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Pinotage | Signature Red Blend | Sweet Wine & Fortifieds

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SIGNATURE RED BLEND
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 and Getwine.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, wine entrepreneur and ASI Diploma Sommelier Spencer Foundamiere, and wine writer Malu Lambert.

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

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.

KEY FINDINGS

This year’s tasting for the Signature Red Blend Report, sponsored by Prescient Fund Services, points to a somewhat disparate set of wines that is nevertheless technically consistent across a wide price spectrum. Rather than fragmentation or disorder, the dominant story is one of democratisation, with quality winemaking now embedded from entry-level to premium wines.

1. Depth across all price tiers

One of the clearest signals from the tasting is just how deep the quality pool has become across the price spectrum. The Top 10 ranges from under R100 to nearly R700, yet consistently delivers scores between 93 and 95 points.

Importantly, there is no single “entry point” for quality. Wines such as Chateau Libertas 2025 (R89, 93 points), Nederburg Baronne 2024 (R105, 95 points) and Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2023 (R97.50, 94 points) sit comfortably alongside far more expensive bottlings, without any compromise in sheer quality, although their styles may differ.

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.

At the same time, premium wines such as Rust en Vrede Estate 2022 (R699, 94 points) and Boschendal Black Angus 2022 (R599, 93 points) confirm that higher price tiers can deliver greater refinement and composure, even if not a proportional leap in score.

2. Is there a shared structural blueprint?

Is a clear approach to blending emerging? Among the Top 10, five wines combine Cabernet Sauvignon with Shiraz/Syrah in some shape or form, supported by a rotating cast of smaller components.

Three of the Top 10 feature Pinotage, suggesting that the so-called “Cape Blend”, built around this variety, is not a completely dead concept. More generally, however, it’s difficult to conclude that there is a broadly accepted structural model. Producers still seem given over to a fair amount of experimentation, and if officialdom is prepared to allow this, then why not?

3. Quality is no longer confined to prestige producers

A defining feature of this tasting is the strength of large and medium-scale producers in delivering both consistency and character. Nederburg, Boschendal, Koelenbosch and De Wet all feature prominently among the highest-rated wines, often at highly accessible prices.

This suggests a meaningful shift: high-volume production is no longer synonymous with compromise, but increasingly provides a platform for reliable quality.

In particular, wines under R150 repeatedly outperform expectations, demonstrating that technical precision and commercial scale are now closely aligned.

4. Premium positioning is increasingly about expression, not hierarchy

While higher-priced wines remain important for depth and range, their role appears to be shifting. Rather than consistently outperforming lower-priced wines in score terms, they are more often distinguished by site expression, production polish and brand narrative.

This is evident in wines such as Rust en Vrede Estate and Donkiesbaai Suiderkruis, which offer detail, structure and composure rather than a dramatic step-up in scoring.

The implication is that premium positioning is becoming less about outperforming the category, and more about offering a different register of expression within it.

Conclusion

This tasting reflects an industry that is no longer defined in hierarchical terms, but one that is consolidating around shared technical competence, with stylistics continually being refined to produce wines suited to every level of the market. Producers across the spectrum are now working from a strong technical foundation.

In short, Signature Red Blends remain a somewhat fragmented category, but taken as a whole, they offer something for virtually every palate and budget.

Winner benefits

Boschendal, as producer of best wine overall, wins shipping services to the value of R10,000 from Aspiring Couriers.

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Boschendal | Best Overall Nicolas 2023

Price: R265

Total Production: 210,000 bottles Abv 13.5%

38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Shiraz, 26% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 1% Malbec and 1% Petit Verdot. Matured for 14–16 months, the Bordeaux varieties in 300-litre barrels and the Shiraz in 500-litre barrels, with a total of 30% new oak. Red berries, buchu, pepper and spice on the nose. The palate is poised and unshowy – medium bodied with fresh acidity and powdery tannins.



Nederburg Baronne 2024

Price: R105

Total Production: 1,168,572 bottles Abv 13.67%

44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Shiraz, the rest Petit Verdot, Tannat, Durif, Malbec and Carignan. Matured for six months in a selection of oak. Appealing aromatics of red berries, flowers, herbs, pepper and vanilla. Pure fruit, vibrant acidity and powdery tannins. Juicy and soft textured, a wine that possesses surprising charm.



