



Aerobotics

Sauv-Sem Blend
& Wooded Sauvignon Blanc
Report 2018

Compiled by Winemag.co.za

KEY FINDINGS

Though Sauvignon Blanc-Semillon blends are supposed to have a limited popular following, it was encouraging to note that this year's report, sponsored by precision agriculture service provider Aerobotics, saw slightly greater industry participation – 41 wines entered from 37 producers compared to 38 wines from 34 producers last year. The average score was again 90.0, testimony to the high overall standard of the category once again, while the average cellar-door price of the top eight wines (these scoring 92 or higher on the 100-point quality scale) was R254 a bottle, suggesting that they are starting to demand a premium among the initiated few.

In the case of the Wooded Sauvignon Blanc category, there were 19 entries from 16 producers, the average score being 89.9 and the average price of the top four (these again scoring 92 or higher) was R270 a bottle.

What insights from this year's judging? It has to be said that the best Sauv-Sem blends make for demanding wines, very dense fruit combined with punchy acidities. It's what makes them both food-friendly and age-worthy but anybody thinking of serving them as an aperitif is probably misguided.

What sets the great apart from the merely good seems to be a matter of balance – some examples appearing too light and lean and others too rich. Regarding the former, there were a few wines that looked overly Sauvignon Blanc-driven, which is to say too much grassy pyrazine character in evidence, not enough fruit weight, acidity no longer fresh and zippy but rather angular and severe.

Regarding the latter, there were wines which were premised on power and weight but came across as listless and unduly thick textured. Some producers seem to be quite oxidative in their approach and it is a moot point if this really suits either category, the resulting wines sometimes looking overly-developed rather than more complex.

When winemakers get it right, however, the end-result is wines of real gravitas and heft, perhaps not everyday drinking but rather to be served in a fine dining environment after some suitable bottle maturation.

We included one Bordeaux among the blends as a ringer, the Fieuzal 2015 rating 92 points. Similarly, there were three Austrian examples in the Wooded Sauvignon Blanc line-up, Neumeister Ried Moarfeitl 2015 rating 92, Sabathi Ried Pössnitzberger Sorgenbrecher 2015 rating 90 and Tement Ried Zieregg 2015 rating 89.

As producer of the best blend overall, Cape Point Vineyards won a 50ha drone flight from Aerobotics worth R25 000 and a new 225-litre barrel from Tonnellerie Sylvain. As producer of the best wooded Sauvignon Blanc, The Fledge and Co. also won an Aerobotics package.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

The judging panel was chaired by me and further consisted of two trusted colleagues, namely Roland Peens and James Pietersen, both of Wine Cellar, Cape Town merchants and cellarers of fine wine. We tasted blind, ratings done according to the 100-point system. Final scores were awarded on the basis of discussion that involved retasting where necessary rather than relying solely on arithmetic averaging.

Christian Eedes,
Editor, Winemag.co.za

TASTING NOTES: BLENDS

94

Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2017

Price: R265

Total production: 4 800 bottles

Abv: 14.58%

76% Sauvignon Blanc, 24% Semillon. The Sauvignon Blanc was fermented in 600-litre barrels, 40 % new while the Semillon was fermented in clay amphorae before being transferred into old 600-litre barrels. Components were kept separate for 10 months before being taken to tank for a further five months.

A subtle and enticing nose showing fynbos, citrus, white peach, apple and spice. The palate has great depth of fruit and tangy acidity before a long and salty finish. Great presence and intensity of flavour.

93

Highlands Road Sine Cera 2015

Price: R160

Total production: 6 666 bottles

Abv: 14.34%

50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Semillon, blending occurring after six months on the lees, 10% of the Sauvignon Blanc component matured in barrel. A note of reduction before fynbos, peach, citrus and blackcurrant. Pure and precise with fresh acidity and a particularly long and savoury finish. Appears remarkably youthful still.

93

Tokara Director's Reserve White 2016

Price: R270

Total production: 13 780 bottles

Abv: 13.9%

70% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Semillon. Matured for nine months in French oak, 400-litre barrels for the Sauvignon Blanc and 225-litre barrels for the Semillon, a total of 28% new. Citrus, peach, blackcurrant, fynbos and attractive oak on the nose. The palate is rich but balanced – lovely fruit definition, coated acidity and a salty finish.

93

Zorgvliet Simoné 2017

Price: R170

Total production: 2 332 750ml bottles and 100 magnums

Abv: 14.25%

57% Sauvignon Blanc, 43% Semillon. Components matured separately for nine months in old 500- and 600-litre French oak barrels before blending, the wine taken to tank for a further four months. Peach, citrus, blackcurrant plus herbs, spice and some leesy complexity on the nose. The palate shows great fruit concentration and fresh acidity before a long and savoury finish.

