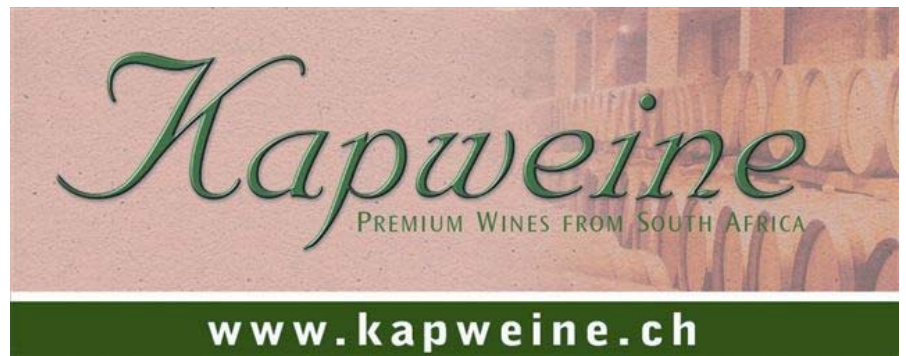


Wines of South Africa – The John Platter tasting

Jancis Robinson die bekannte Master of Wine Journalistin aus England hat in London einige der besten Südafrikanischen Weine verkostet.



The Platter Guide to South African wine has been published annually since 1980 and during that time has grown from a slim pocket sized handbook into a much expanded 600 page heavyweight tome. It is rightly regarded as the bible for SA wines and the wines are rated by an expert tasting panel. For 2008 there were just 21 wines given 5 stars (the equivalent of 'superlative') and 312 wines awarded 4.5 Stars ('brilliant'). A recent tasting in London gave a chance to assess some of these wines.

Here then is my review of the wines on show. While this was not a fully comprehensive overview and there were some great names missing, there were 66 wines on show that scored either 5 or 4.5 on the Platter Scale, although most of the 5 Star wines were absent from the line up. One or two anomalies crept in – a couple of 3.5 or 4 Star wines were erroneously supplied by importers - but these are included as they do serve to show the rating scale lower down and they only came to light afterward.

Unusually, I've *also scored* these wines in a break from my usual aversion to numbers to see if my thoughts correlate to the Platter scores. As the world is already overloaded with different scoring systems I've used a system with which I'm fairly familiar - Jancis Robinson's 20-point system. (That also gave me a chance to see where I differ in opinion from that of a highly regarded MW – a kind of palate calibration exercise, for which I hope I'll be forgiven the temerity). Meanwhile I have no current plans to include scoring as a regular feature as I firmly believe these are best left to competitions! The wines are listed in the order tasted.

Please bear in mind some caveats; this was *not* a blind tasting and I do start salivating when I see the likes of Forrester, Bouchard Finlayson and Hamilton Russell, for example. Also, each wine by necessity can only receive short attention at a tasting. Pre-2008 Budget prices plus selected UK stockists are supplied by Wines of South Africa.



1. Simonsig Cuvée Royale B de B, WO Stellenbosch, 1999. 12%. £10.99

91% Chardonnay, 9% Pinot Noir. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

SA Wines Online, Halifax Wine Company, grapeland.co.uk, Cape Province Wines, Cape Wine and Food

The only *Cap Classique* on show. Full, well balanced, very dry finish. Fresh mousse, pear fruit, leesy. Medium length. Good value

Chenin Blanc

2. Ken Forrester, The FMC, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 14.5%. £16.99

100% Chenin Blanc. **This new vintage is not yet Platter rated, generally 4.5/5 Stars. My Score: 17.5**

Great Western Wine Company, Premier Vintners, Swig, Jascots Wine Merchants, Selfridges, Harrods, Waitrose

A personal favourite, as *Wine Alchemy* readers will know by now. This new release is pale gold. This is very young, that wet wool varietal character is subdued nose as yet. Honeyed hints on a broad palate and that super high acidity for crispness. No alcoholic heat. Needs bottle age to fill out - wait for the tangerine, honey and toast to develop. Needs 2 years?

3. Simonsig Chenin Avec Chêne, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 14.5%. £9.99

100% Chenin Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

SA Wines Online, Halifax Wine Company, grapeland.co.uk, Cape Province Wines, Cape Wine and Food

Brassy colour, subdued nose, pears fruits and minerals, zesty, but lacks a little excitement. Oaked as per the label, but not overly so, this is well done. Good value.

