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AUTUMN
SERIES 2026

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

Cape White Blends | Chenin Blanc | Minority White | Minority Red | Shiraz

An aerial photograph of a vineyard in a valley. The foreground shows rows of green grapevines on a hillside. In the middle ground, there are several white buildings, including a large barn and a smaller house, surrounded by trees. A road winds through the valley. The background features steep, rocky mountains under a clear sky.

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CHENIN BLANC
REPORT 2026

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

LE SUEUR

ABOUT THE WINEMAG.CO.ZA TASTING PROGRAMME 2026

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.

The tasting programme is further supported by partners Aspiring Couriers, Getwine and Winterhalter.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, wine writer Malu Lambert, and Alexandra McFarlane of McFarlane Wines.

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 Chenin Blanc Report, sponsored by financial services company Prescient Fund Services, 50 wines from 38 producers were entered. Of these, 32 wines (64%) scored 90 or higher on the 100-point quality scale.

Stylistics

The Top 10 shows a clear consolidation around precision over power, with winemaking favouring texture, line (drive from entry to finish) and site expression rather than overt oak imprint. Old vine fruit dominates, increasingly handled through a mix of large-format oak, concrete egg, amphora and stainless steel, with new oak used sparingly for framing rather than flavour. Foudre and other neutral vessels are prevalent, supporting clarity and pithy, savoury finishes. Despite often ripe aromatics, alcohols sit broadly moderate, with acidity consistently well judged. Stylistically, there is a shift toward layered restraint: density without weight, and complexity delivered through fermentation and vessel diversity.

Structural insights

Several structural and economic signals emerge from the 2026 Chenin Blanc score set, relating to both quality distribution and the category's evolving position within South African fine wine:

1. Quality compression at the top end

The spread is tight: many wines cluster in the 90–93 range, with only a few reaching 94. This points to a maturing category where consistency is widespread and differentiation increasingly rests on site and philosophy rather than sheer winemaking execution.

2. Old vine material as primary value anchor

The highest scores are disproportionately linked to old vine or explicitly heritage-designated sites. "Old vine" is no longer a marketing adjunct but a core pricing and scoring driver – an informal grand cru logic taking shape.

3. Terroir diversification remains significant

Chenin has long been widely planted across the Cape, but diversification beyond Stellenbosch could be seen to be accelerating. While Stellenbosch remains numerically dominant, the top tier is increasingly dispersed, with Klein Karoo, Paarl, Piekenierskloof and Wellington all featuring in the Top 10.

4. Scale is no longer a clear disadvantage

Large-volume wines (e.g. Cavalli, Flagstone, Donkiesbaai) compete comfortably at 92–93 points, though small-production wines still dominate the 94 peak. Technical excellence has been commoditised; exceptional site expression remains scarce and rewarded.

5. Stylistic convergence around a “Cape Chenin” idiom

There is clear convergence: moderate alcohols, pithy or savoury finishes, restrained oak, and an emphasis on tension over opulence. The debate is no longer what Chenin should be, but where the best fruit is sourced.

6. Price decoupled from quality

High scores span a wide price range, from entry-level to premium single-site wines. Chenin remains one of the few categories where meaningful value arbitrage persists.

Bottom line

South African Chenin Blanc is shifting from a category defined by winemaking variation to one defined by site hierarchy. The industry is highly efficient at producing good wine, but still inefficient at allocating value to its best vineyards.

Cape White Blends

Also included in the tasting was a selection of Cape White Blends, eligible only if Chenin Blanc made up more than 15% but less than 85% of the final wine. Of the 18 entries, 12 scored 90 or higher. The best wines show no fixed formula: different varieties, same result – balance and precision. Impressively, even at good volumes and accessible prices, producers achieve complexity, using blending to enhance quality, not hide flaws.

Winner benefits

Le Sueur, producer of the Best Chenin Blanc, and Cavalli, producer of the Best Cape White Blend, each win shipping services to the value of R10,000 from Aspiring Couriers, as well as a set of Spiegelau glasses worth R2,400, courtesy of warewashing specialist Winterhalter.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Le Sueur | Best Overall Kluisenaar 2025

Price: R219

Total Production: 1,080 bottles Abv 13.78%

From an old Meiringspoort vineyard, the mountain pass between Beaufort West and Oudtshoorn. Matured for 10 months in a 2,000-litre foudre. Flowers, herbs, citrus, peach and some bee's wax on the nose. Impressive fruit density matched by fresh acidity, the finish long and pithy.



