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

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SHIRAZ
REPORT 2026

WINEMAG.CO.ZA



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 James Pietersen, CEO of merchant 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

KEY FINDINGS

For this year's Shiraz Report, sponsored by financial services company Prescient Fund Services, 59 wines from 48 producers were entered. Of these, 29 wines (49%) scored 90 or higher on the 100-point quality scale.

Stylistics

The Top 10 again reflects the shift toward finesse over force, with winemaking geared toward aromatic lift, purity and structure. Whole-bunch fermentation is widely employed, often at significant levels, enhancing perfume, tension and tannin shape. Carbonic maceration appears selectively, contributing suppleness without sacrificing detail. Large-format oak and foudre dominate, with new wood used sparingly, preserving site expression and fruit clarity. Alcohols are generally moderate, supported by bright acidity and finely managed extraction. Stylistically, the wines emphasise precision and energy: weightless intensity, savoury complexity and peppery typicity, in line with the move away from the overt richness of yesteryear toward a more restrained, Syrah-authentic paradigm.

Structural insights

Several clear structural and economic patterns emerge from the 2026 South African Shiraz/Syrah score set – pointing to a category that is simultaneously broadening geographically, tightening stylistically, and stratifying sharply at the top end.

1. A pronounced “long tail” with a steep quality spike at the top

While most wines cluster between 88–91 points, a small elite tier (93–97) creates a sharp upward break. This indicates a category where competent, commercially viable Syrah is widely produced, but true excellence remains scarce and highly differentiated.

2. Quality drivers are multifactorial rather than singular

No single explanatory variable dominates the upper tier. High scores are distributed across a wide range of regions, soil types and producer profiles, suggesting that excellence in Syrah emerges from a convergence of factors rather than a discrete driver. What unites the top wines is less geography or soil type in isolation than a shared producer commitment to precision and controlled winemaking.

3. Top-tier performance is increasingly geographically dispersed

While Stellenbosch remains numerically dominant in terms of entries, the highest-scoring wines are spread across multiple regions, reflecting a more decentralised quality map for South African Syrah.

4. Stylistic convergence around restraint and aromatic lift is now entrenched

Across regions and price points, the stylistic signature is consistent: peppery aromatics, moderate alcohols and finely textured tannins. This confirms a clear shift away from dense, extraction-led wines toward a more transparent, aromatic, Northern Rhône-adjacent Cape idiom.

5. Whole-bunch fermentation is now a mainstream tool

Widespread whole-bunch usage indicates methodological convergence. It is now a standard instrument for managing perfume, freshness and tannin shape rather than an experimental technique.

6. Quality is outpacing price formation

Prices do not reliably track quality: some of the best Syrahs are expensive, but many equally high-scoring wines remain very affordable. This suggests a market where pricing lags behind quality, with brand reputation still outweighing performance. As a result, strong value exists beyond the established top-tier names.

Bottom line

South African Syrah shows rising quality and growing stylistic maturity, but pricing still lags reality. Brand strength, not inherent quality, largely drives price, creating strong value opportunities across the category.

Winner benefits

Leeuwenkuil, as producer of best wine overall, wins 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



Leeuwenkuil | Best Overall Heritage Syrah 2022

Price: R509

Total Production: 2,616 bottles Abv 13.5%

From a 1995 vineyard on schist. 30% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 18 months in older oak. Arresting aromatics of red and black berries, lavender, olive brine and intense pepper on the nose. The palate is wonderfully precise – great clarity of fruit, vibrant acidity and powdery tannins. So very complex.



Zevenwacht Z Collection Syrah 2024

Price: R399

Total Production: 2,424 bottles Abv 13.65%

50% carbonic maceration and the remainder with varying portions of whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 12 months in 1000-litre foudre. Red and black berries, musk, violets, fynbos and pepper on the nose. The palate is lush but balanced – pure fruit, bright acidity and powdery tannins, the finish ultra-dry.



Joostenberg Klippe Kou Syrah 2022

Price: R239

Total Production: 4,980 bottles Abv 13.3%

70% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 10 months in a combination of older barrel and concrete egg. Gorgeous aromatics of red berries, rose, fynbos and white pepper. The palate has a weightless intensity about it – light-bodied, fresh acidity and tightly packed tannins. Elegant and energetic.





