

Zooming in on two top wine trends to watch for 2018

By [James Pietersen](#)

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"The South African wine industry is experiencing one of its most exciting phases in history. Overall wine quality has increased dramatically over the last five years, international recognition is at an all-time high and the consumer is now spoilt for choice, with a wealth of new producers, varieties and styles.

Though winery input costs have risen and the continued drought may mean a significant drop in yield, the battered rand has helped exports and aid profitability. South African wine offers tremendous value locally and abroad, but premium South African wines are surging in price, widening the gap to everyday beverage wines," writes Roland Peens, director of Wine Cellar.



Five wine trends to watch for in 2018

Roland Peens 9 Jan 2018



James Pietersen, Wine Cellar

We zoom in on the two top trends and predictions for the nectar of the gods...

Planting for the future with old vine vision:

There has been a lot of communication about the value and need for nurturing and looking after our old vines heritage. For many reasons this is essential and these vineyards have become a clear indication of what works best. However, the flip side is that these old vines in all there gnarly beauty are only the beginning.

A rapidly changing world necessitates that we use the knowledge that has now been garnered to find a way to the future. With the decline in vineyard plantings, ensuing drought and the rising cost of wine growing, it is now, more than ever, imperative that we support quality wines in order to stimulate the planting of new visionary vineyards, the old vines of the future.

And this is exactly what is happening, many of our very best producers are actively and intelligently planting **new vineyards**. These include Sadie Family Wines, Raats Family Wines, Mullineux, David & Nadia Wines, Boekenhoutskloof, and Alheit Vineyards to name but a few. So look out for interesting **new wines and even regions** coming to the fore.

It is getting hot around here – drought resistance:

Climate change is a reality and being in the middle of the worst drought in 100 years is a clear indication that things are set to change. The Western Cape is set to see a 30% drop in average rainfall going forward. Vineyards are of the hardiest and marginal plants out there, as a matter of fact, grapes make the best wine when they struggle.

However, very much like a well-conditioned athlete needs to be supremely fit, but healthy, so too vineyards need to be fighting fit. Vines need water.

What does this hold for the future? As we expect changes in climate to persist we will see a drastic drop in quality wines being produced, this scarcity will translate to higher prices and possibly, in the long term, the relocation of wine producing regions. The growth in the production and quality of English wine is a good example.

Other trends that stem from this, like the intelligent new plantings of vineyards, will be taking in futuristic drought conditions. This means that we will see **a rise in different cultivars** – some that are better suited to drought conditions like Verdelho, Malvasia Rei, Assystiko and Grenache Noir, whilst others will be favoured as they ripen earlier like Gamay Noir and Pinotage, thus missing out on the severity of the end of the season.

So get ready for a plethora of new exciting wines to come our way.

ABOUT JAMES PIETERSEN

James Pietersen manages the South African wine portfolio for Wine Cellar and was enticed into the world of wine whilst studying law at the University of Stellenbosch. An encounter with some Château Lynch-Bages 1982 led to an epiphany and a life-long journey in wine ensued. This has included stints in retail, wine buying and recently as head sommelier for the Slick Restaurant Group.

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