

10-YEAR-OLD WINE
REPORT 2026

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ANNO

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TOKARA
STELLENBOSCH

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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 was chaired by me and included James Pietersen, CEO of Wine Cellar and Francois Rautenbach, a wine and hospitality specialist.

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.

Christian Eedes

Editor, Winemag.co.za

KEY FINDINGS

The 2016 vintage was defined by high temperatures and drought. Yields were lower than 2015 due to heatwaves and water shortages, particularly in Stellenbosch, Paarl and Swartland. It was never widely championed, so it's no surprise that entries for this year's 10-year retrospective fell to 60 wines from 36 producers, down from 98 wines from 47 producers for the much-vaunted 2015 vintage.

Of the entries, 65% (39 wines) rated 90 points or higher on the 100-point quality scale. Not as impressive as the 69.4% of the 2015s that made the threshold but equally not as bad as all the negative publicity the vintage has attracted to date might have led one to expect.

In the most basic terms, an exceptionally hot and dry vintage accelerates ripening – sugars rise quickly, leading to higher alcohol, while acidity drops, potentially leading to imbalance if picking dates aren't well judged. That said, industry body Vinpro also notes that the drought led to smaller berries bringing greater concentration. Here, the higher skin-to-juice ratio gives deeper colour, more intense flavour and firmer tannins.

Among the Top Six are three red blends and a single-variety Cabernet Sauvignon, all from Stellenbosch, with a collective gravitas that makes them a match for the best of 2015. The panel's view was that while 2016 was undeniably challenging, those producers most attuned to their sites still managed to produce exceptional wines.

The Port-style Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve was again among the front-runners, a wine with proven age-worthiness, irrespective of vintage. Best Overall, and the only white in the Top Six, was the Tokara Director's Reserve White 2016, a perennial high performer in this annual retrospective.

As producer of the best wine overall, Tokara receives two magnums of Meerlust Cabernet Sauvignon 1983, worth approximately R12,000 and sponsored by Amorim Cork, along with shipping services to the value of R10,000 from Aspiring Couriers.

TOP SIX TASTING NOTES



BEST OVERALL

Tokara Director's Reserve White 2016

Alc 13.9% RS 3.6 g/l TA 5.8 g/l pH 3.25

70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Semillon. The Sauvignon Blanc was fermented in 400L barrels, the Semillon in 225L barrels. All French oak, 28% new. Maturation lasted nine months. Attractive aromatics of peach, blackcurrant, elderflower, touches of vanilla and spice and a little smoky reduction. The palate shows great purity and poise – concentrated fruit and fresh acidity before a long finish. Classy as always.



Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2016

Alc 14.3% RS 2.9 g/l TA 6.2 g/l pH 3.56

49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 11% Petit Verdot, 2% Malbec. Components kept separate and matured for 23 months in new oak before blending and returned to tank for one month. Red and black berries, an attractive herbal note, rose and pencil shavings on the nose while the palate has great structure – dense fruit, vibrant acidity and tannins that are still firm and granular. Sappy and long.



Rust en Vrede Estate 2016

Alc 14.63% RS 3.4 g/l TA 5.8 g/l pH 3.57

52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Syrah, 9% Merlot. Matured for 22 months in barrel, 40% new. Red and black berries, violets, fynbos and touch of pencil shavings. The palate is medium bodied with pure fruit, vibrant acidity and powdery tannins, the finish long and dry. Poised and precise.





Boplaas
Cape Vintage Reserve 2016

Alc 18.96% RS 92 g/l TA 5.5 g/l pH 3.65

80% Touriga Nacional, 10% Tinta Barocca, 5% Souzao, 5% Tinta Branca. Matured for 12 months in pipes. Wonderfully complex aromatics of black berries, violets, tea leaf, herbs, chocolate and spice while the palate shows great focus – dense fruit, bright acidity and firm yet fine tannins. Rich, smooth textured, the spirit addition handled exceptionally well.



Delaire Graff
Botmaskop 2016

Alc 14.5% RS 2.7 g/l TA 6.0 g/l pH 3.44

69% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc, 12% Petit Verdot, 3% Merlot, 3% Malbec. Matured for 16 months in barrel, 50% new. Red and black berries, herbs, and earth on the nose. Great clarity, fresh acidity and firm yet fine tannins. Concentrated and sweet-fruited, a polished wine.



