

STANDARD BANK CHENIN BLANC TOP 10 CHALLENGE – 2020 REPORT

- The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2020 judging and procedures

It was business unusual this year where we had to apply and adhere to strict Covid 19 protocols. Besides this judging at the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2020 was conducted according to standard tasting protocols detailing both the logistics and tasting procedures as before. This is not only good governance but ensures consistency and is a guarantee that the same procedures will be followed each year.

The judging panel comprised five judges – unfortunately there was no international judge this year due to the Covid 19 travel restrictions – and an associate, whose score was not considered but who was there to learn and to contribute to the discussion. Our Associate Judge showed great enthusiasm and brought wonderful energy to the procedures.

Panel members were:

- James Pietersen (Chair)
- Boela Gerber CWM (Senior Judge – Groot Constantia Richard Kershaw Wines)
- Higgo Jacobs (Senior Judge – Sommerlier and Strauss Auction Wine Specialist)
- Tinashe Nyamudoka (Kumusha Wines)
- Penelope Setti (Chef's Warehouse)
- Tendai Marisa (Indochine, Delaire Graff)

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 136 entered wines was concluded, 27 wines were considered to show particular 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

There were 136 entries from 81 producers in this year's Challenge. This is 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. The uncertainty surrounding Covid 19 playing its part.

Of the 136 entries in the 2020 Challenge, 108 wines were indicated as wooded on the entry form versus 113 for 2019, this is equivalent to 79% (2019 - 75%). Obviously, 28 wines were unwooded (2019 – 37), equivalent to 21%. However, this 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.

Once again, all judges remarked on the quality of the wines entered in the competition, which is indicative of the high quality of Chenin Blanc being produced in the country. The oaking was extremely well handled and the younger fresher styles also came through this year. There is still a note to be made of the so called sauvignon blanc-esque style and these wines are often just too young to perform at the highest level. Notably there was one stellar unwooded wine in the final Top 10. This shows that oak is not needed to perform at the highest level.

It must also be noted that 2019 was a stellar vintage with loads of clarity and precision. 9 of the top 10 were from 2019 with only the Muderbosch from 2018.

The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge list for 2020 includes (in alphabetical order):

- Alvi's Drift Wines 221 Chenin Blanc 2019
- Alvi's Drift Wynkelder Albertus Viljoen Chenin Blanc 2019
- Badsberg Wynkelder Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc 2019
- DeMorgenzon Reserve Chenin Blanc 2019
- Durbanville Hills Collectors Reserve The Cape Garden Chenin Blanc 2019
- Kaapzicht Kliprug Chenin Blanc 2019
- Mulderbosch Vineyards Single Vineyard Chenin Blanc Block S2 2018
- Spier Wines 21 Gables Chenin Blanc 2019
- Stellenrust Chenin Blanc 2019
- Stellenrust B28 Chenin Blanc 2019

It brings the total number of producers to have made an appearance over the seven-year history to 33, as there are three producers debuting in this year's Top 10 (Alvi's Drift – 2 wines, Babsberg and Kaapzicht). There is also one producer making its seventh appearance (StellenRust), with two winners and one their sixth appearance (De Morgenzon)!

The average price of the top 10 wines in 2020 is R192.80 (2018 – R255). The lowest priced wine on the Top 10 Challenge list for 2020 is R68 (2019 – R108) and the highest price R430 (2019 – R550).

Grapes for six of the 2019 Top 10 Challenge wines come from Stellenbosch while others have sourced from Durbanville, Breedekloof and Worcester. 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. We also see a healthy combination of older and younger vineyards. Notably the one Unwooded Chenin that came through was from a 43 year old vineyard, offering proof that oak is not required for complexity. Some of the oldest vineyards are close to 50 years of age. (Please see the individual winners' write ups for details.)