Sauvignon Blanc

4. De Grendel Sauvignon Blanc, WO Durbanville, 2006. 13%. £7.99

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4 Stars only. My Score: 15**

Oddbins

Couldn't see how this would be 4.5 and found it was 4 stars afterward. Silver-green, subdued aromatics, a little confected for me. Not showy and finishes a bit short.

5. Oak Valley Sauvignon Blanc, WO Elgin, 2006. 13%. £9.95

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Great Western Wine Company, Abbey Fine Wines, Harrods, L'Art du Vin

Quite a dumb nose, recognisably Sauvie but lacks individuality. Fresh and zippy but I'd like more at this price.



6. Jordan Estate Sauvignon Blanc, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 13%. £9.99

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

everywine.co.uk, SA Wines Online, Jeroboams, Sandhams Wine Merchants, Oxford Wine Company

Much more intensity here, Loire-like elegance and minerality. Good balance of fruit and fresh acidity, some subtlety and spice on the length.

7. Durbanville Hills Biesjes Craal, WO Durbanville, 2007. 12%. £8.99

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

SA Wines Online

Pale yellow. A mineral, almost kerosene – like nose. Acidic tart palate and feels a little dilute here, alcohol is remarkably low. Best feature is intense gooseberry length. No lack of individuality but a strange SA Sauvie.

8. Mulderbosch Sauvignon Blanc, WO Stellenbosch, 2007. 12.5%. £11.55

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4 Stars** only in this vintage (previous vintages 4.5 Stars). **My Score: 16.5**

SA Wines Online from July 2008

Peapod and cat-box dominate, rounded texture, moderate alcohol and very persistent. Very young and may well improve with a few months bottle age.

9. Iona Sauvignon Blanc, WO Elgin, 2007. 13%. £11.99

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Booths Wines, The Sussex Wine Company

Rather soft and not aggressive, tight aromatics, very dry. Seems very young and primal at present.

10. Kumkani Lanner Hill, WO Groenekloof, 2007. 14.5%. £12.99

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 14**

SA Wines Online, everywine.co.uk, capewineandfood.com

Obviously Sauvie but no excitement for me. Unbalanced alcoholic heat, expensive for what it is.

11. Klein Constantia Perdeblokke, WO Constantia, 2007. 13%? £13.00

100% Sauvignon Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Swig, Quintessentially Wines, SA Wines Online, Noel Young Wines

An advance tank sample, this vintage available won't be in the UK until autumn 2008. By that time it may have settled down and filled out. Rather narrow and ungiving just now, acidity to the fore.

Chardonnay



12. Durbanville Hills *Rhinofields*, WO Durbanville, 2005. 13.5%. £7.49

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

SA Wines Online

Plenty of new oak on the nose and palate. Some tropical fruit but this isn't a bruiser though richly textured. Needs to suck that oak up but not sure it will.

13. Paul Cluver Chardonnay, WO Elgin, 2006. 13.5%. £9.99

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Laytons

Oaked chardonnay, fruit flavours trying to escape from the oak. Energy sapping.

14. Groote Post unwooded Chardonnay, WO Darling, 2006. 14%. £10.99

100% Chardonnay. **3.5 Stars. My Score: 12**

SA Wines Online, Vins de Bordeaux, Penistone Court Cellars, Lakeland Vintners

Found out afterward this was only rated 3.5 and it tasted like it. The wooded version is the 4.5 star wine. This bottle was horribly sulphured and masking stone fruit.

15. Bouchard Finlayson, *Missionvale*, WO Walker Bay, 2006. 13%. £11.99

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Lea and Sandeman

BF to the rescue as usual. Elegance and balance is expected and it's there a-plenty. Satisfying subtle fruit, lipsmaking acidity. Very satisfying austere white burg style. Buy this and wait a couple of years.

16. Vergelegen Chardonnay Reserve, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 14.5%. £12.79

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17.5**

Majestic, SA Wines Online, Hailsham Cellars, The Vine King

This might be in muscular contrast to the BF above but Vergelegen do big Chardy so well. Palate is very refined with some flinty minerality poking through the lush fruit. Alcohol is just a bit heady but no doubting the quality or the ageing potential here.

17. Sumaridge Chardonnay, WO Walker Bay, 2006. £12.99

100% Chardonnay. **4 Stars only. My Score: 16.5**

Charles Steevenson, Vinusvita

This is very good, subtle oak and an interesting hint of polish on the nose. The oak lets the flavours through and a good length. 4.5 in previous vintages, this might come on a bit yet. Returned to this one again later, I think more potential here.



