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SERIES 2026

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

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

Prescient

FUND SERVICES

MINORITY
REPORT 2026

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

Alternative White and Red Varieties



WILDEBERG

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.

INTRODUCTION

The Minority Report focuses on wines made from grape varieties with total plantings of 5,000 hectares or less. South Africa's seven most widely planted varieties – Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Colombar, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Pinotage and Chardonnay – all exceed this threshold, while the eighth, Merlot, falls just short at 4,907 hectares. Together, the Big Eight account for 81.5% of the national vineyard, leaving lesser-known varieties easily overlooked – this is their moment to step into the spotlight.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The white varieties panel was chaired by me and included Ndaba Dube, director of operations, President Hotel, Cape Town, and Jolette Steyn-Prior, head of sales and imports at merchant Brice & Burnett.

The red varieties panel comprised me, Dube and Lauren Seegers-Jewell, SA buyer and sales manager at Brice & Burnett.

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

WINEMAG.CO.ZA

Everything to do with South African fine wine.

KEY FINDINGS

For this year's Minority Report, sponsored by financial services company Prescient Fund Services, 33 white wine and 52 red wine entries were entered – a total of 85 wines from 48 producers. Of these, 26 whites (79%) and 44 reds (85%) scored 90-plus on the 100-point quality scale.

What stands out most this year is not novelty, but the emergence of a distinct grouping of alternative varieties alongside the mainstream core. Alternative varieties are no longer marginal experiments; they are entirely credible in their own right – albeit with a still-narrow consumer base.

1. Quality is increasingly beyond dispute

This year's results show a substantial cluster of 90+ wines across both white and red categories, with a small elite tier at 94. This confirms that alternative varieties are now capable of consistent fine-wine performance, particularly in Semillon, Grenache Blanc, Grenache Noir, Cinsault, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc.

2. Stylistic convergence is reinforcing category identity

Despite genetic diversity, the wines increasingly share a recognisable stylistic frame: fresh acidity and moderate alcohol, yielding a profile defined by detail, texture and savoury character. Whole-bunch fermentation, large-format oak, concrete and amphora are now standard tools rather than experimental choices. The result is not homogenisation, but a coherent "Cape restraint" aesthetic across varieties.

3. The Big Eight remain dominant – but no longer exclusive in defining quality

The Big Eight still account for the vast majority of vineyard plantings and retail volume, and they continue to anchor the market structurally. However, alternative varieties are increasingly capable of matching or exceeding quality benchmarks in specific sites and hands. The shift is therefore not displacement, but quality pluralisation.

4. The key commercial question: who actually drinks these wines?

At present, the consumer base for alternative varieties remains small, educated and highly engaged – typically sommeliers, collectors, wine trade professionals and curious premium consumers. These wines are not yet mainstream purchases; they are discovery-driven rather than habitual buys.

This creates a structural challenge: the category is critically strong but demand-constrained. Unlike Sauvignon Blanc or Cabernet Sauvignon, alternative varieties do not yet benefit from mass recognition, global category familiarity, or entrenched consumption occasions.

5. Value distortion remains a defining feature

Pricing is still imperfectly aligned with quality. Several top-performing wines remain accessible, while others reflect brand positioning more than intrinsic differentiation. This reinforces the idea that alternative varieties are still in a price-discovery phase, particularly outside established producer names.

6. Commercial relevance depends on three pathways

For alternative varieties to scale beyond their current niche, three mechanisms matter:

- On-trade influence (restaurants and wine bars): where discovery and recommendation drive trial
- Producer-led storytelling and identity building: varietal and site narratives that replace familiarity with curiosity
- Price-value advantage: continued strong quality-to-price ratios that encourage repeat purchase once discovered

Without these, the category risks remaining “admired but not habitual.”

Bottom line

The most important insight is that alternative varieties are not struggling on quality – they are struggling on consumer habit formation. The wines are technically and intellectually successful, but commercially they remain dependent on recommendation ecosystems rather than organic demand.

Winner benefits

Wildeberg, producer of the Best White Overall, and Perdeberg, producer of the Best Red Overall, 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.

BEST WHITE TASTING NOTES



Wildeberg | Best Overall White 2023

Price: R459

Total Production: 1,470 bottles Abv 12.55%

From a Franschoek vineyard planted in 1905. Matured for nine months in Austrian oak, 50% new. Thatch, citrus, stone fruit and wax on the nose. The palate is rich yet balanced – concentrated fruit and bright acidity before a gently savoury finish. Full of flavour.



