



Prescient

FUND SERVICES

SIGNATURE RED BLEND
REPORT 2025

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

RUST EN VREDE

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2025

Winemag.co.za will release a series of category reports throughout the year with Prescient Fund Services as sponsor. Each report is 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 (wines ranked by quality relative to price) and scores on the 100-point quality scale for all wines entered. Upon publication, 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, Ndaba Dube, director of operations at the President Hotel in Cape Town, and Francois Rautenbach, wine and hospitality specialist.

Ratings were done according to the 100-point system, with final scores determined through discussion and retasting when necessary, rather than relying solely on arithmetic averages.

Christian Eedes
Editor, Winemag.co.za

KEY FINDINGS

For this year's Signature Red Blend Report sponsored by financial services company Prescient Fund Services, there were 52 entries from 41 producers with 27 (52%) rating 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

The best wines stand out for their distinctive aromatic and flavour profiles, and the panel was again reminded that the absence of bureaucratic constraints around permitted varieties – so typical of many European regions – remains a significant advantage for South African producers.

Moreover, wines positioned with relative modesty from a marketing perspective frequently over-deliver in terms of quality relative to price. Some caveats: not all experiments succeed – some blends feel like marriages of convenience rather than true partnerships – and sound basic winemaking technique remains non-negotiable. There are also numerous wines that, while technically correct, are soft and facile, offering little in the way of complexity.

The average price of the 27 wines to rate 90-plus is R276 a bottle and of the Top 10 is R347. Offering the best quality relative to price is Charles Lang & Sons Cabernet Sauvignon Ruby Cabernet Carignan Shiraz 2023 with a rating of 90 and selling for R65 a bottle.

Koelenhof, as producer of the wine judged best overall, wins an energy audit, 12-month monitoring, and grid optimization support worth approximately R10 000 from Evolve Battery & Grid Solutions.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2022

Price: R130

Total production: 12 481 bottles Abv 14.74%

58% Pinotage, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 4% Shiraz. Matured for 18 months in a combination of 70% second-fill and 30% third-fill barrels. Violets, red and black berries, subtle leafiness, pencil shavings, earth, and pepper on the nose. The palate combines density with clarity of fruit, while the acidity is bright and the tannins fine and tightly packed. A most assured wine that stands tall and finishes long.



Rust en Vrede Estate 2021

Price: R650

Total production: 74 500 bottles Abv 14%

59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Syrah, 10% Merlot. Matured for 18 months in barrel, 20% new. A top note of rose before plums, red berries, fynbos, pepper and spice. Medium bodied with plenty of detail, poise and length, the tannins very fine. Plush yet not overdone, a finely crafted wine.



Afrikaans Vol. VII Cabernet Sauvignon Cinsault 2023

Price: R280

Total production: 10 500 bottles Abv 14%

80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cinsault. Matured for 12 months, the Cabernet in 300-litre and the Cinsault in 500-litre older barrels. Red and black berries with a touch of spice on the nose. The palate is unapologetically polished – sweet, rich, and ripe, with a silky texture and soft tannins. A wine that provides effortless enjoyment.





Bizoe Genant 2022

Price: R390

Total production: 2 000 bottles Abv 14.74%

70% Shiraz, 25% Mourvèdre and 5% Grenache, the former two components from Darling, the latter from Breedekloof. Matured for 18 months in older oak. Red and black berries, flowers and spice on the nose while the palate is full-bodied and concentrated yet vital with fine tannins, the finish particularly long and dry.



JAN Syrah Grenache Mourvèdre 2023 (Zevenwacht)

Price: R190

Total production: 9 080 bottles Abv 14.01%

67% Syrah, 26% Grenache and 7% Mourvèdre. Matured for 12 months in 500-litre barrels, 15% new. Attractive aromatics of red and black berries, flowers and fynbos. The palate is elegant with good clarity of fruit, plenty of verve and crunchy tannins, the finish long and dry.



Alto Rouge La Residence Centenary Blend 2022

Price: R1 980

Total production: 1 000 magnums Abv 14%

40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Cinsault, 20% Shiraz, the Cabernet matured for 18 months in 100% new oak, the Cinsault and Shiraz for 14 months in older barrels. Compelling aromatics including floral perfume, fynbos, red and black berries, earth and spice. The palate is concentrated yet vital – succulent fruit, zesty acidity and fine tannins. Well balanced with a long, dry finish.





Coterie
Grenache & Syrah
2024
(Wildeberg)

Price: R210

Total production: 10 689 bottles Abv 13.44%

60% Grenache from Paarl, 40% Syrah from Franschhoek. Matured for nine months in 600-litre barrels, 22% new. The nose is lifted and intriguing with notes of mint and buchu to go with red and black berries while the palate shows a certain lightness and tension, something that allows its detail to shine.



