

STANDARD BANK CHENIN BLANC TOP 10 CHALLENGE – 2019 REPORT

- The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2019 judging and procedures

As usual, judging at the Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge 2019 was conducted according to a protocol detailing both the logistics and tasting procedures. 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 – including one international judge – and an associate, whose score was not considered but who was there to learn and to contribute to the discussion. Your Chair as well as Senior Judges were very impressed by the Associate Judge. Panel members were:

- Cathy van Zyl MW (Chair)
- Richard Kershaw MW (Senior Judge - Richard Kershaw Wines)
- James Pietersen (Senior Judge - Wine Cellar)
- Joseph Dhafana (La Colombe)
- Fabien Laine (ex-sommelier, wine judge, social media entrepreneur)
- Penelope Setti (Chef's Warehouse)

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 150 entered wines was concluded, 20 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 150 entries from 87 producers in this year's Challenge. This is slightly down on the 159 entries in 2018, but still up on the 136 entries in 2017, the 124 in 2016 and the 126 for the 2014 Challenge, and also tops the previous high of 145 entries received for the 2015 Challenge.

Of the 150 entries in the 2019 Challenge, 113 wines were indicated as wooded on the entry form (2018 – 113), equivalent to 75% (2018 - 71%). Obviously, 37 wines were unwooded (2018 – 46), equivalent to 25% (29%). 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. They said that the majority of the oaked wines were exceedingly well done, and recognised that the sauvignon blanc-esque style is also a valid style. A handful of wines were showing fermentation esters; indeed, this was one of the major reasons for wines not scoring highly.

The Standard Bank Chenin Blanc Top 10 Challenge list for 2019 includes (in alphabetical order):

- Cederberg Cellars Five Generations 2017
- DeMorgenzon Reserve Chenin Blanc 2018
- Durbanville Hills Collector's Reserve The Cape Garden Chenin Blanc 2018
- Flagstone Winery Tributary Bush Vine Chenin Blanc 2018
- Ken Forrester Wines The FMC 2018
- Kleine Zalze Family Reserve Chenin Blanc 2018
- Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection Chenin Blanc 2018
- Rijk's Cellar Touch of Oak Chenin Blanc 2017
- Slanghoek Wynkelder Legends Barrel Fermented Chenin Blanc 2017
- Stellenrust SeriesRARE The Mothership Chenin Blanc 2018

It brings the total number of producers to have made an appearance over the six-year history to 30, as there are three producers debuting in this year's Top 10 (Durbanville Hills, Ken Forrester Wines and Flagstone Winery). There is also one producer making its sixth appearance (StellenRust) and two their fifth appearance (De Morgenzon and Kleine Zalze, which has two wines in the line-up).

The average price of the top 10 wines in 2019 is R255,80 (2018 - R200). The lowest priced wine on the Top 10 Challenge list for 2019 is R108 (2018 - R70) and the highest price R550 (2018 - R375).

Grapes for five of the 2019 Top 10 Challenge wines come from Stellenbosch while others have sourced from Cederberg, Durbanville, Paarl, Slanghoek, Tulbagh and Wellington. Again, one of the characteristics of this year's Top 10 Challenge 2018 wines is the dominance of older vineyards. While one of the winners comes from 8-year old vines and another from a 10-year old vineyard, the others come from vines that are older than 30 years. Indeed, the oldest vineyard in the line-up is 55-years old. (Please see the individual winners' write ups for details.)

Of the 2019 Top 10 wines, one wine included a 35% portion fermented in concrete eggs (Stellenrust), all 10 wines included portions either fermented or matured in wood, the largest new oak percentage was 70% and three only used older oak. There was also a wine using American barrels (Durbanville Hills).

Residual sugars seem to be creeping up, but in conjunction with higher levels of acidity. One of the winners has a residual sugar of 7.6 g/l (with a corresponding acidity of 6.2 g/l – Ken Forrester Wines) and the lowest was 1.9 g/l residual (6.45 g/l acidity – Durbanville Hills). 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 five years in a row:

DeMorgenzon Reserve Chenin Blanc

Two wines feature in the Top 10 four years 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:

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

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)

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

Five appearances in the Top 10 Challenge:
DeMorgenzon (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019)
Kleine Zalze (2014, 2 x 2016, 2 x 2019)
Spier (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018)

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)

One appearance in the Top 10 Challenge:
Aetermitas (2015)
Allee Blue (2016)
Boschendal (2016)
Boutinot (2015)
Durbanville Hills (2019)
Flagstone Winery (2019)
Fleur du Cap (2017)
Jean Daneel Wines (2018)
Ken Forrester (2019)
L'Avenir (2015)
Mulderbosch (2018)
Nederburg (2017)
Remhoogte (2014)
Spice Route (2017)
Villiera (2014)
Wellington Wines La Cave Chenin Blanc 2016 (2018)
Wildekrans 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
Cederberg Cellars	Five Generations	2017	13.8%	5.7g/l	6.2g/l	3.5	33% new French	13 years	R230
DeMorgenzon	Reserve	2018	14.28%	3.8g/l	6g/l	3.29	20% new French	47 years	R400
Durbanville Hills	Collector's Reserve The Cape Garden	2018	13.05%	1.94g/l	6.45g/l	3.27	30% new oak, mostly French, 4% American	11 years	R150
Flagstone Winery	Tributary Bush Vine	2018	14.31%	2.8g/l	6.1g/l	3.22	70% new French	39, 32 years	R110
Ken Forrester Wines	The FMC	2018	13%	7.6g/l	6.2g/l	3.34	58% new French	45 years	R550
Kleine Zalze	Family Reserve	2018	13.25%	4.8g/l	6.7g/l	3.24	Older French oak	40 years	R210
Kleine Zalze	Vineyard Selection	2018	13.53%	5.7g/l	7.1g/l	3.02	Older French oak	30 years	R108
Rijk's Cellar	Touch of Oak	2017	14.4%	2.7g/l	6.2g/l	3.19	Older French oak	8 years	R110
Slanghoek Wynkelder	Legends Barrel Fermented	2017	13.16%	4.5g/l	5.9g/l	3.45	50% new French	30 years	R210
Stellenrust	SeriesRARE The Mothership	2018	13.4%	3.3g/l	7.5g/l	3.18	Old foudre, 38% concrete egg	55 years	R480