92

Delaire Graff White Reserve 2016

Price: R400

Total production: 4 500 bottles

Abv: 13.67%

62% Sauvignon Blanc (Darling and Durbanville) & 38% Semillon (Franschhoek and Stellenbosch). Matured in 225-litre barrels for five months before blending, the wine taken to tank for a further eight months. A fragrant nose with notes of flowers and fynbos before citrus and peach plus a touch of oak. Medium bodied and well balanced – pure fruit, lively acidity and a long, dry finish.

92

Chateau de Fieuzal 2015

Wine Cellar price: R950

Citrus, stone fruit, some nuttiness and a hint of vanilla on the nose. Lovely weight and texture, layers of flavor and great length – big, full and complex.

92

Hazendal 2017

Price: R260

Total production: 3 610 bottles

Abv: 13.65%

67% Semillon, 33% Sauvignon Blanc. 70% fermented and matured for nine months in new 500-litre barrels, 30% in tank. A complex nose with top notes of flowers and herbs before peach, apple and blackcurrant. Rich and thick textured but equally not short of freshness, the finish long and pithy.

92

Strandveld Adamastor 2016

Price: R165

Total production: 5 500 bottles

Abv: 12.9%

54% Sauvignon Blanc, 46% Semillon, the former tank fermented and the latter fermented and matured for 10 months in mostly older 500-litre barrels. A subtle yet multifaceted nose showing thatch and flowers before lime, peach and blackcurrant. Relatively light bodied with vibrant acidity and a saline finish.

92

Warwick Professor Black 2017

Price: R350

Total production: 9 269 bottles

Abv: 14.1%

65% Darling Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Elgin Semillon. Matured for 11 months in older oak, 225-litre barrels for the former and 400-litre barrels for the latter. Apple, peach, naartjie, dried herbs, vanilla and spice on the nose. Rich and broad on the palate – good depth of fruit, nicely coated acidity and gently savoury finish.

BUYING GUIDE: CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90 – 91

91

Quoin Rock White Blend 2017 – R115

Celestina 2017 – R120

Benguela Cove Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016 – R160

Nitida Coronata Integration 2016 – R160

Highlands Road Sine Cera 2016 – R175

Lanzerac Keldermeester Versameling Bergstroom 2017 – R190

Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve 2017 – R190

David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner The Bowline 2016 – R210

Iona One Man Band White 2016 – R230

Durbanville Hills The Tangram 2017 – R375

90

Waverley Hills 2018 – R76

Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserve 2017 – R135

Elgin Vintners The Century 2017 – R187

Bizoe Henriëtte 2017 – R200

Bloemendal Kanonberg 2015 – R205

David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner The Bowline 2017 – R210

TASTING NOTES: WOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC

93

The Fledge & Co. Fumé Blanc 2017

Price: R150

Total production: 4 812 bottles

Abv: 13.37%

A combination of Stellenbosch and Sondagskloof Sauvignon Blanc plus 5% Semillon. Fermented and matured for eight months in old oak barrels of various sizes. A herbal top note before peach, yellow apple and spice. Rich and broad with coated acidity and a gently savoury finish. Balanced, layered and long.

92

Bloemendal Suider Terras 2016

Price: R475

Total production: 2 533 bottles

Abv: 13%

Matured for 10 months in French oak, 100% new. A complex nose showing peach, apple and blackcurrant plus crushed herbs and some leesy complexity. Deep and full with coated acidity and a gently savoury finish. Powerful yet poised.

92

Highlands Road White Reserve 2017

Price: R295

Total production: 1 866 bottles

Abv: 14%

Fermented and matured for 18 months in French oak, 70% in 500-litre and 30% in 225-litre barrels, a combination of first- and third-fill. Peach, some waxiness and attractive oak on the nose. The palate is thick textured but there's also tangy acidity lending drive. A wine of presence and composure.

92

Neumeister Ried Moarfeitl 2015

Average wine-searcher.com price: R572

Abv: 13.5%

Peach, green apple and blackcurrant plus some sea air on the nose. Pure fruit and zippy acidity on the palate. Plenty of weight and power but equally intricate and very well balanced.

92

Overgaauw Abraham 2017

Price: R160

Total production: 2 700 bottles

Abv: 13%

5% fermented and matured for six months in second-fill barrel. A pretty nose with notes of flowers and fresh herbs before lime and white peach. The palate is light-bodied and elegant – pure fruit and a lovely line of acidity before a long and pithy finish.