DaschBosch
The Gift
2022

Price: R130

Total production: 26 400 bottles Abv 14.58%

47% Pinotage, 36% Shiraz, 17% Petit Verdot. Matured for 10 months in barrel, 10% new. Red and black berries, vanilla, spice, and a hint of flinty reduction on the nose. The palate is substantial yet well balanced, with pure fruit and fresh acidity before a dry finish. Admirable depth and detail.



Ernie Els
Proprietor's Blend
2022

Price: R350

Total production: 6 488 bottles Abv 14.74%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Shiraz, 10% Merlot. Matured for 18 months in barrel, 60% new. The nose shows top notes of violets and herbs before red and black berries plus a hint of earth. The palate is full-bodied yet not without freshness and the tannins are fine-grained. Well balanced, the finish long and dry.





Fairview Extraño 2021

Price: R150

Total production: 13 000 bottles Abv 14.07%

67% Tempranillo, 16% Cinsault, 14% Shiraz, 3% Grenache. Cinsault and Grenache Noir included 20% whole-bunch fermentation. Components matured for 23 months in French and American oak; 20% new oak used for the Tempranillo. Red and black berries, some floral perfume, pepper and spice on the nose. The palate is well balanced with succulent fruit and bright acidity before a gently savoury finish. Doesn't try to over-reach itself and all the better for it.



HONORABLE MENTIONS

Because final ratings are determined by averaging the scores of three judges, decimal places come into play. As a result, the following wines fell just short of the Top 10 on 92 points:



Alto Rouge 2023 | Price: R135

Nederburg Heritage Heroes
The Motorcycle Marvel 2022 | Price: R245

Warwick
Professor Black Pitch Black 2022 | Price: R225

BUYING GUIDE: RETAIL PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

Wine	Score	Price
Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2022	95 – Best Overall	R130
Rust en Vrede Estate 2021	95	R650
JAN Syrah Grenache Mourvèdre 2023 (Zevenwacht)	94	R190
Afrikaans Vol. VII Cabernet Sauvignon Cinsault 2023	94	R280
Bizoe Genant 2022	94	R390
DaschBosch The Gift 2022	93	R130
Coterie Grenache & Syrah 2024 (Wildeberg)	93	R210
Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2022	93	R350
Alto Rouge La Residence Centenary Blend 2022 (1.5L)	93	R1 980
Fairview Extraño 2021	92	R150
Alto Rouge 2023	92	R135
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2022	92	R225
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Motorcycle Marvel 2022	92	R245
Jakkalsvlei Mount Cuvee 2023	91	R200
Boschendal Nicolas 2021	91	R230
Spier Creative Block 3 2021	91	R250
Charles Lang & Sons Cabernet Sauvignon Ruby Cabernet Carignan Shiraz 2023	90	R 65
Bellevue Aticus 2023	90	R160
Bellevue Aticus 2024	90	R160
Bruce Jack Reserve Stream of Consciousness 2024	90	R160
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine 2022	90	R180
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Joseph's Legacy 2021	90	R190
Org de Rac Die Waghuis Red 2022	90	R215
Guardian Peak SMG 2022	90	R240
Babylonstoren Babel 2023	90	R250
De Krans Tritonia Calitzdorp Blend 2023	90	R250
Stellenzicht Acheulean Red 2019	90	R825