Zandvliet 2024

Price: R170

Total Production: 59,515 bottles Abv 14.04%

Matured for 15 months in 4,000-litre foudre. Red and black berries, olive, charcuterie and white pepper on the nose while the palate displays dense fruit, bright acidity and powdery tannins. Full of flavour, the finish gently savoury.



Christina Syrah 2023 (Van Loveren)

Price: R309

Total Production: 3,384 bottles Abv 13.97%

Matured for 15 – 18 months in 300-litre barrels, 20% new. Enticing aromatics of red and black berries, fynbos, lavender white pepper and a touch of vanilla. The palate is precise - pure fruit matched by fresh acidity, the tannins fine-grained and yet grippy. Lovely weight and texture, the finish persistent.



Groot Phesantekraal Syrah 2024

Price: R195

Total Production: 6,664 bottles Abv 14.24%

20% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 12 months in barrel, 20% new. Pronounced aromatics of red and black berries, orange, herbs and pepper. The palate offers succulent, clean fruit, fresh acidity and crunchy tannins. Well balanced and immediately approachable.





Hazendal Syrah 2025

Price: R139

Total Production: 10,828 bottles Abv 13.5%

22% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for nine months, 60% in older 500-litre barrels, and 40% in concrete tanks. Heady aromatics of red and black berries, wilted rose and pepper. The palate is rich and dense with moderate acidity and soft tannins, the finish nevertheless dry.



La Motte Reserve Collection Syrah 2024

Price: R229

Total Production: 48,000 bottles Abv 13.41%

58% of grapes from Franschhoek, 40% Elim and 2% Stellenbosch. Includes 4% Petite Sirah and 2% Cabernet Sauvignon. 20% of the Elim grapes whole-bunch fermented. Matured for 15 months in 300-litre barrels, 30% new. Red and black berries, fynbos, incense and white pepper on the nose while the palate is concentrated with lemon-like acidity and grippy tannins. Pure and focussed.



Leeuwenkuil Reserve Red 2023

Price: R169

Total Production: 13,598 bottles Abv 13.5%

88% Shiraz, 9% Mourvèdre, 2% Cinsault, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon. Matured for 12 months in 5,000-litre foudres. Red and black berries, orange, fynbos and pepper on the nose. The palate is substantial yet detailed – good fruit concentration, fresh acidity and powdery tannins, the finish long and dry.





Rust en Vrede Syrah 2022

Price: R475

Total Production: 45,000 bottles Abv 14.16%

15% whole-bunch fermentation. Matured for 18 months in 500-litre barrels, 16% new. The nose shows red berries, cured meat, white pepper and a touch of reduction. The palate is medium bodied and well balanced – good clarity of fruit and fresh acidity before a gently savoury finish. Tightly wound and built to age.



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:



Cederberg 2021 | Price: R295

Nicolas van der Merwe Syrah 2020 | Price: R450

Rainbow's End Syrah 2024 | Price: R295

Windmeul 2023 | Price: R85

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

Wine	Score	Price
Leeuwenkuil Heritage Syrah 2022	97 – BEST OVERALL	R509
Zevenwacht Z Collection Syrah 2024	95	R399
Zandvliet 2024	94	R170
Joostenberg Klippe Kou Syrah 2022	94	R239
Hazendal Syrah 2025	93	R139
Leeuwenkuil Reserve Red 2023	93	R169
Groot Phesantekraal Syrah 2024	93	R195
La Motte Reserve Collection Syrah 2024	93	R229
Christina Syrah 2023 (Van Loveren)	93	R309
Rust en Vrede Syrah 2022	92	R475
Windmeul 2023	92	R85
Cederberg 2021	92	R295
Rainbow's End Syrah 2024	92	R295
Nicolas van der Merwe Syrah 2020	92	R450
Cavalli 2024	91	R175
Raar Carbonic Maceration 2025 (Riebeek Cellar Wine Co.)	91	R197
Stellenbosch Reserve Kruithuis Syrah 2023	91	R200
Mellish Family Vineyards Bakenkop Syrah 2024	91	R245
Zandvliet Kalkveld 2023	91	R292
Bellingham The Bernard Series Syrah 2024	91	R322
Tokara Reserve Collection Syrah 2023	91	R440
Wildeberg Red 2024	91	R458
Koelenbosch Shiraz 2023 (Koelenhof)	90	R105
Truter 2024	90	R145
De Grendel 2022	90	R250
Alto 2022	90	R300
Kevin Arnold 2021 (Waterford)	90	R395
David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner 2023	90	R395
Zoetendal The Signature Shiraz 2024	90	R550

