



Chardonnay | Cabernet Sauvignon | Cape Bordeaux Red Blends

Prescient

FUND SERVICES

CAPE BORDEAUX
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.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, James Pietersen, CEO of Brice & Burnett, and Jolette Steyn-Prior, the merchant's head of sales and imports.

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

The tasting suggests a category with plenty of ambition, but also a tendency in some quarters to polish the rough edges a little too thoroughly. Of the wines entered, 25 (46%) scored 90 or more, and the leading examples demonstrate that South African red blends can combine concentration and refinement with freshness, structure and a sense of place. Eikendal Classique, the 94-point Best Overall, is a good example: rich and seamless, but with bright acidity and firm, fine tannins providing shape.

The more interesting question is what happens when the pursuit of polish becomes an end in itself. Several wines seem designed to project luxury: abundant fruit, generous oak, soft textures and a high degree of finish. Such wines can be immediately appealing, but there is a danger that in removing anything angular, earthy or otherwise challenging, they also remove some of the character. A wine can be technically impeccable and still feel somewhat anonymous.

This is particularly apparent in the relationship between fruit sweetness and texture. There are wines here that are not actually sweet in analytical terms but give an impression of sweetness because the fruit is so ripe and the tannins so thoroughly smoothed out. That can make a wine feel luxurious, particularly at the upper end of the price spectrum, but it can also leave it feeling soft. The better wines use ripeness as a source of concentration rather than sweetness, with acidity and tannin providing counterweight.

Oak is part of the equation. The top wines are generally matured for long periods in barrel, sometimes with substantial proportions of new wood, yet the best examples integrate this without losing definition. The lesson is not that oak, extraction or richness are inherently problematic, but that they need something to push against.

Perhaps the category's challenge is therefore not a lack of sophistication but an excess of it. South African red blends are capable of being polished, powerful and luxurious. The question is whether they can retain enough tension, savouriness and individuality to remain interesting once the sheen has worn off.

Winner benefits

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

TOP 10 TASTING NOTES



Eikendal | Best Overall Classique 2022

Price: R549

Total Production: 4 228 bottles Abv 14.78%

55% Merlot, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Cabernet Franc, 9% Petit Verdot. Matured for 18 months in barrel, 20% new. Red and black berries, violets, some leafiness, oyster shell, earth and vanilla on the nose, while the palate is rich and seamless – good fruit expression, bright acidity and firm but fine tannins. Statuesque, layered and long.



Alto M.P.H.S. 2022

Price: R1,349

Total Production: 2 930 bottles Abv 14.5%

50% Cabernet Franc, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon Blanc. Matured for 18 months, with the Cabernet Franc in second-fill barrels and the Cabernet Sauvignon in new barrels. Enticing aromatics of red and black berries, violets, some leafiness and pencil shavings. Great structure – a dense core of fruit matched by bright acidity and suitably firm tannins. Succulent, with a long finish.



Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2024

Price: R839

Total Production: 45 976 bottles Abv 14.5%

45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 10% Petit Verdot, 5% Malbec. Components matured separately for 23 months in barrel, 85% new before blending and taken to tank for a month. Red and black berries, violets toast, chocolate and vanilla. The palate is commanding with dense fruit, fresh acidity and firm, tightly knit tannins, the finish resolutely dry.





Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2021

Price: R635

Total Production: 46 000 bottles Abv 14.46%

70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Petit Verdot, 10% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec. Matured for 22 months in barrel, 47% new. Red and black berries, rose, oyster shell and vanilla on the nose. Pure fruit, plenty of drive, the tannins smooth in the best sense. Still remarkably youthful.



Zorgvliet Richelle 2021

Price: R489

Total Production: 7 435 bottles Abv 14.7%

57% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Petit Verdot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 11% Merlot. Components mature separately for 22 months in barrel (62%), before being blended and returned to barrel for a further two months. Complex aromatics of cassis, dried herbs, flowers, iodine, boot polish and earth. The palate is full yet balanced and detailed, with pure fruit, freshness and a dry finish.



Diemersdal Private Collection 2024

Price: R269

Total Production: 47 000 bottles Abv 14.31%

31% Cabernet Sauvignon, 27% Merlot, 23% Petit Verdot, 18% Cabernet Franc, 1% Malbec. Matured for 22 months in barrel, 30% new. Red and black berries, dried herbs, potpourri and pencil shavings on the nose. The palate is well balanced and elegant. Good fruit expression, bright acidity and fine, tightly knit tannins.





Ernie Els Signature 2023

Price: R975

Total Production: 9 499 bottles Abv 14%

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc, 5% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot. Aged for 18 months in barrel (50% new); a small batch (10%) spent 8 months in amphora. Red and black berries, tea leaf, violets, and dried herbs on the nose. Medium bodied with concentrated fruit, fresh acidity and fine, velvety tannins, the finish savoury. Well balanced and detailed.



