



Chardonnay | Cabernet Sauvignon | Cape Bordeaux Red Blends

Prescient

FUND SERVICES

CABERNET SAUVIGNON
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.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, James Pietersen, CEO of merchant Brice & Burnett, and Francois Rautenbach, a wine and hospitality specialist.

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

Of the 71 wines entered, 30 (42%) scored 90 or more, a modest conversion rate that points to a category where top-tier quality is relatively difficult to achieve.

Vintage conditions are part of the story: 2022 was hot, while 2023 was wet, yet wines from both years feature prominently among the top performers. Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2022, for example, is full, concentrated and firmly structured, while Benguela Cove Vinography 2023 and Delaire Graff Reserve 2023 show that a wetter season did not preclude richness.

More striking is the stylistic tension within the category. There is a clear desire for elegance: several wines are juicy, fresh and easy to drink, with bright acidity and supple tannins. This is welcome compared with the heavier, more extracted expressions that have sometimes defined the category. But elegance can become a problem when it is reduced to softness and accessibility. A wine can be fresh and polished yet still leave little to contemplate.

Ernie Els Major Series 2024, the 95-point Best Overall, combines dense fruit with bright acidity, supple tannins and a dry, persistent finish. Vriesenhof 2024 is similarly concentrated and uncompromising, while Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2022 has the structure and depth to suggest longevity. These wines have shape and personality as well as polish.

By contrast, some wines in the set are clean, juicy and sound but rather too straightforward. The pursuit of finesse can become another kind of formula, particularly when freshness and softness are treated as ends in themselves. Juiciness may make a wine immediately appealing, but without tannic structure, savoury complexity or some other marker of individuality, it can also make it feel uncomplicated.

The encouraging conclusion is that there is evidence of a move away from sheer power without necessarily abandoning substance. The challenge is to make wines that are elegant without becoming facile, and fresh without becoming simple. Vintage will always impose its character, but winemaking determines whether that material becomes something distinctive. Here, restraint is not an absence of ambition; it gives concentration, structure and individuality room to show.

Winner benefits

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

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Ernie Els | Best Overall Major Series 2024

Price: R279

Total Production: 9 499 bottles Abv 14.5%

90% matured for 16 months in 300-litre barrel (35% new), 5% for 12 months in foudre, 5% for 10 months in amphora. Cassis, floral perfume, herbs and a hint of vanilla on the nose. Pure, dense fruit, bright acidity and supple tannins, with a long, dry finish. Powerful yet focused and beautifully structured, this is a wine built to last.



Benguela Cove Vinography 2023

Price: R669

Total Production: 560 bottles Abv 14.5%

Matured for 20 months in barrel, 40% new. Cassis, some leafiness, violets, incense, coffee and vanilla. The palate is plush and luxurious with concentrated fruit, bright acidity and smooth tannins, the finish savoury.



Delaire Graff Reserve 2023

Price: R1,209

Total Production: 9 583 bottles Abv 14.75%

Matured for 16 months in barrel, 80% new. Inviting aromatics of cassis, flowers, herbs, vanilla and oak spice on the nose. Pure, clean fruit, bright acidity and supple tannins. Well balanced, but very youthful at this stage, with considerable time needed to reveal anything approaching its full potential.





Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2022

Price: R559

Total Production: 5 000 bottles Abv 14.5%

Matured for 22 months in barrel, 80% new. Remarkably fragrant with notes of cassis, violets, earth, pencil shavings and oak spice. Full but balanced with good fruit concentration, fresh acidity and fine, tightly knit tannins. Well structured with a persistent finish.



Vriesenhof 2024

Price: R165

Total Production: 41 641 bottles, 539 magnums Abv 14%

Matured for 15 months in older oak. Brooding aromatics of cassis, violets, tea leaf, incense, earth and vanilla. Concentrated fruit, fresh acidity and firm but fine tannins, the finish long and uncompromisingly dry.



Babylonstoren 2024

Price: R319

Total Production: 63 196 bottles Abv 14%

Matured for 18 months in barrel, 40% new. Cassis, violets, earth, vanilla and oak spice on the nose. Dense fruit, bright acidity and nicely assertive tannins, the finish long and dry. Succulent and vital.





Blaauwklippen 2024

Price: R295

Total Production: 26 200 bottles Abv 14.82%

Matured for 18 months in barrel, 47% new. Attractive aromatics of plum, cranberry, cassis, rose, some leafiness, a hint of mint. Clean, pure fruit with bright acidity and fine tannins. Well balanced and already accessible, but with enough structure and substance to reward further ageing.



Diemersdal The Journal 2024

Price: R519

Total Production: 6 500 bottles Abv 14.54%

Matured for 24 months in barrel, 100% new. Cassis, some leafiness, wilted rose, boot polish and earth on the nose. The palate is rich and well structured. Dense fruit, bright acidity and firm tannins, the finish gently savoury and persistent.



Peter Falke Kailani 2021

Price: R825

Total Production: 1 475 bottles Abv 14%

Matured for 22 months in barrel, 100% new. Dark berries, oystershell, earth, cocoa and vanilla on the nose. Well-structured with dense fruit, creamy texture balanced by fresh acidity, the finish nicely dry.





Zevenwacht Z Collection Reserve 2024

Price: R399

Total Production: | 797 bottles, 60 magnums Abv 14.68%

Matured for 18 months in 2240-litre barrels, 60% new. Red and black berries, floral perfume, a touch of mint and chocolate on the nose. The palate is full and luxurious, with fresh acidity preventing it from becoming overbearing and fine-grained tannins providing shape.