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Afrikaans Vol. VII Cabernet Sauvignon Cinsault 2023	Stellenbosch	94
Alto Rouge 2023	Stellenbosch	92
Alto Rouge La Residence Centenary Blend 2022	Stellenbosch	93
Anwilka 2021	Stellenbosch	89
Babylonstoren Babel 2023	Simonsberg-Paarl	90
Bellevue Aticus 2023	Stellenbosch	90
Bellevue Aticus 2024	Bottelary, Stellenbosch	90
Bizoe Genant 2022	Western Cape	94
Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2022	Western Cape	89
Boschendal Black Angus 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Boschendal Nicolas 2021	Cape Coast	91
Bruce Jack Reserve Stream of Consciousness 2024	Western Cape	90
Charles Lang & Sons Cabernet Sauvignon Ruby Cabernet Carignan Shiraz 2023	Stellenbosch	90
Coterie Grenache & Syrah 2024(Wildeberg)	Coastal Region	93
DaschBosch The Gift 2022	Western Cape	93
De Krans Tritonia Calitzdorp Blend 2023	Calitzdorp	90
De Wet Vintage Mashup Shiraz Pinotage Durif 2023	Worcester	92
Donkiesbaai Suiderkruis 2021	Piekenierskloof	87
Endura Cape Blend 2022 (Perdeberg)	Coastal Region	89
Ernie Els Proprietor's Blend 2022	Stellenbosch	93
Fairview Caldera 2022	Western Cape	89
Fairview Extraño 2021	Western Cape	92
Fairview Homtini 2022	Darling	87
Flagstone Dragon Tree Cape Blend 2022	Cape Coast	89
Groot Phesantekraal Cape Francolin 2023	Cape Town	88
Guardian Peak SMG 2022	Western Cape	90
Haute Cabrière Arnim Family Reserve 2021	Franschhoek	89
Jakkalsvlei Mount Cuvee 2023	Western Cape	91
JAN Syrah Grenache Mourvèdrem 2023 (Zevenwacht)	Stellenbosch	94
Joostenberg Bakermat 2021	Paarl	89
Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2022	Stellenbosch	95
La Petite Ferme Variations 2020	Western Cape	88
Nederburg Baronne 2023	Western Cape	89
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Motorcycle Marvel 2022	Coastal Region	92
One Man Band 2021 (Brocha)	Elgin	88
Org de Rac Die Waghuis Shiraz Grenache Mourvèdre 2022	Swartland	90
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Joseph's Legacy 2021	Coastal Region	90
Quoin Rock Simonsberg Blend 2020	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	89
Retief Reserve Cape Red 2023 (Van Loveren)	Robertson	85
Rust en Vrede Estate 2021	Stellenbosch	95
Salt Rock Red Blend NV	Western Cape	88
Spier Creative Block 3 2021	Stellenbosch	91
Spier Signature Collection Red Blend 2023	Western Cape	88
Stellenzicht Acheulean Red 2019	Stellenbosch	90

Strandveld Navigator 2022	Elim	88
The Drift Moveable Feast 2019	Overberg	89
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2022	Stellenbosch	92
Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2021	Stellenbosch	87
Warwick Three Cape Ladies 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Waterleliefontein Syrah Grenache Noir Blend 2022	Walker Bay	89
Zandvliet Pocket Power 2023	Robertson	88
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine Syrah Mourvèdre 2022	Stellenbosch	90

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WILDEBERG



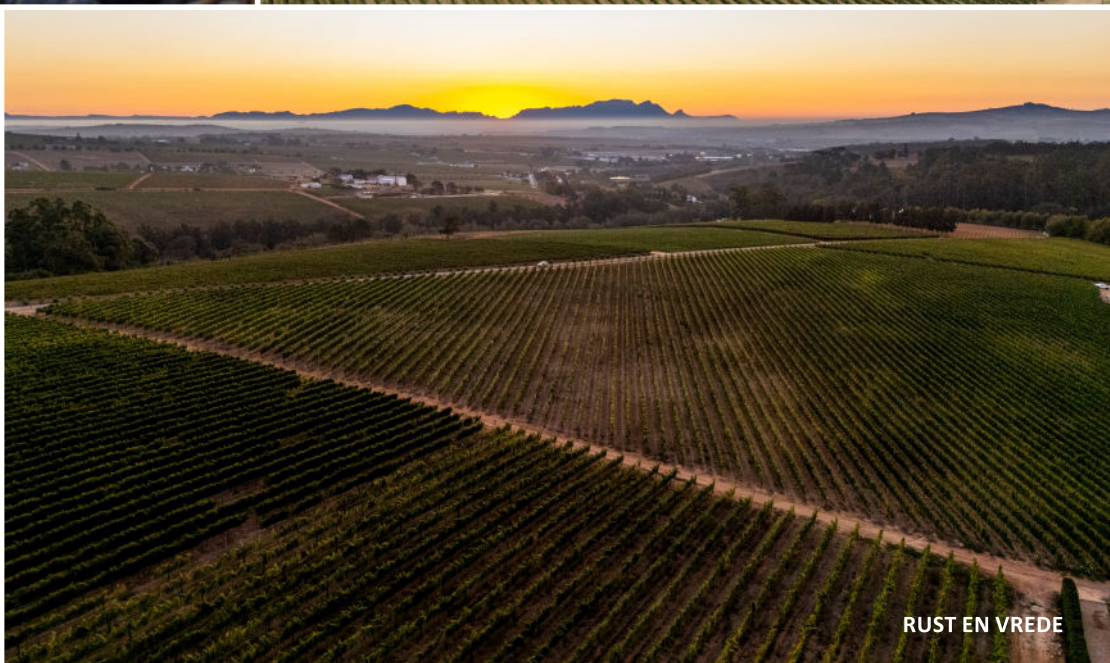
ERNIE ELS



FAIRVIEW



KOELENHOF



RUST EN VREDE



ALTO



UNIWINES