Hazendal White Blend 2025

Price: R395

Total Production: 3,000 bottles Abv 13.11%

54% Roussanne, 46% Marsanne. Matured for 11 months in predominantly clay pots but also older oak. Compelling aromatics of floral perfume, fynbos, pear, peach, citrus and some flinty reduction. The palate is taut and energetic – good fruit clarity, snappy acidity and a pithy finish. Plenty of nuance even at this early stage.



Donkiesbaai Grenache Blanc 2025

Price: R389

Total Production: 5,850 bottles Abv 13.9%

60% in older 500-litre barrels, 30% in concrete eggs, and 10% in clay amphorae. Blossom, fynbos, pear, peach and citrus on the nose. Good weight and energy – concentrated fruit matched by zesty acidity, the finish long and dry. Precisely made.



BEST RED TASTING NOTES



Perdeberg | Best Overall The Vineyard Collection Grenache Noir 2024

Price: R129

Total Production: 14,086 bottles Abv 13.52%

Matured for 12 months in older oak. Red and black berries, fynbos and pepper on the nose. Succulent fruit, bright acidity and chalky tannins. Intensely flavoured without sacrificing vibrancy.



Cirrus Pinot Noir 2024

Price: R389

Total Production: 7,200 bottles Abv 13.15%

From clones PN 115 and PN 777. 30% whole-bunch fermented. Matured for 14 months in older 500-litre barrels. Red and black cherry, crushed herbs, spice and some earthiness. The palate is structured and well-balanced – pure fruit, fresh acidity and tannins that are none too soft. The finish, meanwhile, is lengthy and dry.



Flagstone The Bugler's Call Grenache Noir 2024

Price: R175

Total Production: 2,500 bottles Abv 14.5%

95% of grapes from Wellington, 5% Swartland. 90% Grenache Noir, 5% Petite Sirah, 5% Shiraz. Matured for five months in older oak. Complex aromatics of red and black berries, orange, olive, fynbos and musk. Medium bodied with good fruit definition, fresh acidity and powdery tannins. Subtle and refined.





Hazendal Carignan 2025

Price: R995 (1.5L)

Total Production: 460 magnums Abv 13.68%

15% whole-bunch fermented. Matured for 11 months in one 500-litre barrel. Red and black berries, flowers, fynbos and white pepper on the nose. The palate is medium bodied, intense but still graceful. Flavourful, vital and resolutely dry on the finish.



Wildeberg Terroirs Cinsault 2025

Price: R329

Total Production: 4,407 bottles Abv 12.72%

30% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for nine months in 500- and 600-litre barrels. 30% new. A touch of reduction precedes notes of cherry, musk, fynbos and spice. Relatively full-bodied, with bright acidity and firm yet supple tannins, it has an appealing vinosity.



Koelenbosch Sangiovese 2023

Price: R109

Total Production: 8,794 bottles Abv 13.14%

Matured for 18 months in second-fill barrels. Red berries, floral perfume and spice on the nose. The palate is medium bodied with good structural integrity – pure fruit, fresh acidity and fine-grained tannins. Delicious!



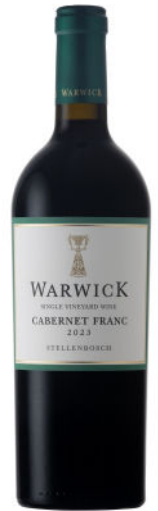


Warwick Cabernet Franc 2023

Price: R675

Total Production: 4,223 bottles Abv 14.5%

Matured for 21 months in barrel, 40% new. Plum, cassis, fynbos, pencil shavings and vanilla on the nose. The palate is dense and smooth textured. Good flavour intensity, the finish dry and persistent. A serious proposition.



ALTERNATIVE WHITE VARIETIES

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

Wine	Score	Price
Wildeberg White 2023	94	R459
Hazendal White Blend 2025	94	R395
Donkiesbaai Grenache Blanc 2025	92	R389
The Foundry Grenache Blanc 2023	92	R250
Wildeberg Amphora 2024	92	R445
Benguela Cove Catalina Semillon 2023	92	R700
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection Grenache Blanc 2025	91	R110
Zorgvliet Semillon 2025	91	R150
Du Toitskloof Viognier 2025	91	R155
Morgenster Vespri Vermentino 2025	91	R155
The Pledge Our Orange Wine Viognier 2025 (Le Grand Domaine)	91	R180
Dornier Semillon 2023	91	R250
Idiom Semillon 2024	91	R250
The Foundry Roussanne 2024	91	R250
Koelenhof Koelnektar Isray Oliver 2026	90	R75
Cederberg Bukettraube 2025	90	R130
Raar Palomino 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	90	R197
Raar Grenache Blanc 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	90	R197
Lothian of Elgin Riesling 2023	90	R199
Constantia Uitsig Semillon 2024	90	R240
Vrede en Lust Barrique Semillon 2023	90	R245
The Foundry Grenache Blanc 2022	90	R250
Terra Loci Déjà Vu Grenache Blanc 2024	90	R325
Quoin Rock Semillon 2021	90	R495
Haute Collection Semillon 2023 (Haute Cabrière)	90	R500
Allée Bleue Amphora Semillon 2025	90	R550