De Wet Vintage Mashup Shiraz Pinotage Durif 2023

Price: R105

Total Production: 4,719 bottles Abv 14.3%

39% Shiraz, 36% Pinotage, 25% Durif, the Shiraz matured in 300-litre barrels, the Pinotage and Durif in tank with staves. Intensely fragrant on the nose with top notes of flowers and herbs before red and black berries plus spice. The palate is pure and focused – dense fruit, fresh acidity and nicely grippy tannins.





Donkiesbaai Suiderkruis 2024

Price: R389

Total Production: 3,600 bottles Abv 13.11%

60% Syrah, 20% Cinsault, 18% Grenache Noir, 2% Grenache Blanc. Red varieties fermented with 10-15% whole-bunches. Varieties matured separately for 12 months in older 500-litre barrels. On the nose, red and black berries, flowers, fynbos and spice. The palate is medium bodied with succulent fruit, bright acidity and powdery tannins, the finish gently savoury.



Florence by Aldering Winemakers Selection Cape Blend 2024

Price: R179

Total Production: 11,866 bottles Abv 14.17%

63% Pinotage, 22% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 5% Shiraz. Matured for 18 months in barrel, approximately 10% new. Red and black berries, fynbos and spice on the nose while the palate shows good fruit concentration, fresh acidity and fine tannins. Precise and clean-lined.



Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2023 (Koelenhof)

Price: R97.50

Total Production: 10,865 bottles Abv 14.04%

49% Pinotage, 38% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot and 6% Shiraz. Matured for 24 months in older oak. The nose is primary and highly expressive, with notes of berries, flowers, herbs and a subtle hint of pepper. The palate shows concentrated fruit, fresh acidity and firm yet fine tannins – remarkably complete.





Rust en Vrede Estate 2022

Price: R699

Total Production: 65,000 bottles Abv 14.32%

69% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Syrah, 7% Merlot. Matured for 18 months, the Bordeaux varieties in 300-litre barrels and the Shiraz in 500-litre barrels, with a total of 20% new oak. Attractive aromatics of red and black berries, rose, fynbos and pepper, while the palate is harmonious and restrained – medium-bodied with fresh acidity and powdery tannins. Full of flavour, with a long, savoury finish.



Baleia Limitados Calcerea 2022

Price: R395

Total Production: 1,700 bottles Abv 14%

50% Syrah, 50% Tempranillo. Matured for 18 months in 300-litre barrels, 30% new. Red and black berries, fynbos and cured meat on the nose. Light-bodied and understated with lemon-like acidity, the finish long and dry.



Boschendal Black Angus 2022

Price: R599

Total Production: 40,000 bottles Abv 14%

60% Shiraz, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc. Matured for 14 months in 300-litre barrels, 34% new. Red and black berries, violets and fynbos on the nose. The palate, meanwhile, is refined and seamless – dense fruit matched by fresh acidity before a persistent finish.





Chateau Libertas 2025

Price: R89

Total Production: 36,500 bottles Abv 13.52%

39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Shiraz, 15% Cabernet Franc, 9% Petit Verdot and 7% Malbec. Matured on staves. Red and black berries, olive, flowers, fynbos and pepper on the nose while the palate shows great fruit purity and drive, with firm tannins providing ample structure. Luscious yet simultaneously well balanced.



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

Wine	Score	Price
Boschendal Nicolas 2023	95 – BEST OVERALL	R265
Nederburg Baronne 2024	95	R105
Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2023 (Koelenhof)	94	R97.50
De Wet Vintage Mashup Shiraz Pinotage Durif 2023	94	R105
Florence by Aaldering Winemakers Selection Cape Blend 2023	94	R179
Donkiesbaai Suiderkruis 2023	94	R389
Rust en Vrede Estate Blend 2022	94	R699
Chateau Libertas 2025	93	R89
Baleia Limitados Calcerea 2022	93	R395
Boschendal Black Angus 2022	93	R599
Babylonstoren Babel 2024	92	R260
Arbeidsgenot Shiraz Grenache Noir 2024	92	R310
Thor Vintners & Co Innibos 2023	91	R185
Haute Cabrière Arnim Family Réserve 2022	91	R190
Coterie Grenache & Syrah 2025 (Wildeberg)	91	R220
Thor Vintners & Co Rommel 2022	91	R250
Guardian Peak SMG 2022	91	R260
Afrikaans Vol. VIII 2024	91	R300
Joostenberg Bakermat 2022	91	R355
Alto Estate Blend 2023	91	R480
Powerlines Red Field Blend 2025 (Wildeberg)	90	R165
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine Red 2023	90	R190
Perdeberg The DryLand Collection Joseph's Legacy 2024	90	R199
Coterie Grenache & Syrah 2024 (Wildeberg)	90	R220
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2023	90	R225
SixLegs Genesis 2024	90	R250
Bellingham The Bernard Series The Maverick S.M.V. 2022	90	R350
Thor Vintners & Co Maze 2024	90	R350
Joostenberg Bakermat 2021	90	R355
Anwilka 2022	90	R420
Black Elephant Vintners Free Bird Bush Vines Red Blend 2024	90	R425
Flagstone Velvet Red Blend 2023	90	R810

