

STANDARD BANK CHENIN BLANC TOP 10 CHALLENGE – 2022 REPORT

- The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2022 judging and procedures

Back to business as normal after two years of Covid protocols. The judging at the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2022 was conducted according to standard tasting protocols detailing both the logistics and tasting procedures as before. This is not only for good governance but ensures consistency and is a guarantee that the same procedures will be followed each year. We again included some highly rated non-entrants as blind benchmarks for further calibration, enhancing the rigour of this competition.

The judging panel comprised of five judges and an associate. The associate's score was not considered but is there to learn and to contribute to the discussion. The associate judging position is a crucial part in the guidance and mentorship of up-and-coming young judges to give them the opportunities to gain experience.

Panel members were:

James Pietersen (Chair – CEO Wine Cellar)

Boela Gerber CWM (Senior Judge – Groot Constantia Richard Kershaw Wines)

Spencer Fondaumiere (Sommerlier and Chairperson of the South African Sommeliers Association)

Malu Lambert (Wine Writer, malulambert.com)

Penelope Setti (Proprietor of Penny Noire Winebar)

Shawn Mathyse (Ken Forrester)

The wines were tasted blind with no indication of vintage, cellar treatment or technical analysis by the five-person panel, scoring done according to the 20-point system. Judges were allowed to request vintage and technical details if they felt it would assist them better understand a wine.

After the first round of judging of the 137 entered wines was concluded, 23 wines were considered to show merit and went through to a second round where the panel could give them more detailed examination. After the scores were tallied in the final round of tasting, there were 10 wines that clearly achieved scores to take them into the Top 10.

- Key findings and commentary

What stands out is the incredible quality of SA Chenin Blanc. We are the benchmark for this variety on the global stage and as such we see greater competition, leading to greater innovation with each new release! This is evident in the winemaker's exploration of new regions, the use of skin contact, natural fermentation and a myriad of fermentation and maturation vessels.

There were 137 entries from 78 producers in this year's Challenge, this is on par with last year's 138 entries but down quite a bit on the 150 in 2019 and the 159 entries in 2018, and similar to the 136 entries in 2017, but still up on the 124 in 2016 and the 126 for the 2014 Challenge.

Of the 137 entries in the 2022 Challenge, 97 wines were indicated as wooded on the entry form versus 95 last year and 108 for 2020 and 113 for 2019. 34 were noted as unwooded versus 43 wines in 2021 and 28 in 2020), these continue to be a significant section of the entries. The distinction between wooded and unwooded is becoming more and more moot as we see the rise in the use of older barrels, eggs, concrete tanks and amphora.

With the added benefit of known benchmarks included blind in the tasting and a rigorous and experienced panel we are once again excited and convinced by the incredible selection of Chenin

Blanc on display. It really does seem to be getting better each year. We also see a healthy consistency in the top performing wines, especially considering that the panel rotates.

Judges were impressed with the even greater style variation with especially the use of amphora, 'natural winemaking' and various combinations of maturation vessels playing a role in adding nuance and complexity. We saw a range of styles from fresh acidity driven wines to fuller fleshier bodied wines with distinctive oak influence leading to creamy buttery wines. This is a return to an older style of chenin.

The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge list for 2022 includes (in alphabetical order):

- Alvi's Drift Private Cellar 221 Chenin Blanc 2021
- Kaapzicht Wine Estate Kliprug Chenin Blanc 2021
- Nabygelegen Private Cellar Chenin Blanc 2021
- Piekenierskloof Wine Company Bergendal Chenin Blanc Old Vine 2021
- Rascallion Devonian Chenin Blanc 2021
- Rijk's Cellar Touch of Oak Chenin Blanc 2020
- Spier Wines Seaward Chenin Blanc 2021
- Stellenbosch Vineyards Bushvine Chenin Blanc 2021
- Stellenrust Wine Estate Stellenbosch Manor Fermented Chenin Blanc 2020
- Stellenrust Wine Estate Old Bush Vine Chenin Blanc 2021

It brings the total number of producers to have made an appearance over the seven-year history to 39, as there are four producers debuting in this year's Top 10 (Nabygelegen, Piekenierskloof Wine Company, Rascallion Wines, and Stellenbosch Vineyards). There is also one producer making its ninth appearance (Stellenrust), with 2 top 10 positions for the 3rd time!

The average price of the top 10 wines in 2022 is R185.50 (R244 – 2021; R192.80 – 2020). The lowest priced wine on the Top 10 Challenge list for 2022 is R80 (2021 – R120) and the highest price R400.