ALTERNATIVE RED VARIETIES

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

Wine	Score	Price
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection Grenache Noir 2024	94	R129
Flagstone The Bugler's Call Grenache Noir 2024	93	R175
Wildeberg Terroirs Cinsault 2025	93	R329
Cirrus Pinot Noir 2024	93	R389
Hazendal Carignan 2025	93	R995 (1,5 L)
Koelenbosch Sangiovese 2023 (Koelenhof)	92	R109
Warwick Cabernet Franc 2023	92	R675
Oak Valley Groenlandberg Pinot Noir 2024	92	R350
Lord Jackal Private Collection Cabernet Franc 2024 (Jakkalsvlei)	92	R375
Backsberg Patriarch Cabernet Franc 2023	92	R495
De Grendel Op die Berg Pinot Noir 2023	92	TBC
Old Road Wine Co. The Rix Dollar Cinsault 2024	92	TBC
Boplaas Touriga Nacional 2024	91	R120
De Krans Touriga Nacional 2024	91	R150
Le Sueur Cinsault 2025	91	R160
Kasteelberg Cinsault 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	91	R197
Raar Grenache Noir 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	91	R197
Raar Petite Sirah 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	91	R197
Zorgvliet Petit Verdot 2023	91	R215
Zorgvliet Cabernet Franc 2022	91	R240
Glenelly Glass Collection Cabernet Franc 2021	91	R265
Morgenster Nabucca Nebbiolo 2021	91	R270
Haute Cabriere Pinot Noir Reserve 2022	91	R300
Wildeberg Terroirs Cinsault 2024	91	R325
Blaauwklippen Cabernet Franc 2024	91	R390
Allée Bleue Old Vine Cinsaut 2025	91	R550
Benguela Cove Vinography Cabernet Franc 2023	91	R725
Benguela Cove Vinography Petit Verdot 2024	91	R725
Straatbrak Red Blend 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	91	TBC
The Pledge Our 1060 Pinot Noir 2025 (Le Grand Domaine)	90	R180
The Pledge Our Challenge Malbec 2024 (Le Grand Domaine)	90	R180
Dornier Malbec 2023	90	R230
Von The Thief Durif 2025	90	R320
Terra Loci Babilon Pinot Noir 2023	90	R325
Vrede en Lust Cabernet Franc 2021	90	R350
Von The Tandem Tannat Cinsault 2025	90	R360
Lord Jackal Private Collection Barbera 2024 (Jakkalsvlei)	90	R375
Donkiesbaai Cinsault 2024	90	R390
Stellenbosch Reserve Stadsaal Cinsault 2024	90	R390
Donkiesbaai Grenache Noir 2024	90	R390
Wateford Estate Grenache Single Vineyard 2023	90	R395
Creation Ridge Grenache Noir 2024	90	R480
Haute Collection Pinot Noir 2023 (Haute Cabrière)	90	R500
Bizoe Idioglossia Malbec 2020	90	R500

ALTERNATIVE WHITE VARIETIES

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
BLENDS		
Hazendal White Blend 2025	Bottelary	94
GRENACHE BLANC		
Donkiesbaai 2025	Piekenierskloof	92
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection Grenache Blanc 2025	Coastal Region	91
Raar Grenache Blanc 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	Swartland	90
Terra Loci Déjà Vu Grenache Blanc 2024	Paarl	90
The Foundry Grenache Blanc 2022	Voor-Paardeberg	90
The Foundry Grenache Blanc 2023	Voor-Paardeberg	92
RIESLING		
Lothian of Elgin 2023	Elgin	90
Vrede en Lust Early Mist 2025	Elgin	89
SEMILLON		
Allée Bleue Amphora 2025	Darling	90
Benguela Cove Catalina 2023	Walker Bay	92
Constantia Uitsig 2024	Constantia	90
Dornier 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Haute Collection 2023 (Haute Cabrière)	Franschhoek	90
Idiom 2024	Stellenbosch	91
Quoin Rock 2021	Cape Agulhas	90
Vrede en Lust Barrique 2023	Elgin	90
Wildeberg White 2023	Franschhoek	94
Wildeberg Amphora 2024	Franschhoek	91
Zorgvliet 2025	Banghoek	91
VIOGNIER		
Du Toitskloof 2025	Breedekloof	91
Flagstone Word of Mouth 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Lowerland Witgat 2024	Prieska	89
The Pledge Our Orange Wine 2025 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	91
OTHER		
Boplaas Nel Family Reserve Alvarinho 2025	Calitzdorp	88
Cederberg Bukettraube 2025	Cederberg	90
De Krans Tritonia Verdelho 2024	Calitzdorp	89
Koelenhof Koelnektar Isray Oliver 2026	Porseleinberg	90
Lothian of Elgin Grüner Veltliner 2025	Elgin	89
Morgenster Vespri Vermentino 2025	Stellenbosch	90
Raar Palomino 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	Swartland	90
The Foundry Roussanne 2024	Voor-Paardeberg	91