BUYING GUIDE: RETAIL PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

Wine	Score	Price
Ernie Els Major Series 2024	95 – BEST OVERALL	R279
Vriesenhof 2024	94	R165
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2022	94	R559
Benguela Cove Vinography 2023	94	R669
Delaire Graff Reserve 2023	94	R1,209
Blaauwklippen 2024	93	R295
Babylonstoren 2024	93	R319
Zevenwacht Z Collection Reserve 2024	93	R399
Diemersdal The Journal 2024	93	R519
Peter Falke Kailani 2021	93	R825
Koelenbosch 2023 (Koelenhof)	92	R120
Vriesenhof Reserve 2024	92	R500
Glenelly Glass Collection 2022	91	R185
KFK Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	91	R200
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2023	91	R230
Dornier 2022	91	R250
Grand Vin de Stellenbosch 2022 (Le Grand Domaine)	91	R325
Eikendal 2023	91	R327
Boschendal Appellation Series Stellenbosch 2022	91	R340
Knorhoek 2023	91	R345
Peter Falke 2023	91	R380
Stellenbosch 1679 2020 (Koelenhof)	91	R450
Great Five Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	90	R150
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Conqueror 2024	90	R199
La Petite Ferme 2024	90	R200
Stellenbosch Reserve Ou Hoofgebou 2024	90	R200
Zevenwacht Estate 2024	90	R200
Zorgvliet 2023	90	R225
Kruger Family Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	90	R290
Flagstone Music Room 2022	90	R415

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Alto 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Avontuur The West Peak 2021	Stellenbosch	89
Babylonstoren 2024	Western Cape	93
Benguela Cove Vinography 2023	Walker Bay	94
Blaauwklippen 2024	Stellenbosch	93
Boschendal Appellation Series Stellenbosch 2022	Stellenbosch	91
Cape Five Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	Coastal Region	88
De Wet 2024	Worcester	88
De Wet Disablom 2025	Worcester	88
Delaire Graff Reserve 2023	Banghoek	94
Diemersdal The Journal 2022	Durbanville	89
Diemersdal The Journal 2024	Durbanville	93
Dornier 2022	Stellenbosch	91
Du Toitskloof 2024	Western Cape	88
Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Castle of Good Hope 2024	Durbanville, Cape Town	88
Eikendal 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Ernie Els Major Series 2024	Stellenbosch	95
Flagstone Music Room 2022	Coastal Region	90
Glenelly Glass Collection 2022	Stellenbosch	91
Grand Vin de Stellenbosch 2022 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	91
Grand Vin de Stellenbosch 2023 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	88
Great Five Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	Coastal Region	90
Groot Phesantekraal 2024	Cape Town	89
Hartenberg 2021	Stellenbosch	89
Jakkalsvlei Barrel Selected 2022	Western Cape	89
Jason's Hill 2021	Breedekloof	87
Jordan The Long Fuse 2024	Stellenbosch	87
KFK Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	Coastal Region	91
Kleine Zalze Family Reserve 2022	Stellenbosch	94
Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Knorhoek 2023	Simonsberg- Stellenbosch	91
Koelenbosch 2023 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	92

Kruger Family Reserve 2020 (Stellenview)	Stellenbosch	88
Kruger Family Reserve 2022 (Stellenview)	Stellenbosch	89
Kruger Family Reserve 2023 (Stellenview)	Stellenbosch	90
La Motte Reserve Collection 2023	Stellenbosch	88
La Petite Ferme 2024	Franschhoek	90
Landskroon 2025	Western Cape	88
Mont Rochelle 2023	Franschhoek	87
Nederburg Private Bin R163 2022	Paarl	89
Nederburg Private Bin Two Centuries 2022	Coastal Region	87
Nederburg The Winemasters 2024	Western Cape	89
Org de Rac 2023	Swartland	89
Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Conqueror 2024	Coastal Region	90
Peter Falke 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Peter Falke Kailani 2021	Stellenbosch	93
Rooshoek 2022	Wellington	87
Rust en Vrede Estate Vineyards 2023	Stellenbosch	89
Spier 21 Gables 2021	Stellenbosch	88
Spier Seaward 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Stellekaya 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Stellekaya Reserve 2022	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenbosch 1679 2020 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	91
Stellenbosch 1679 2021 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenbosch Reserve Ou Hoofgebou 2024	Stellenbosch	90
Stellenzicht Tristone 2023	Stellenbosch	89
The Pledge Our Stellie 2022 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	89
The Pledge Our Stellie 2023 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	89
Tokara 2024	Stellenbosch	88
Tokara Reserve Collection 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Tokara Simonsberg 2022	Stellenbosch	87
Vergelegen Reserve 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Vriesenhof 2024	Stellenbosch	94
Vriesenhof Reserve 2024	Stellenbosch	92
Warwick The Blue Lady 2022	Simonsberg-Stellenbosch	88
Waterford 2020	Stellenbosch	88
Windmeul 2024	Coastal Region	88

Winshaw The Fox 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Zevenwacht Estate 2024	Stellenbosch	90
Zevenwacht Z Collection Reserve 2024	Polkadraai Hills	93
Zorgvliet 2023	Banghoek	90



BLAAUWKLIPPEN



KLEINE ZALZE



DELAIRE GRAFF



VRISENHOF



BABYLONSTOREN



PETER FALKE



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