18. Edgebaston Chardonnay, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 14%. £12.99

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

SA Wines Online, Connollys of Birmingham, Dorjes of Warwick, everywine.co.uk

First bottle unbalanced, a strange combination of hot alcoholic finish and a dilute palate - faulty. Relieved to find a second bottle much better, plenty of rich fruit, big boned, Meursault style.

19. Glen Carlou Quartz Stone Chardonnay, WO Paarl, 2006. 13.5%. £14.49

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 14.5**

Stockists: SA Wines Online

Confected boiled sweets. Residual sugar? Palate is a bit cloying, especially at this price.

20. Oak Valley Chardonnay, WO Elgin, 2006. £14.95

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Stockists: Great Western Wine Company, L'Art du Vin

Very nice balance, palate weight and texture. Very cool climate style. Citrus, minerals and low-level oak that adds some complexity.

21. Hamilton Russell Chardonnay, WO Walker Bay, 2006. 13%. £17.49

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17.5**

SA Wines Online, Jeroboams, Philglas & Swiggot, everywine.co.uk, Wimbledon Wine Cellar

Head and shoulders above most of the Chardy's here. Stone fruit and racy minerality and all the fine wine hallmarks – balance, fruit complexity, texture, palate weight, poise. Walks that tightrope effortlessly and surely will improve. Very drinkable but I confess I do find this style enormously appealing.

22. Jordan *Nine Yards* Chardonnay, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 14%. £18.99

100% Chardonnay. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 12**

Jeroboams, Rodney Densem Wines, Christopher Piper

High hopes but this bottle was unclean. I'd like to try it again another time.

White blends

23. Kumkani Chardonnay Viognier, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 14%. £5.99

79% Chardonnay, 21% Viognier. **4 Stars. My Score: 15**

Stockists: Various independents, SA Wines Online, everywine.co.uk, capewineandfood.com

The nose has nothing to say. The Viognier is a giveaway on the palate. Broad, verging on the flabby, simple honeysuckle fruit going nowhere fast. While cheap in this line up it's 4 stars and shouldn't be here.



24. Klein Constantia *Mme Marlbrook*, WO Constantia, 2006. 13.5%. £15.00

60% Semillon, 37% Sauv Blanc, 3% Muscat de Frontignan. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Notes - this vintage is available in UK from summer 2008. Current vintage available is 2005.

Wimbledon Wine Cellars, Tanners, Quintessentially Wines, Portland Wine Company, Swig, Halifax Wine Company.

Sauvie-nose and Muscat on the palate makes this an interesting take on a dry white Bordeaux style. Slightly waxy texture but firm and not exactly generous right now. One to put away and hope for development.

25. Vergelegen *Prestige White*, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 13%. £21.44

79% Semillon, 21% Sauvignon Blanc. **5 Stars. My Score: 18.5**

Waitrose, Majestic, SA Wines Online, Swig, The Vine King, Wimbledon Wine Cellar

Shows very clearly why this wine received 5 Stars! Absolutely stunning example of how to do a white Bordeaux blend. Great quality, great texture, subtle and satisfying, generous in the mouth, restrained alcohol. Finish has a very moreish lick of salt. World class wine, go buy. Easily worth the money.

Pinot Noir

26. Oak Valley Pinot Noir, WO Elgin, 2006. 14%. £21.95

100% Pinot Noir. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 15**

Great Western Wine Company, Abbey Fine Wines

Light raspberry colour with purple flecks. Nose shows liquorice and earth. After that good start the palate is a let-down: uncomfortable jagged rubber amidst the raspberry jam.

27. Hamilton Russell Pinot Noir, WO Walker Bay, 2006. 14%. £22.99

100% Pinot Noir. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 18**

Jeroboams, Philglas & Swiggot, everywine.co.uk, SA Wines Online, Wimbledon Wine Cellar

As usual HR lead the way, fine consistency year on year. Lifted bramble nose cut with smoke and violets. Tannins a bit upfront yet but only needs a year or two to soften. Incisive and focused *pinosity*. Nearly 5 stars.

Pinotage

28. DeWaal *Top of the Hill* Pinotage, WO Stellenbosch, 2002. 13.5%. £22.99

100% Pinotage. General rating **4.5 Stars** (this vintage no rating). **My Score: 14.5**

Forth Wines Ltd

Volatile - bitter, acid and tiring to drink. Seems to be falling apart. Unflattering.



