wine's vitality, tension and texture were a compelling reminder of how much more there is still to be achieved in South African whites. It's the kind of wine that makes you revisit your own barrels and taste them more intently.



Beau Constantia Pierre Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2024

Price: R480

Wine of Origin: Constantia

Abv: 13.36%

96% Sauvignon Blanc, 4% Semillon. Includes three portions: The first 20% saw some skin contact before being oak-matured. The second – Sem and Sauv – were co-fermented in clay pots (59%). The last 21% went into new oak. All matured for 8 months. Peach, nectarine, fynbos and just a hint of leesy complexity on the nose. The palate shows dense fruit and a creamy texture balanced by bright acidity, the finish long and savoury. Elegant and detailed – pure, vibrant and dry.



Daniel Colombo

Age: 32 years, four months

Place of birth: Cape Town, Western Cape

Qualification: BA, Development and Environment,
Stellenbosch University, 2014

**What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently
– and what did it teach you?**

Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2011. Made me think a lot about the aging potential of whites and what the characteristics of an age-worthy white could be outside of the traditional mould.



Colombo There's Something About You Muscat d' Alexandrie 2024

Price: R295

Wine of Origin: Citrusdal Mountain

Abv: 12%

Grapes from a Skurfberg vineyard on its own roots planted sometime in the early 20th century. The winemaking involved three batches with varying skin maceration: five, seven, and 14 days. Matured for nine months in old 500-litre barrels. Gorgeous aromatics of peach, apricot, potpourri and herbs while the palate has presence and structure without any astringency – pure fruit offset by fresh acidity, the finish long and savoury.



Bobby Wallace

Age: 30 years, 11 months

Place of birth: Cape Town, Western Cape

Qualification: B.Agric, Oenology & Viticulture, Elsenburg, 2016

**What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently
– and what did it teach you?**

One of the most exciting wines I've had in some time comes from a winery that first ignited my passion for wine – Rockford in the Barossa Valley.

The 2019 Semillon was taut and restrained, with remarkable length. Not flashy, not built to impress on release, but crafted with patience in mind. In our fast-moving world, it's a reminder that some things truly do get better with time.



Off the Record Chenin Blanc 2023

Price: R270

Wine of Origin: Elgin

Abv: 12.86%

Spontaneously fermented and matured for 10 months in barrel, 10% new. The nose shows citrus, peach, herbs and a hint of reduction while the palate is complex and taut – concentrated fruit matched by a great line of acidity, the finish long and savoury. Flavoursome and characterful.



Banele Vakele

Age: 31 years, five months

Place of birth: Nqamakwe, Eastern Cape

Qualification: B.Agric, Oenology & Viticulture, Elsenburg, 2015

**What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently
– and what did it teach you?**

Domaine Roulot Meursault Les Vireuils 2018. Until April, I'd never had a great bottle of Roulot. Despite the hype, every time Duncan [Savage] pulled a cork, the wines were a bit disappointing. This one changed everything – though it also reminded me how easily we place impossible expectations on famous producers. Taught me to be patient and less quick to judge.



Tembela Syrah 2024

Price: R295

Wine of Origin: Coastal Region

Abv: 14%

80% Polkadraai Hills, 20% Paardeberg. Approximately 80% whole-bunch fermentation before maturation lasting 10 months in older 500-litre barrels. Flinty reduction precedes red and black berries, fynbos, potpourri, violets and pepper on the nose while the palate displays great fruit definition, lively acidity and powdery tannins. A seamless wine with a persistent finish.



Michelle Waldeck

Age: 30 years, eight months

Place of birth: Kraaifontein, Western Cape

Qualification: BScAgric, Viticulture and Oenology,
Stellenbosch University, 2016

**What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently
– and what did it teach you?**

Domaine Armand Rousseau Chambertin Grand Cru 2018. I've never thought South African wines need to stand back for any international counterparts – especially not the French! But this truly reshaped my thinking.