Franschhoek Cellar The Last Elephant 2022

Price: R655

Total Production: 14 412 bottles Abv 14%

52% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot. Matured for 14 months in barrel, 35% new. Red and black berries, violets, some leafiness and earth on the nose. The palate is clean, pure and precise. Medium bodied with fresh acidity and fine tannins.



La Bri Affinity 2022

Price: R259

Total Production: 12 995 bottles Abv 14.15%

59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot. Matured for 24 months in barrel, 10% new. Red and black berries, potpourri, dried herbs, vanilla and spice on the nose. Succulent fruit and bright acidity before a dry finish. Understated in style.





Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2021

Price: R330

Total Production: 38 958 bottles Abv 14%

48% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 13% Malbec, 7% Petit Verdot. Matured for approximately 18 months in barrel, 35% new. Red and black berries, violets, herbs, earth and pencil shavings on the nose while the palate is elegant and composed with pure fruit, bright acidity and fine tannins, 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 wines fell just short of the Top 10 on 92 points:



Donier Donatus Red 2021 | Price: R430

Ridgeback The Journey 2022 | Price: R198

BUYING GUIDE: RETAIL PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90+

Wine	Score	Price
Eikendal Classique 2022	94 – BEST OVERALL	R549
Zorgvliet Richelle 2021	93	R489
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2021	93	R635
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2024	93	R839
Alto M.P.H.S. 2022	93	R1,349
La Bri Affinity 2022	92	R259
Diemersdal Private Collection 2024	92	R269
Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2021	92	R330
Franschhoek Cellar The Last Elephant 2022	92	R655
Ernie Els Signature 2023	92	R975
Ridgeback The Journey 2022	92	R198
Dornier Donatus Red 2021	92	R430
Vriesenhof Jan Boland Coetzee 2024	91	R175
Diemersdal Private Collection 2023	91	R220
Vriesenhof Kallista 2023	91	R475
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2023	91	R775
Zorgvliet Argentum Silver Myn 2024	90	R118
Neethlingshof Prelum 2024	90	R130
Flagstone Treaty Tree Classique Red 2023	90	R178
Stellenbosch Reserve Vanderstel 2023	90	R240
Grand Vin de Stellenbosch Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2022 (Le Grand Domaine)	90	R325
Cavalli Warlord 2023	90	R365
De Grendel Rubiayat 2021	90	R490
Idiom Bordicon Blend 2024	90	R600
Quoin Rock Red Blend 2022	90	R750

COMPLETE SCORES: A-Z

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Aaldering Estate V-Grapes 2024	Devon Valley	88
Allée Bleue L'Amour Toujours 2020	Stellenbosch	88
Alto M.P.H.S. 2022	Stellenbosch	93
Avontuur Val de Ra Red Blend 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2023	Simonsberg-Paarl	91
Babylonstoren Nebukadnesar 2024	Simonsberg-Paarl	93
Benguela Cove Estate Collage 2023	Walker Bay	88
Blaauwklippen De Blaauwe Klip 2024	Stellenbosch	89
Canetsfontein 1781 2024	Wellington	88
Cavalli Warlord 2023	Stellenbosch	90
Clos Malverne Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2024	Stellenbosch	88
Coterie Cabernet Franc & Malbec2024 (Wildeberg)	Coastal Region	89
De Grendel Rubiyat 2021	Coastal Region	90
De Wet Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon 2025	Worcester	87
Diemersdal Private Collection 2023	Durbanville	91
Diemersdal Private Collection 2024	Durbanville	92
Dornier Donatus Red 2021	Stellenbosch	92
Eikendal Classique 2022	Stellenbosch	94
Ernie Els Signature 2023	Stellenbosch	92
Flagstone Treaty Tree Classique Red 2023	Cape Coast	90
Franschhoek Cellar The Last Elephant 2022	Stellenbosch	92
Grand Vin de Stellenbosch Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2022 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	90
Grand Vin de Stellenbosch Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2023 (Le Grand Domaine)	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom Bordicon Blend 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Idiom Bordicon Blend 2024	Stellenbosch	90
Jason's Hill Private Cellar Izak Reserve 2021	Breedekloof	87
La Bri Affinity 2022	Franschhoek	92
La Petite Ferme Verdict 2024	Franschhoek	88
Landskroon Paul de Villiers Reserve 2022	Paarl	89
Mont Rochelle Miko 2023	Franschhoek	89