29. Kaapzicht *Steytler* Pinotage, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £19.99

100% Pinotage. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Hedley Wright, Great Grog

Voluptuous wine, restrained but almost musky odours, medicinal palate with black berry fruit, softly textured and a nice spice end. A big but interesting wine.

30. Ashbourne Pinotage, WO Walker Bay, 2004. 14%. £22.99

100% Pinotage. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Lewis & Cooper, Wine Library Ltd, Planet of the grapes

Lovely red fruits, a lighter style Pinotage despite the 14% alcohol. Marked down for being a bit lacking in Pinotage character – for some that would be a bonus. Pricy though.

31. Simonsig *Redhill* Pinotage, WO Stellenbosch, 2005. 15%. £11.99

100% Pinotage. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

SA Wines Online, Halifax Wine Company, grapeland.co.uk, Cape Province Wines, Cape Wine and Food

And here's the contrasting heavyweight style of Pinotage. Purple people eater, massive in every way. It's very well made; masses of fruit with an herbal character and a chocolate finish. Very good value but bodybuilders only need apply.

Cabernet Sauvignon & Bordeaux Blends (Part 1)

32. Mischa Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, WO Wellington, 2003. 13.5%. £10.25

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 15**

Promotion Wine, SA Wines Online, Great Grog

Deep colour. Herbal to the point of chlorination on the nose. Bright and juicy red fruit.

33. Waterford Estate Cab Sauvignon, WO Stellenbosch, 2003. 13.5%. £15.00

85% Cab Sauv, 5% Cab Franc, 5% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 18**

Stockists: Berry Bros & Rudd

This should be rated 5 stars *imho*. I liked this wine a lot last year and it's showing very well again. Tobacco and cedar, big cassis fruit and some attractive vanilla, pencils! Distinctive, with complexity and harmony, soft inviting texture. Lovely drinking now and over the next 5 years. Buy this by the case.

34. Vergelegen Cabernet Reserve, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £13.79

Cabernet Sauvignon 85%, Merlot 7%, 8% Cabernet Franc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17.5**

Majestic, SA Wines Online, Swig, Hailsham Cellars



A classic Bordeaux blend. Richly textured, good fruit, slightly cakey with a little milk chocolate from oak at the end. Very good and well priced with a way to go – keep it a year or two longer yet – and a long life predicted too. Easily recommended.

35. Hartenberg Estate, Mackenzie, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £21.50

85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Genesis Wines

Heady herbal nose is too medicinal for me and a rather angular palate follows. A bit unbalanced and jagged, especially at this price.

36. Rustenberg Peter Barlow, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £22.99

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17.5**

Lea and Sandeman

Bacon Fat on the nose with big black fruit. Tannins say wait a while. Savoury almost marmite-ish undertow, quite a lean style. Different, distinctive and very good!

37. Glen Carlou Gravel Quarry, WO Paarl, 2004. 14%. £23.99

93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Petit Verdot. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Stockists: SA Wines Online

Menthol and mint on the nose and finish. Bright, juicy and inviting. Softly textured, damson and black fruit flavours give way to a persistent dark chocolate ending. Fine drinking.

38. Thelema The Mint, WO Stellenbosch, 2005. 14%. £19.99

100% Cabernet Sauvignon. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Stockists: SA Wines Online

Well named! Big peppermint nose overlaying blackcurrants. The mint on the palate could be a bit tiring and dominates the fruit. I like the individuality though - Polo's with your wine?

Shiraz/Syrah

39. Rickety Bridge Shiraz, WO Franschhoek, 2003. 14%. £13.95

100% Shiraz. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 14**

greatwineonline.co.uk

Black core, purple rim. Hot and heady. Sorry.



40. Hartenberg Shiraz, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 15%. £11.00

100% Shiraz. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Genesis Wines

Delightful white pepper and damson nose! A bit let down after that start by the sheer weight of alcohol – spirity heat. Partially forgiven for that nose though.

41. Kumkani Triple J Shiraz, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 13.5%. £12.99

100% Shiraz. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 15.5**

SA Wines Online, everywine.co.uk, capewineandfood.com

Dense, some pepper and red fruits. Better balanced because of less alcohol but there's a hole in the middle where the interest should be.

42. Saxenburg Private Collection Shiraz, WO Stellenbosch, 2004 . 15%. £13.99

100% Shiraz. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 15**

Abbey Wines, Hennings

Black, leggy, opaque. I feel bludgeoned.