Of the 2020 Top 10 wines, one wine was 100% unwooded and fermented in stainless steel (Stellenrust), while the other 9 wines included portions either fermented or matured in wood, the largest new oak percentage was 60% and the use of larger oak vessels like the 1500l foudre used on the Mulderbosch and 2500l on the Spier speaks to the sophistication of the oak regimes. All oaking was on new or used French barrels, but for a smattering of American on the Badsberg.

Residual sugars seem to be more or less around the 4g/l and the lowest was 1.53 g/l residual on the Durbanville Hills and the highest 4.6g/l residual sugar was on the Alvi's Drift 221. There are five wines with over 4 g/l residual sugar.

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

The only wine to feature in the Top 10 six years in a row:

DeMorgenzon Reserve Chenin Blanc (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

Two wines feature in the Top 10 five in a row:

Perdeberg The Dry Land Collection Courageous Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

Spier 21 Gables Chenin Blanc (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018)

Two producers feature in the Top 10 five years in a row:

Spier with 21 Gables (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) and Private Collection for Woolworths (2014)

One producer featured in the Top 10 four years in a row:

Perdeberg (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

Seven appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
Stellenrust (2014, 2015, 2 x 2017, 2018, 2019, 2 x 2020)

Six appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
DeMorgenzon (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)
Spier (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020)

Five appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
Kleine Zalze (2014, 2 x 2016, 2 x 2019)

Four appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
Perdeberg (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

Three appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
Cederberg Private Cellar (2017, 2018, 2019)
Leopard's Leap (2015, 2016, 2018)
Rijk's (2014, 2016, 2019)

Two appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
Bellingham (2014, 2016)
KWV (2014, 2015)
Simonsig (2014, 2015)
Slanghoek Wynkelder (2018, 2019)
Durbanville Hills (2019, 2020)
Mulderbosch (2018, 2019)

One appearance in the Top 10 Challenge:
Aetermitas (2015)
Allee Blue (2016)
Boschendal (2016)
Boutinot (2015)
Flagstone Winery (2019)
Fleur du Cap (2017)
Jean Daneel Wines (2018)
Ken Forrester (2019)
L'Avenir (2015)
Nederburg (2017)
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 2019 at a glance

Producer	Wine	Vintage	Alcohol	RS	TA	pH	Oak	Vine age	Price
Alvi's Drift Wines	221 Chenin Blanc	2019	13.7%	4.6g/l	6.6g/l	3.2	20 - 30% old French		R230
Alvi's Drift Wynkelder	Albertus Viljoen Chenin Blanc	2019	13.7%	4.4g/l	6.9g/l	3.2	100% with 40% new French rest 2 nd	25 to 40years	R400
Badsberg Wynkelder	Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc	2019	13.4%	4.5g/l	6.0g/l	3.3	New and second fill French and American Oak		R150
DeMorgenzon	Reserve Chenin Blanc	2019	14.09	2.5g/l	5.6g/l	3.37	25% new French	48 years	R110
Durbanville Hills	Collectors Reserve The Cape Garden Chenin Blanc	2019	13.05%	1.53g/l	6.6g/l	3.43	85% in 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Fill French Oak		R550
Kaapzicht	Kliprug Chenin	2019	13.92%	2.6g/l	4.8g/l	3.46	300, 400 and 500l older French Oak	38 years	R210
Mulderbosch Vineyards	Single Vineyard Chenin Blanc Block S2	2018	12%	3.8g/l	5.2g/l	3.35	1500 litre Foudres		R108
Spier Wines	21 Gables Chenin Blanc	2019	14.44%	4.3g/l	7.0g/l	3.25	300, 400, 500 and 2500l and 60% New French oak	35 years	R110
Stellenrust	Chenin Blanc	2019	13.37%	3.4g/l	7.0g/l	3.08	Unwooded – 100% Stainless Steel	30 to 40 years	R210
Stellenrust	B28 Chenin Blanc	2019	13.8%	4.2g/l	7.3g/l	3.21	Old French 225 barrels	42 years	R480