ALTERNATIVE RED VARIETIES

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
BLENDS		
Straatbrak Red Blend 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	Swartland	91
Von The Tandem Tannat Cinsault 2025	Swartland	90
CABERNET FRANC		
Backsberg Patriarch 2023	Stellenbosch	92
Benguela Cove Vinography 2023	Walker Bay	91
Blaauwklippen 2024	Stellenbosch	91
Glenelly Glass Collection 2021	Stellenbosch	91
Lord Jackal Private Collection 2024 (Jakkalsvlei)	Western Cape	92
Vrede en Lust 2021	Elgin	90
Warwick 2023	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	92
Zorgvliet 2022	Banghoek	91
CINSAULT		
Allée Bleue Old Vine Cinsaut 2025	Piekenierskloof	91
Donkiesbaai 2024	Piekenierskloof	90
Kasteelberg 2025	Swartland	91
Le Sueur 2025	Swartland	91
Old Road Wine Co. The Rix Dollar 2024	Stellenbosch	92
Stellenbosch Reserve Stadsaal 2024	Stellenbosch	90
Welbedacht Bakleiblok 2025	Groenberg	88
Wildeberg Terroirs 2024	Wellington	91
Wildeberg Terroirs 2025	Wellington	93
GRENACHE NOIR		
Creation Ridge 2024	Hemel-en-Ridge, Walker Bay	90
Donkiesbaai 2024	Piekenierskloof	90
Eenzaamheid 2025	Agter-Paarl	86
Flagstone The Bugler's Call 2024	Coastal Region	93
Perdeberg The Vineyard Collection 2024	Paarl	94
Raar 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co.)	Swartland	91
Wateford Estate Single Vineyard 2023	Stellenbosch	90
MALBEC		
Bizoe Idioglossia 2020	Western Cape	90
Blaauwklippen 2022	Stellenbosch	88
Charles Lang & Sons 2025	Western Cape	89
Dornier 2023	Stellenbosch	90
The Pledge Our Challenge Malbec 2024 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	90
PETIT VERDOT		
Benguela Cove Vinography 2024	Walker Bay	91
Zorgvliet 2023	Banghoek	91
PINOT NOIR		
Haute Collection 2023 (Haute Cabrière)	Franschhoek	90
Cirrus 2024	Ceres Plateau	93
De Grendel Op die Berg 2023	Ceres Plateau	92

Haute Cabrière Reserve 2022	Franschhoek	91
Lothian of Elgin 2023	Elgin	89
Oak Valley Groenlandberg 2024	Elgin	92
Quoin Rock 2024	Elgin	88
Terra Loci Babilon 2023	Walker Bay	90
The Pledge Our 1060M 2025 (Le Grand Domaine)	Ceres Plateau	90
TOURIGA NACIONAL		
Boplaas 2024	Western Cape	91
De Krans 2025	Calitzdorp	91
OTHER		
Hazendal Carignan 2025 (magnum)	Bottelary	93
Bosman Nero Nero d'Avola 2024	Wellington	89
Idiom Zinfandel 2021	Zinfandel	87
Koelenbosch Sangiovese 2023 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	92
Lord Jackal Private Collection Barbera 2024 (Jakkalsvlei)	Western Cape	90
Morgenster Nabucca Nebbiolo 2021	Stellenbosch	91
Raar Petite Sirah 2025 (Riebeek Valley Wine Co)	Swartland	91
Von The Thief Durif 2025	Swartland	90



WARWICK



PERDEBERG



DONKIESBAAI



HAZENDAL



QUOIN ROCK



FLAGSTONE

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