43. Rustenberg Stellenbosch Syrah, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £14.99

100% Syrah. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Noel Young, Lea and Sandeman

Earthy mineral complexity, silky texture and much more a Syrah style, yet still big alcohol!

44. Rudi Schultz Syrah, WO Stellenbosch, 2005. 15%. £10.99

100% Syrah. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 14**

Justerini & Brooks

Your Grannies' Jam Pan. Can a Syrah at 15% be a Syrah?

45. Horse Mountain Voor-Paardeberg Shiraz, WO Paarl 2005. 14.5%. £11.99

100% Shiraz. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Peter Graham Wines, Christopher Piper Wines, everywine.co.uk, SA Wines Online

Very, very drinkable with a big stew on a cold night, otherwise may not bring real pleasure. A savoury note – marmite? Sweetish mid-palate.

46. Glen Carlou Syrah, WO Paarl, 2005. 14%. £13.99

100% Syrah. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Oddbins



At last, some floral notes on the nose – Lily here. Juicy and moreish, easily despatched, there's marmite here again but it's less obvious. Threaded through with pepper and spice. Good value too.

47. Simonsig Estate *Merindol Syrah*, WO Stellenbosch, 2005. 100%. £13.99

100% Syrah. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 12**

SA Wines Online, Halifax Wine Company, grapeland.co.uk, Cape Province Wines, Cape Wine and Food

Appallingly corked. So was a second bottle. TCA was all there was.

48. Anthony de Jaeger *Homtini*, WO Paarl, 2005. 15%. £12.95

93% Shiraz, 7% Viognier. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Great Western Wine Company

A part of SA that is forever Côte-Rôtie. Really deep almost black core (co-fermented?), floral and smoke nose . Layers of red berry fruit, damson and black berry. I liked this a lot even though it's a bit international in style.

Cabernet & Bordeaux Blends (Part 2)

49. Durbanville Hills *Caapmans*, WO Durbanville, 2003. 14.5%. £13.99

64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Merlot. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 15**

SA Wines Online

Very herbaceous –“green”. Menthol and bramble fruit. Tiring.

50. Buitenverwachting, *Christine*, WO Constantia, 2003. 14.5%. £15.99

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Cabernet Franc, 10% Malbec. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Cape Food & Wine, Wimbledon Wine Cellar, Abbey Wines, Swig, everywine.co.uk

Cheesy nose with an initial sample. Second bottle was better and showed concentration. Very smooth cassis fruit, complexity and no hard edges. Ready now.

51. Vergelegen *Prestige Red*, WO Stellenbosch, 2003. 14.5%. £26.00

76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 18**

Tesco, Majestic, SA Wines Online, Roberson Wine Merchants, Swig, Wimbledon Wine Cellar

Fine complexity, plenty going on. Pencils. Went back to this after the tasting – expensive but fantastic quality wine drinking quite brilliantly even though this is very young and almost primal. Come back in 2-3 years, when it should be a belter.

52. Meinert *Devon Crest*, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14%. £10.95

63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Merlot. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Great Western Wine Company, Swig



Lush and enjoyable Bordeaux blend. I thought slightly under-ripe fruit but great value in this company.

53. The Morgenhof Estate, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14%. £15.00

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 6% Malbec and 4% Cabernet Franc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17.5**

McKinley Vintners

Listed as Morgenhof *Premiere Selection*. Yes, Yes, Yes! Excitement, complexity, rich fruit cake spices, Richness and finesse but not ready yet, let the tannins mellow. Encore!

54. Meinert *Synchronicity*, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14%. £15.95

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 10% Pinotage. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

Great Western Wine Company, Selfridges

Really nicely blended, quite seamless and the Pinotage adds rather than subtracts. Satisfying melange of red and black fruit flavours with a spice end. Drinking now.

55. Flagstone *Mary Le Bow*, WO Western Cape, 2004. 15%. £17.99

Cab Sauvignon 59% Shiraz 19% Merlot 20% Cabernet Franc 2%. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Tesco, The Wine Society

Previously found this to be very well made but almost too powerful and a hot finish, no reason to change my mind. Very persistent and lovely fruit flavours – lots to admire here if you like the style, put it away for a couple of years.

56. Jordan Estate *Cobblers Hill*, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £18.99

85% Cabernet Sauvignon 15% Merlot. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 15**

Jeroboams, Christopher Piper, Frank Stainton Wines

Black berry, black currants and milk chocolate finish. Very smooth but acidity is pronounced. Pricey too.