Kleinbegin 2025 (Arbeidsgenot)

Price: R275

Total Production: 1,600 bottles Abv 14.5%

Matured for 10 months in 500-litre barrels. Exotic aromatics of stone fruit, orange, potpourri, ginger and baking spice. Great fruit density and punchy acidity before a lightly grippy finish. Complex, layered and long, an arresting wine.



Cavalli Reserve Chenin Blanc 2025

Price: R229

Total Production: 26,500 bottles Abv 13.26%

Matured for 8.5 months in a combination of 225-, 300- and 500-litre barrels, 10% new. Compelling aromatics of floral perfume, herbs, citrus, peach, vanilla and a little flinty reduction. The palate shows excellent clarity and drive, finishing long and pithy.





Donkiesbaai Steen 2025

Price: R389

Total Production: 39 500 bottles and 515 magnums Abv 13.37%

From Piekenierskloof vineyards planted in 1986 and 1988. 70% is fermented and matured in 500-litre barrels, partially new, and 30% in concrete eggs. Complex and enticing aromatics of citrus, peach, flowers, herbs and a hint of reduction. The palate is energetic with excellent fruit purity and bright acidity before a pithy finish. Elegant and detailed.



Ernie Els Proprietor's Old Vine 2025

Price: R350

Total Production: 1,990 bottles Abv 13.5%

From two blocks planted in 1988 at the foot of the Helderberg on granite. Fermented and matured for nine months in oak barrel, a ceramic oblong called a Clayver and amphorae. Flowers, herbs, pear, peach and citrus on the nose while the palate has clarity, poise and energy – pure fruit and fresh acidity before a savoury finish.



Knorhoek 2025

Price: R220

Total Production: 18,500 bottles Abv 13.3%

Fermented and matured for 10 months in a combination of foudre, concrete egg, stainless steel and barrels. Top notes of hay and herbs before citrus, peach, some leesy complexity and a hint of vanilla. The palate is forceful yet balanced – broad and textured with moderate acidity and a gently savoury finish.





Le Sueur 2025

Price: R150

Total Production: 1,700 bottles Abv 13.81%

60% of the grapes from Meiringspoort, fermented and matured for 10 months in foudre, 40% from the Outeniqua Mountains, vinified in stainless steel tank. The nose displays a herbal top note before citrus, peach and a hint of leesy complexity. The palate has nice weight and texture, tangy acidity lending verve, the finish savoury.



Welbedacht Skoolblok Steen 2025

Price: R165

Total Production: 3,015 bottles Abv 12.88%

From a block planted in 1979. Fermented and matured for six months in stainless steel. Citrus, peach and some leesy complexity on the nose while the palate is forceful – dense fruit and punchy acidity before a savoury finish.



Flagstone Tributary 2025

Price: R160

Total Production: 3,900 bottles Abv 13.5%

55% of grapes from Agter-Paarl, 45% from Wellington. 75% vinified in stainless steel tank, 25% fermented and matured for four months in barrel, 10% new. Attractive aromatics of herbs, flowers, guava, citrus, peach and a little flinty reduction. The palate is tightly wound – clean fruit and racy acidity before a dry finish.





Joostenberg Die Agteros 2025

Price: R239

Total Production: 6,162 bottles Abv 12.7%

From a block planted in 1989. Fermented and matured for eight months in a combination of older oak, concrete eggs and amphorae. Pretty aromatics of pear, peach, jasmine, herbs and spice while the palate is linear with pure fruit and fresh acidity, the finish long and dry.