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Afrikaans Vol. VIII 2024	Stellenbosch	91
Alto Estate Blend 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Anwilka 2022	Stellenbosch	90
Arbeidsgenot Shiraz Grenache Noir 2024	Swartland	92
Babylonstoren Babel 2024	Western Cape	92
Baleia Limitados Calcerea 2022	Lower Duivenshok River	93
Beau Constantia Aidan 2020	Constantia	89
Bellevue Atticus 2025	Stellenbosch	89
Bellingham The Bernard Series The Maverick S.M.V. 2022	Coastal Region	90
Black Elephant Vintners Free Bird Bush Vines Red Blend 2024	Swartland	90
Boplaas Ring of Rocks 2022	Western Cape	89
Boschendal Black Angus 2022	Stellenbosch	93
Boschendal Nicolas 2023	Stellenbosch	95
Chateau Libertas 2025	Western Cape	93
Coterie Grenache & Syrah 2024 (Wildeberg)	Coastal Region	90
Coterie Grenache & Syrah 2025 (Wildeberg)	Coastal Region	91
De Krans Tritonia Calitzdorp Blend 2023	Calitzdorp	89
De Wet Vintage Mashup Shiraz Pinotage Durif 2023	Worcester	94
Donkiesbaai Suiderkruis 2024	Piekenierskloof	94
Du Toitskloof Dimension 2024	Western Cape	89
Flagstone Dragon Tree Cape Blend 2022	Western Cape	89
Flagstone Velvet Red Blend 2023	Cape Coast	90
Florence by Aaldering Winemakers Selection Cape Blend 2024	Stellenbosch	94
Glenelly Glass Collection Red Blend 2023	Stellenbosch	89
Great Five Cape Premier Red 2019 (Stellenview)	Western Cape	88
Groot Phesantekraal Cape Francolin Red Blend 2023	Cape Town	89
Guardian Peak SMG 2022	Western Cape	91
Hartenberg The Megan 2021	Stellenbosch	87
Haute Cabrière Arnim Family Réserve 2022	Franschhoek	91
Jakkalsvlei Mount Cuvée Cape Blend 2024	Western Cape	88
Joostenberg Bakermat 2021	Paarl	90
Joostenberg Bakermat 2022	Paarl	91
Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2022	Stellenbosch	87
Koelenbosch Koelenberg 204 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	89
Koelenbosch Nineteenfortyone 2023 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	94
Le Sueur Paradoks 2023	Klein Karoo	88
Nederburg Baronne 2024	Western Cape	95
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Motorcycle Marvel 2023	Coastal Region	89
Perdeberg The DryLand Collection Joseph's Legacy 2024	Coastal Region	90
Powerlines Red Field Blend 2025 (Wildeberg)	Paarl	90
Quoin Rock Simonsberg Blend 2023	Simonsberg Stellenbosch	88
Retief Reserve Cape Blend 2024 (Van Loveren)	Robertson	88
Rust en Vrede Estate Blend 2022	Stellenbosch	94
SixLegs Genesis 2024	Stellenbosch	90

Stellenzicht Acheulean Red 2019	Stellenbosch	88
Strandveld The Navigator 2023	Elim	89
The Drift Moveable Feast 2020	Overberg	87
Thor Vinters & Co Gentis Red 2022	Coastal Region	88
Thor Vintners & Co Innibos 2023	Swartland	91
Thor Vintners & Co Maze Cape Mediterranean Blend 2024	Coastal Region	90
Thor Vintners & Co Rommel 2022	Franschhoek	91
Vigne d' Or Red Blend 2018 (Terre Paisible)	Coastal Region	87
Warwick Professor Black Pitch Black 2023	Stellenbosch	90
Welbedacht Die Afrikaanse Patriot 2024	Groenberg	88
Zevenwacht The Tin Mine Syrah Mourvèdre 2023	Stellenbosch	90



AALDERING



NEDERBURG



BALEIA



KOELNHOF



DONKIESBAAI



RUST EN VREDE

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