Neil Ellis
Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch
Cabernet Sauvignon 2016

Alc 14.5% RS 2.3 g/l TA 5.8 g/l pH 3.56

Matured for 18 months in barrel, 100% new. Aromas of red and black berries, violets, subtle leafiness, sea breeze, and pencil shavings. The palate is pure and fresh, with fine tannins and a long, dry finish. Full-bodied yet tightly wound – set to go a long while yet.



COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
CAP CLASSIQUE		
Babylonstoren Sprankel 2016	Simonsberg-Paarl	91
Boschendal Grand Cuvée Brut 2016	Elgin	91
CHARDONNAY		
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2016	Elgin	87
Warwick The White Lady 2016	Stellenbosch	92
CHENIN BLANC		
Bellingham The Bernard Series Old Vine 2016	Coastal Region	89
Gabriëlskloof The Landscape Series Elodie 2016	Swartland	92
Ken Forrester The FMC 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Maison Single Vineyard 2016	Franschhoek	90
GRENACHE BLANC		
Leeuwenkuil 2016	Voor Paardeberg	93
SAUVIGNON BLANC		
Boschendal Appellation Series Elgin 2016	Elgin	90
Nederburg Two Centuries 2016	Darling	92
The Fledge & Co. Fume Blanc 2016	Western Cape	90
The Giant Periwinkle Blanc Fumé 2016	Elim	90
Tokara Reserve Collection Elgin 2016	Elgin	91
SAUVIGNON BLANC-SEMILLON BLENDS		
Constantia Glen Two 2016	Constantia	92
Delaire Graff White Reserve 2016	Coastal Region	91
Durbanville Hills The Tangram White 2016	Durbanville	90
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2016	Elgin	90
Tokara Directors Reserve White 2016	Stellenbosch	95
CABERNET FRANC		
David Finlayson Camino Africana 2016	Stellenbosch	87
Gabriëlskloof The Landscape Series 2016	Bot River	90
CABERNET SAUVIGNON		
Alto 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Ernie Els 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Niel Ellis Jonkershoek Valley Stellenbosch 2016	Jonkershoek Valley	94
Redstone 2016	Stellenbosch	87
Tokara Reserve Collection 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Waterford 2016	Stellenbosch	93
CAPE BORDEAUX RED BLENDS		
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2016	Simonsberg-Paarl	95
Constantia Glen Five 2016	Constantia	88
De Grendel Rubaiyat 2016	Coastal Region	87
Delaire Graff Botmaskop 2016	Stellenbosch	94
Ernie Els Signature 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Keet First Verse 2016	Stellenbosch	91
La Bri Affinity 2016	Franschhoek	90
Morgenster The Reserve Red 2016	Stellenbosch	88

Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Brew Master 2016	Western Cape	89
Schultz Family Wines Boneyards 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Seriously Old Dirt 2016	Western Cape	89
Tokara Directors Reserve Red 2016	Stellenbosch	89
Vilafonté Series C 2016	Paarl	87
Vilafonté Series M 2016	Paarl	89
MERLOT		
De Trafford Merlot 2016	Stellenbosch	90
PINOTAGE		
Bellingham The Bernard Series Bushvine 2016	Coastal Region	90
De Grendel Amandelboort 2016	Durbanville	92
Fairview Primo 2016	Paarl	90
PINOT NOIR		
The Drift There Are Still Mysteries 2016	Napier	92
SHIRAZ		
Alto 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Babylonstoren 2016	Simonsberg-Paarl	88
De Grendel 2016	Coastal Region	87
Kevin Arnold 2016	Stellenbosch	90
Maison 2016	Franschhoek	91
Tokara Reserve Collection Syrah 2016	Stellenbosch	91
Zonnebloem 2016	Stellenbosch	90
SIGNATURE RED BLENDS		
Boschendal Nicolas 2016	Coastal Region	91
Hogan Divergent 2016	Coastal Region	90
Rust en Vrede Estate 2016	Stellenbosch	95
The Drift Moveable Feast 2016	Overberg	93
NOBLE LATE HARVEST		
Nederburg The Winemasters Noble Late Harvest 2016	Western Cape	89
PORT-STYLE		
Boplaas Cape Vintage Reserve 2016	Western Cape	94
De Krans Cape Vintage Reserve 2016	Calitzdorp	92



BABYLONSTOREN



NEIL ELLIS



DELAIRE GRAFF



BOPLAAS



RÛST EN VREDE

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