HONOURABLE MENTIONS

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



Dornier Moordenaarskloof 2023 | Price: R315

Nederburg Heritage Heroes

The Anchor Man Old Vine 2024 | Price: R225

Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection

Courageous Barrel-Fermented 2025 | Price: R199

Zevenwacht Z Collection 2025 | Price: R330

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

Wine	Score	Price
Le Sueur Kluisenaar 2025	94 – BEST OVERALL	R219
Kleinbegin 2025 (Arbeidsgenot)	94	R275
Le Sueur 2025	93	R150
Welbedacht Skoolblok Steen 2025	93	R165
Knorhoek 2025	93	R220
Cavalli Reserve Chenin Blanc 2025	93	R229
Ernie Els Proprietor's Old Vine 2025	93	R350
Donkiesbaai Steen 2025	93	R389
Flagstone Tributary 2025	92	R160
Joostenberg Die Agteros 2025	92	R239
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Courageous Barrel-Fermented 2025	92	R199
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Anchor Man Old Vine 2024	92	R225
Dornier Moordenaarskloof 2023	92	R315
Zevenwact Project Z 2025	92	R330
Charles Lang & Daughter NV	91	R50
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2025	91	R170
Vrede en Lust Kogelberg 2025	91	R245
Old Road Wine Co. Anemos 2024	91	R260
Groot Phesantekraal Anna De Koning 2025	91	R275
Flagstone Paradigm 2025	91	R286
Windmeul Reserve 2024	90	R110
Kleine Zalze Heritage Vineyards Old Vine 2025	90	R140
Stellenbosch Reserve Hangbrug 2025	90	R175
Rikus Neethling 2025	90	R180
Roodekrantz Old Vine Somerkind 2025	90	R225
Bellingham The Bernard Series Old Vine Cape Town 2024	90	R250
Bellingham The Bernard Series Old Vine Cape Town 2025	90	R250
Groot Phesantekraal Anna De Koning 2024	90	R275
Wildeberg Terroirs 2024	90	R325
Waterford 2025	90	R395
Cederberg Nieuwoudt Five Generations 2024	90	R395
Old Road Wine Co. Stone Trail 2024	90	R425

CHENIN BLANC COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Bellingham The Bernard Series Old Vine Cape Town 2024	Cape Town	90
Bellingham The Bernard Series Old Vine Cape Town 2025	Cape Town	90
Cavalli Reserve 2025	Stellenbosch	93
Cederberg Nieuwoudt Five Generations 2024	Cederberg	90
Charles Lang & Daughter NV	Western Cape	91
Chamonix Old Vine Steen 2025	Franschhoek	89
Creation Cool Climate 2025	Walker Bay	89
Donkiesbaai Steen 2025	Piekenierskloof	93
Dornier Moordenaarskloof 2023	Stellenbosch	92
Du Toitskloof Old Vine 2025	Breedekloof	88
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cape Garden 2025	Durbanville, Cape Town	89
Ernie Els Proprietor's Old Vine 2025	Stellenbosch	93
Flagstone Paradigm 2025	Agter-Paarl	92
Flagstone Tributary 2025	Coastal Region	92
Groot Phesantekraal Anna De Koning 2024	Cape Town	90
Groot Phesantekraal Anna De Koning 2025	Durbanville	91
Hazendal 2025	Bottelary	89
Jason's Hill Beatrix Reserve 2024	Breedekloof	86
Joostenberg Die Agteros 2025	Paarl	92
Kleinbegin 2025 (Arbeidsgenot)	Piekenierskloof	94
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2024	Stellenbosch	88
Kleine Zalze Heritage Vineyards Old Vine 2025	Western Cape	
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2025	Stellenbosch	91
Knorhoek 2025	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	93
Le Sueur 2025	Klein Karoo	93
Le Sueur Kluisenaar 2025	Klein Karoo	94
Leeuwenkuil Heritage 2022	Swartland	85
Leeuwenkuil Reserve 2025	Swartland	89
Leyland Single Vineyard 2024 (De Wet)	Rooikrans	87
Mellish Family Vineyards Bakenkop 2024	Durbanville, Cape Town	88
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Anchor Man Old Vine 2024	Swartland	92
Old Road Wine Co. Anemos 2024	Swartland	91
Old Road Wine Co. Stone Trail 2024	Franschhoek	90
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Courageous Barrel-Fermented 2025	Paarl	92
Rikus Neethling 2025	Stellenbosch	90
Roodekrantz Old Vine Somerkind 2025	Darling	90
Rudmatis 2022	Coastal Region	87
Rudmatis 2023	Coastal Region	89
Stellenbosch 1679 Bush Vine 2023 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	87
Stellenbosch 1679 Bush Vine 2024 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenbosch Reserve Hangbrug 2025	Stellenbosch	90
Tokara Limited Release 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Vrede en Lust Kogelberg 2025	Elgin	91
Waterford 2025	Stellenbosch	90

Welbedacht Skoolblok Steen 2025	Groenberg	93
Wildeberg Terroirs 2024	Paarl	90
Wildeberg Terroirs 2025	Paarl	87
Windmeul Reserve 2024	Paarl	90
Zevenwacht Z Collection 2025	Polkadraai Hills	92
Zoetendal 2022	Coastal Region	86



CAVALLI



QUOIN ROCK



DONKIESBAAI



ERNIE ELS



JOOSTENBERG



FLAGSTONE

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CAPE WHITE BLEND
REPORT 2026

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TOP SIX TASTING NOTES



Cavalli | Best Overall Reserve White 2025

Price: R309

Total Production: 6,500 bottles Abv 13.24%

60% Chenin Blanc, 30% Verdelho, 10% Chardonnay. Matured for 10 months in barrel, 30% new. Sophisticated aromatics of earth, pear and peach, with hints of herbs and spice. The palate is pure and poised yet finely detailed, revealing layers of flavour before a long, dry finish.