Nederburg Double Barrel Reserve 2024	Coastal Region	88
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Brew Master 2022	Coastal Region	88
Nederburg The Winemasters Edelrood 2024	Western Cape	88
Neethlingshof Prelum 2024	Stellenbosch	90
Peter Falke Kanoa 2020	Stellenbosch	88
Quoin Rock Red Blend 2022	Stellenbosch	90
Ridgeback The Journey 2022	Paarl	92
Romansrivier Grand Reserve Fire Lily 2023 (Mountain Ridge)	Breedekloof	89
Stellekaya Orion 2022	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenbosch 1679 The Legacy 2020 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenbosch 1679 The Legacy 2021 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	89
Stellenbosch 1679 The Legacy 2022 (Koelenhof)	Stellenbosch	88
Stellenbosch Reserve Vanderstel 2023	Stellenbosch	90
Tokara Director's Reserve Red 2021	Stellenbosch	93
Vergelegen Estate Red 2022	Stellenbosch	88
Vrede en Lust Boet Erasmus 2021	Simonsberg-Paarl	92
Vriesenhof Jan Boland Coetzee 2024	Stellenbosch	91
Vriesenhof Kallista 2023	Stellenbosch	91
Warwick Trilogy 2021	Stellenbosch	88
Welvanpas La Velo Rouge 2024	Wellington	88
Zorgvliet Argentum Silver Myn 2024	Stellenbosch	90
Zorgvliet Keurtjieskloof 2024	Banghoek	87
Zorgvliet Richelle 2020	Banghoek	89
Zorgvliet Richelle 2021	Banghoek	92



TOKARA



ZORGVLIT



BABYLONSTOREN



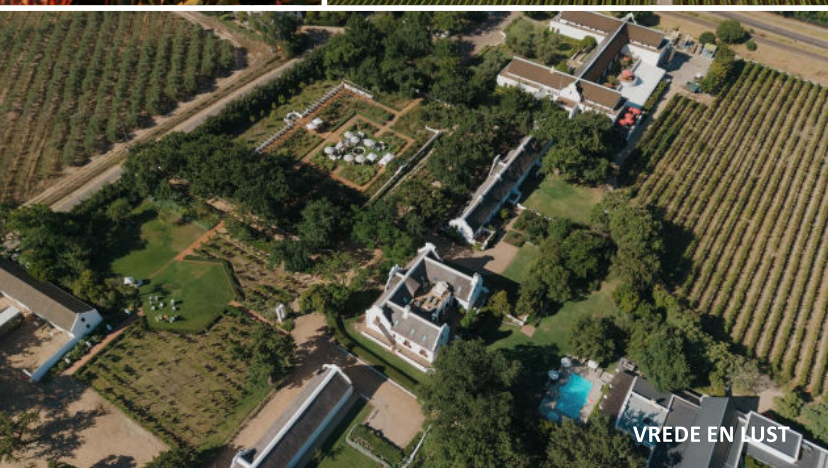
ERNIE ELS



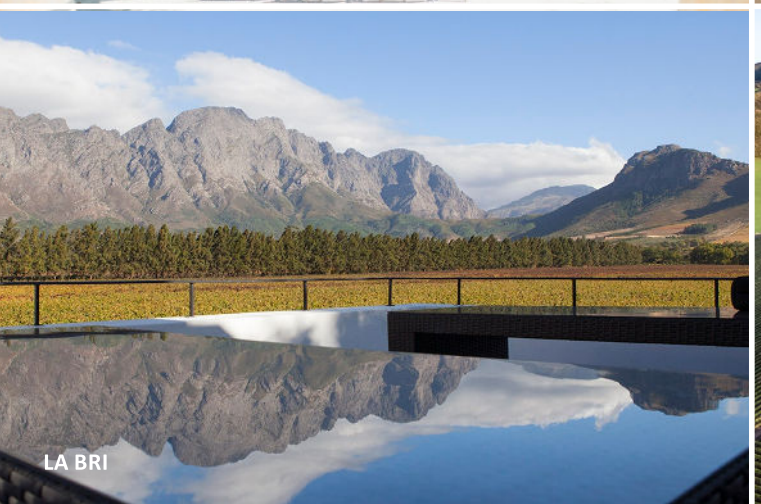
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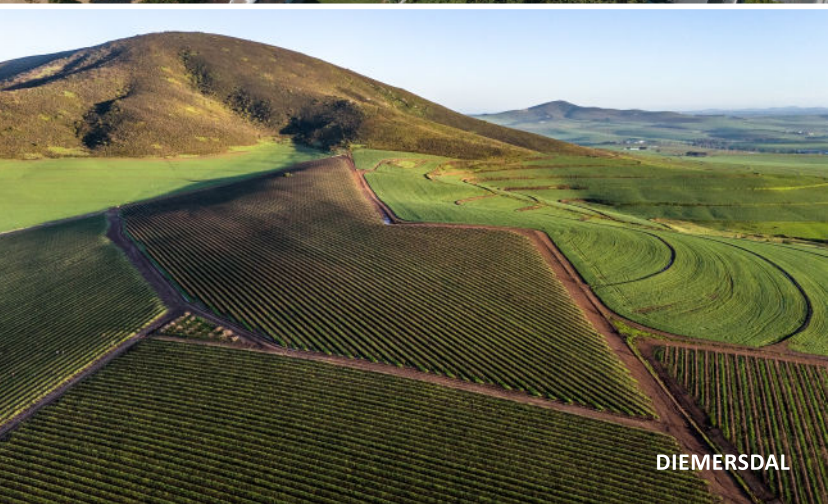
FRANCHHOEK CELLAR



VREDE EN LUST



LA BRI



DIEMERSDAL

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