I tasted it in Belgium during a July 2024 trade visit. Our importer introduced us to a private client with a collection acquired over 40 years. He opened a lineup of exceptional Burgundies – my first real encounter with the region – and I was both nervous and exhilarated.

The Chambertin came last and didn't disappoint. Fresh and delicate yet assertive, it wasn't crafted to please the crowd but to express place and variety in the truest sense. That ethos is one I hope to carry in my own winemaking.



Benguela Cove Catalina Semillon 2022

Price: R650

Wine of Origin: Walker Bay

Abv: 14%

90% matured in 500-litre barrels, of which 35% new, and 10% in stainless-steel tank. Lots of leesy, waxy character to go with peach and citrus on the nose while the palate is rich and smooth textured with layers of flavour and well-integrated acidity. Not especially energetic but undeniably characterful and rewarding to drink.



Selma Willemse

Age: 26 years

Place of birth: Gqeberha, Eastern Cape

Qualification: B.Agric, Oenology & Viticulture, Elsenburg

What wine, local or international, blew your mind recently – and what did it teach you?

A Staffelter hof Ortega Beerenauslese 1988 – it sparked a great conversation about wine in that era and stirred a recurring thought: the remarkable legacy of those who came before us, their work laying the foundation we continue to build on today.



Crate Work Pinotage 2024

Price: R240

Wine of Origin: Swartland

Abv: 14.55%

Grapes from a vineyard planted in 1995. Matured for nine months in older oak. Cherries, plums, fynbos and flowers on the nose. The palate is super-dense with fresh acidity and fine tannins, the finish long and dry.

ROLL OF HONOUR: WINES RATING 90+

WHITE		
Wine	Winemaker	Score
22 Families Bush Vine Chenin Blanc 2024 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co)		92
Almenkerk Chardonnay 2023		90
Angus Paul Fantamtango Chenin Blanc 2023		93
Beau Constanti Cecily Viognier 2024		90
Beau Constantia Pierre Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2024		94
Benguela Cove Catalina Semillon 2022		93
Chamonix Old Vine Steen 2024		91
Colombo There's Something About You Muscat d' Alexandrie 2024		94
Groot Phesantekraal Marizanne Sauvignon Blanc 2024		92
Knorhoek Chenin Blanc 2023		92
Morgenster Vespri Vermentino 2024		90
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Anchor Man Old Vine Chenin Blanc 2024		94
Neethlingshof Estate Gewurztraminer 2024		91
Off the Record Chenin Blanc 2023		94
Painted Wolf Tear Drop Viognier 2024		91
Paul Wallace Reflections Chardonnay 2023		90
Reyneke Sauvignon Blanc 2024		95
Silvestre Chenin Blanc 2023		92
Steilpad Chenin Blanc 2023		91
Swanepoel White Pinotage 2023		90
Tembela Chenin Blanc 2024		91
Van Niekerk Vintners Sonwater 2023		90
Vrede en Lust Kogelberg Chenin Blanc 2024		92
RED		
Anco Spontaan 2024		90
Anwilka 2021		94
Beau Constantia Lucca Merlot Cabernet Franc 2021		91
Beau Constantia Stella Syrah 2022		90
Beyerskloof Eerste Ry Cabernet Sauvignon 2021		91
Carlo Pinotage 2023		92
Crate Work Pinotage 2024		93
Groot Phesantekraal 1897 Cabernet Sauvignon 2023		90
Groot Phesantekraal Syrah 2023		91
Hartenberg Doorkeeper Shiraz Grenache Mourvèdre 2023		90
Morgenster Rigoletto Sangiovese 2024		93
Off the Record Syrah 2023		90
Quoin Rock Merlot 2021		91
Raar Petite Sirah 2024 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co)		90
Reyneke Syrah 2023		95
Silvestre Shiraz 2021		90
Steilpad Silent Workhorse 2024		92
Tembela Syrah 2024		94
Vergenoegd Löw Amalie Merlot 2023		90
Vergenoegd Löw Maximilian 2022		91

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