Coterie by Wildeberg Chenin Blanc & Grenache Blanc 2025

Price: R225

Total Production: 7,848 bottles Abv 13%

78% Chenin Blanc, 32% Grenache Blanc. Spontaneously fermented and matured for nine months in 500- and 600-litre Austrian and French oak barrels. Intricate aromatics of citrus, stone fruit, flowers, herbs and some flinty reduction. Good fruit concentration and big acidity before a lightly grippy finish – flavours narrowing down precisely.



JAN 2025 (Zevenwacht)

Price: R199

Total Production: 26,500 bottles Abv 13.26%

Matured for 8.5 months in a combination of 225-, 300- and 500-litre barrels, 10% new. Compelling aromatics of floral perfume, herbs, citrus, peach, vanilla and a little flinty reduction. The palate shows excellent clarity and drive, finishing long and pithy.





Bosman Adama 2025

Price: R229

Total Production: 5,500 bottles and 515 magnums Abv 12.56%

57.09% Chenin Blanc, 18.99% Viura, 17.12% Vermentino, 6.06% Grenache Blanc, 0.14% Viognier. Components vinified separately – matured for four months in barrel before being blended. Complex aromatics of flowers, herbs, pear and peach, a lightly oxidative, cut apple note and spice. Medium-bodied, with moderate acidity and a gently savoury finish. Subtle and nuanced.



De Wet Vintage Mashup Sauvignon Blanc Chenin Blanc Semillon 2025

Price: R105

Total Production: 4,042 bottles Abv 12.73%

41% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Chenin Blanc, 19% Semillon. Fermented and matured for six months in older barrels. Hay, spearmint and other herbs, flowers, citrus and peach on the nose. Pure fruit and racy acidity before a dry finish.



Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Rossouw's Heritage 2025

Price: R209

Total Production: 6,750 bottles Abv 14.24%

67% Chenin Blanc, 18% Grenache Blanc, 15% Viognier. 40% of the wine matured for 10 months in second-fill 500-litre barrels. Herbal top notes give way to citrus, green apple, peach and melon. The palate has satisfying weight yet retains bright acidity. Flavourful and well-composed, it certainly merits attention.



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

Wine	Score	Price
Cavalli Reserve White 2025	95	R309
JAN 2025 (Zevenwacht)	94	R199
Coterie by Wildeberg Chenin Blanc & Grenache Blanc 2025	94	R225
Bosman Adama 2025	93	R229
De Wet Vintage Mashup Sauvignon Blanc Chenin Blanc Semillon 2025	92	R105
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Rossouw's Heritage 2025	92	R209
Vrede en Lust White Mischief 2025	91	R135
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine White 2025	91	R190
Afrikaans Vol. VIII Chenin Blanc Chardonnay 2025	91	R240
Arbeidsgenot Tannie Dona White Blend 2025	91	R295
Flagstone Noon Gun 2025	90	R116
Zwartwater Estate White Blend 2024 (Lammershoek)	90	R395

CAPE WHITE BLEND COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Arbeidsgenot Tannie Dona White Blend 2025	Swartland	91
Afrikaans Vol. VIII Chenin Blanc Chardonnay 2025	Stellenbosch	91
Bosman Adama 2025	Coastal Region	93
Bellingham Freda 2023	Coastal Region	89
Boland Cellar One Formation 2025	Coastal Region	88
Boland Cellar Reserve White 2025	Paarl	88
Cavalli Reserve White 2025	Stellenbosch	95
Coterie by Wildeberg Chenin Blanc & Grenache Blanc 2024	Coastal Region	89
Coterie by Wildeberg Chenin Blanc & Grenache Blanc 2025	Coastal Region	94
De Wet Vintage Mashup Sauvignon Blanc Chenin Blanc Semillon 2025	Worcester	92
Eenzaamheid Vin Blanc 2025	Paarl	89
Flagstone Noon Gun 2025	Western Cape	90
JAN 2025 (Zevenwacht)	Stellenbosch	94
Maanschijn Herbarium Cape White 2024	Walker Bay	89
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Rossouw's Heritage 2025	Coastal Region	92
Vrede en Lust White Mischief 2025	Elgin	91
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine Cape White Blend 2025	Stellenbosch	91
Zwartwater Estate White Blend 2024 (Lammershoek)	Swartland	90



DE WET



CAVALLI



WILDEBERG



ZEVENWACHT

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