BUYING GUIDE: CELLAR-DOOR PRICES FOR WINES RATED 90 – 91

91

Zevenwacht 360^o 2017 – R140

Rousseau Sacharia 2017 – R150

Cape Point Vineyards Reserve 2017 – R200

90

Rousseau Grace 2018 – R95

Miravel Nigma 2017 – R120

Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Young Airhawk 2017 – R167

Diemersdal M.M. Louw 2017 – R180

The Giant Periwinkle Blanc Fumé 2017 – R200

Iona Klipkop Blanc Fumé 2017 – R230

Sabathi Ried Pössnitzberger Sorgenbrecher 2015

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z: SAUV-SEM BLENDS

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Benguela Cove Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2016	Walker Bay	91
Bizoe Henriëtte 2017	Western Cape	90
Bloemendal Kanonberg 2015	Durbanville	90
Cape Point Vineyards Isliedh 2017	Cape Town	94
Celestina 2017	Cape Agulhas	91
Constantia Glen Two 2017	Constantia	89
Constantia Uitsig Natura Vista 2015	Constantia	89
Darling Cellars Lady Ann Darling 2017	Darling	89
David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner The Bowline 2016	Elim	91
David Nieuwoudt Ghost Corner The Bowline 2017	Elim	90
Delaire Graff White Reserve 2016	Coastal Region	92
Durbanville Hills The Tangram 2017	Durbanville	91
Elgin Vintners The Century 2017	Elgin	90
Fairview Drie Papen Fontein 2017	Darling	89
Chateau de Fieuzal 2015	Pessac-Leognan	92
Flagstone Treaty Tree Reserve 2017	Elim	90
Gabriëlskloof The Landscape Series Magdalena 2017	Western Cape	89
Glen Carlou The Curator's Collection Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2018	Groenekloof	89
GlenWood 2017	Franschhoek	88
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2016	Constantia	89
Groot Constantia Gouverneurs Reserve 2017	Constantia	89
Groote Post Seasalter 2018	Darling	88
Hazendal Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2015	Elgin	93
Highlands Road Sine Cera 2016	Elgin	91
Iona One Man Band White 2016	Elgin	91
Kroonpoort 2017	Cape South Coast	89
La Petite Ferme Winemakers Edition "Wikus" 2018	Western Cape	86
Lanzerac Keldermeester Versameling Bergstroom 2017	Western Cape	91
Morgenster White Reserve 2016	Stellenbosch	86
Nitida Coronata Integration 2016	Cape Town	91
Nitida Woolworths Bush Baby 2018	Coastal Region	88
Quoin Rock White Blend 2017	Western Cape	91
Rickety Bridge The Printer's Devil The Gremlin 2017	Franschhoek	87
Steenberg Magna Carta 2016	Constantia	89
Strandveld Adamastor 2016	Elim	92
Tokara Director's Reserve White 2016	Stellenbosch	93
Trizanne Signature Wines Reserve Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2017	Elim	91
Vrede en Lust Barrique 2016	Elgin	89
Warwick Professor Black 2017	Western Cape	92
Waverley Hills 2018	Tulbagh	90
Zorgvliet Simoné 2017	Banghoek	93

COMPLETE SCORES A – Z: WOODED SAUVIGNON BLANC

Name	Wine of Origin	Score
Bloemendal Suider Terras 2015	Durbanville	88
Bloemendal Suider Terras 2016	Durbanville	92
Cape Point Vineyards Reserve 2017	Cape Town	91
Diemersdal M.M. Louw 2017	Durbanville	90
Diemersdal Wild Horseshoe 2016	Durbanville	87
Driefontein 2016	Stellenbosch	88
Haut Espoir 2017	Franschhoek	89
Highlands Road White Reserve 2017	Elgin	92
Iona Klipkop Blanc Fumé 2017	Elgin	89
Jordan The Outlier 2017	Stellenbosch	89
Miravel Nigma 2017	Stellenbosch	90
Nederburg Heritage Heroes The Young Airhawk Wooded 2017	Western Cape	90
Neumeister Ried Moarfeitl 2015	Steiermark, Austria	92
Nitida Wild Child 2018	Durbanville, Cape Town	87
Overgaauw Abraham 2017	Stellenbosch	92
Rousseau Grace 2018	Western Cape	90
Rousseau Sacharia 2017	Western Cape	91
Sabathi Ried Possnitzberger Sorgenbrecher 2015	Steiermark, Austria	90
Tement Ried Zieregg 2015	Steiermark, Austria	89
The Fledge & Co. Fume Blanc 2017	Coastal Region	93
The Giant Perieinkle Blanc Fumé 2017	Cape South Coast	90
Zevenwacht 360º 2017	Stellenbosch	91