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Allée Bleue 2022	Franschhoek	87
Alto 2022	Stellenbosch	90
Arbeidsgenot 2024	Swartland	88
Avontuur Stone Field Syrah 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Backsberg Pumphouse 2024	Coastal Region	88
Bellingham The Bernard Series Basket Press Syrah 2023	Coastal Region	87
Bellingham The Bernard Series Basket Press Syrah 2024	Coastal Region	91
Bizoe Estalet Syrah 2024	Western Cape	88
Cavalli 2024	Stellenbosch	91
Cederberg 2021	Cederberg	92
Charles Lang & Sons 2024	Western Cape	89
Charles Lang & Sons 2025	Western Cape	88
Christina Syrah 2023 (Van Loveren)	Robertson	
Creation Ridge Syrah 2022	Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge, Walker Bay	88
David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner Syrah 2023	Elim	90
De Grendel 2022	Coastal Region	90
De Wet 2024	Worcester	89
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The High Noon 2023	Durbanville, Cape Town	89
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The High Noon 2024	Durbanville, Cape Town	87
Eagles' Nest Reserve 2023	Constantia	88
Eenzaamheid 2023	Agter-Paarl	88
Flagstone Dark Horse 2021	Cape Coast	88
Groot Phesantekraal Syrah 2024	Cape Town	93
Hazendal Syrah 2025	Bottelary	93
Joostenberg Klippe Kou Syrah 2022	Paarl	94
Kevin Arnold 2021 (Waterford)	Stellenbosch	90
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2021	Stellenbosch	89
Kleynood Tamboerskloof Syrah 2021	Stellenbosch	89
Koelenbosch Shiraz 2023 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	90
Kruger Family Reserve 2022 (Stellenview)	Stellenbosch	88
Kruger Family Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	Stellenbosch	88
La Motte Reserve Collection Syrah 2024	Cape Coast	93
La Petite Ferme 2023	Franschhoek	89
Leeuwenkuil Heritage Syrah 2022	Swartland	97
Leeuwenkuil Reserve Red 2023	Swartland	93
Mellish Family Vineyards Bakenkop Syrah 2024	Durbanville, Cape Town	91
Nederburg The Manor House 2022	Coastal Region	88
Nederburg The Winemasters 2023	Western Cape	88
Nicolas van der Merwe Syrah 2020	Stellenbosch	92
Peter Falke Alani 2020	Stellenbosch	87
Quoin Rock 2022	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Raar Carbonic Maceration 2025 (Riebeek Cellar Wine Co.)	Swartland	91

Rainbow's End Syrah 2024	Banghoek, Stellenbosch	92
Rust en Vrede Syrah 2022	Stellenbosch	92
Stellenbosch Reserve Kruithuis Syrah 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Tokara 2022	Western Cape	89
Tokara Reserve Collection Syrah 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Truter 2024	Coastal Region	90
Vinevenom Spektra 2024	Swartland	88
Von The Sir 2024	Swartland	89
Wildeberg Red 2023	Franschhoek	89
Wildeberg Red 2024	Franschhoek	91
Windmeul 2023	Coastal Region	92
Zandvliet 2024	Robertson	94
Zandvliet Hill of Enon 2022	Robertson	88
Zandvliet Kalkveld 2023	Robertson	91
Zevenwacht Estate Syrah 2022	Stellenbosch	88
Zevenwacht Z Collection Syrah 2024	Polkadraai Hills	95
Zoetendal The Signature 2024	Elim	90



GROOT PHEANTEKRAAL



HAZENDAL



JOOSTENBERG



RUST EN VREDE



ZEVENWACHT



ZANDVLIET



LA MOTTE

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