57. Kaapzicht Estate Steytler *Vision*, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14.5%. £19.99

50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Pinotage, 10% Merlot. **4 Stars** this vintage, previous vintage 5 Stars. **My Score: 16.5**

Hedley Wright, SH Jones

Certainly not as good as the 2003, which I found very worthy of the 5 Star rating. Hence the drop in the Platter score. Extremely competent, big wine with shoulders. I'd like to try this again in a couple of years to see how it might integrate and develop.

58. Tokara *Red*, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. 14%. £18.00

69% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Merlot, 11% Petit Verdot, 6% Cabernet Franc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 18**

Hic!, SA Wines Online, Harrods



A smashing blend, pushing 5 Stars surely. Bramble fruit and herbaceous nose. Darker Damson fruit intensity, spices and pencils, cigar-box cedar. Mocha sign-off. Rich creamy texture leavened by good acidity. Drink now or leave for years of development. Worryingly expensive if you go to Harrods (£27.50) – a big range of prices in evidence.

59. Simonsig Estate *Tiara*, WO Stellenbosch, 2005. 14%. £9.99

62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

SA Wines Online, Halifax Wine Company, grapeland.co.uk, Cape Province Wines, Cape Wine and Food

Very subtle and mild compared with some in this show. Terrific value. Liked the cedar nose and fruit complexity.

60. Rustenberg *John X Merriman*, WO Stellenbosch, 2005. 14.5%. £9.99

54% Merlot, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 3% Malbec. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Lea and Sandeman

Pencil nose, fine, lifted and juicy and jammy dark fruits. Soft tannins and much to admire. Another great value wine.

61. Horse Mountain *Michele*, WO Voor-Paardeberg, 2005. 14.5?%. £12.99

56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Franc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16**

Dorjes Wine Club, Weavers of Nottingham, SA Wines Online, everywine.co.uk

A bit spirity on the nose and some alcoholic heat on the finish. In between is a full bodied smoothly polished red wine with straightforward damson flavour.

Dessert wines

62. Paul Cluver Noble Late Harvest, WO Elgin, 2006. 13%. £9.99

Half bottle. 100% Riesling, Botrytis affected. **5 Stars. My Score: 18**

Laytons.

Deep amber and plenty of botrytis. Endless tangerine peel, candied fruits and even lime peel. Brilliant wine, great value.

63. Villiera *Inspiration* Late Harvest, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. ?%. £9.99

100% Chenin Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: N/A**

Tesco

It had all gone!

64. Kanu *Kia-Ora* Noble Late Harvest, WO Stellenbosch, 2004. ?%. £10.49

93% Chenin Blanc, 7% Harslevelu. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

Cape Food & Wine Middlesex, Hailsham Cellars



600 bottles for UK only, so very rare. Like a young sweet Vouvray, nice balance of sweetness and acidity. A bit simple now but might it age? No botrytis or only a smidgeon.

65. Simonsig Estate *Vin de Liza*, WO Stellenbosch, 2006. 12.5%. £10.99

52% Semillon, 48% Chenin Blanc. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 16.5**

SA Wines Online, Halifax Wine Company, grapeland.co.uk, Cape Province Wines, Cape Wine and Food

Buttery almost Sauternes style without perhaps the ultimate in rich intensity but this is very good.

66. Klein Constantia Estate *Vin de Constance*, WO Constantia, 2002. 7%. £28.00

100% Muscat de Frontignan. **4.5 Stars. My Score: 17**

SA Wines Online, Waitrose, Swig, Harvey Nichols, Tanners, Fortnum & Mason

Marmalade on toast. Lime, bitter orange, honey and some sweet spices. Very rich and a huge length measured in minutes.

Conclusions

This tasting confirmed a few things. Firstly, if you are in any doubt as to the excellence of South Africa's wines then do seek out some of the wines here, whether white or red. Secondly, the Platter ratings are very reliable and backed by a panel of expert judges. The annual publication of the Guide makes for a sound investment for anyone wanting to find out more about South African wine.

On this showing the Sauvignon Blanc category was the most varied in quality and style. Strangely the Shiraz was less successful but there were some truly excellent Cabernet's and Bordeaux blends. Anyhow here, by the narrowest of margins, are my three picks of the picks:

Best White wine and Wine of the Show: Vergelegen Prestige White 2006

Best Red wine: Tokara Red 2004

Best Value: Waterford Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2003

For Claudia Brown of WoSA, for doing a great job!