Grapes for 4 of the 2021 Top 10 Challenge wines come from Stellenbosch while others have been sourced from Worcester, Piekenierskloof, Swartland, Tulbagh, Wellington and Tygerberg. There was a great spread of styles, it is clear however that older established vineyards do play a significant role in producing quality Chenin Blanc. Most of the wines this year were off 30 year and older vineyards, with 8, 10 and 25 year old being the three youngest and the oldest vineyards 70 years of age. (Please see the individual winners' write ups for details.)

All of the 2020 Top 10 wines included portions either fermented or matured in wood, the largest new oak percentage was 50% and the use of larger oak vessels like the 500l and 400l foudre, clay pots, amphora and concrete eggs all contribute to the sophistication of the oak/maturation regimes.

Residual sugars average at 3,2g/l and alc% averages 13,76% with no real low alc or high alcoholic outliers.

- [Analysis of the Top 10 Challenge list over the nine-year history](#)

Nine appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

Stellenrust (2014, 2015, 2 x 2017, 2018, 2019, 2 x 2020, 2021, 2022 x 2)

Eighth appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

Spier (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2022)

Seven appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

DeMorgenzon (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021)

Kleine Zalze (2014, 2 x 2016, 2 x 2019, 2 x 2021)

Six appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

Four appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

Perdeberg (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

Rijk's (2014, 2016, 2019, 2022)

Three appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

Cederberg Private Cellar (2017, 2018, 2019)

Leopard's Leap (2015, 2016, 2018)

Bellingham (2014, 2016, 2021)

Simonsig (2014, 2015, 2021)

Two appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:

Slanghoek Wynkelder (2018, 2019)

Durbanville Hills (2019, 2020)

Mulderbosch (2018, 2019)

Ken Forrester (2019, 2021)

Alvi's Drift (2020, 2022)

KWV (2014, 2015)

One appearance in the Top 10 Challenge:

Aetermitas (2015)

Allee Blue (2016)

Boschendal (2016)

Boutinot (2015)

Flagstone Winery (2019)

Fleur du Cap (2017)

Guardian Peak (2021)

Jean Daneel Wines (2018)

Labelle Rebel (2021)

L'Avenir (2015)

Nederburg (2017)

Piekenierskloof Wine Company (2022)

Remhoogte (2014)

Spice Route (2017)

Villiera (2014)

Wellington Wines La Cave Chenin Blanc 2016 (2018)

Wildeckrans Barrel Select Chenin Blanc Reserve 2017 (2018)

Windmeul (2017)

- Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2022 at a glance

Producer	Wine	Vintage	Alcohol	RS	TA	pH	Oak	Vine age	Price
Alvi's Drift Private Cellar WO Western Cape	221 Chenin Blanc	2021	13.7%	4.81g/l	6.5g/l	3.1	Barrel fermented (25%), rest in stainless steel tanks	8-50 years	R100
Kaapzicht Wine Estate WO Stellenbosch	Kliprug Chenin Blanc	2021	13.78%	2.5g/l	6g/l	3.47	11 months in 300-, 400- and 500-litre barrels	40 years	R200
Nabygelegen Private Cellar WO Wellington	Chenin Blanc	2021	13.5	2.8g/l	5.95/l	3.65	Barrel fermented in old French oak	70 years	R110
Rascallion Wines WO Swartland	The Devonian	2021	13%	2.9g/l	-g/l	3.45	Barrel fermented and then in 300-litre French barrels	39-54 years	R395
Piekenierskloof Wine Company WO Piekenierskloof	Bergendal Chenin Blanc Old Vine	2021	13.63%	2.2g/l	5.7g/l	3.52	6 months in 500-litre French oak barrels, 30% new	59 years	R400
Rijk's Cellar WO Coastal Region	Touch of Oak Chenin Blanc	2020	13.5%	2.9g/l	6.2g/l	3.26	25% barrel fermented, and 75% stainless steel	10 years	R140
Spier Wines WO Coastal Region	Seaward Chenin Blanc	2021	14.26%	2.6g/l	6.2g/l	3.32	Barrel fermentation in 300 and 400l French barrels, 10% new	10-38 years	R125
Stellenbosch Vineyards WO Stellenbosch	Bushvine Chenin Blanc	2021	13.58%	4.2g/l	6g/l	3.36	50% barrel fermented and 50% stainless steel component	Average 25 years	R80
Stellenrust Wine Estate WO Stellenbosch	Stellenbosch Manor Fermented Chenin Blanc	2020	14.6%	4.3g/l	7.4g/l	3.17	7 months in 225-litre French oak barrels	TBC	R200
Stellenrust Wine Estate WO Stellenbosch	B28 Chenin Blanc	2021	14.12%	3.7g/l	7.3g/l	3.08	7 months in old 225-litre French oak barrels, 4 th to 5 th fill	45 years	R300