



[FOOD & DRINK](#)



the art of the blend

Zonnebloem on combining cultivars

If you're one of the many who align with the misconception that a blend equates to poorer quality or a winemaking 'accident', think again!

The combination of multiple cultivars, creating the perfect blend is quite literally an art form, and is also certainly a science. A change in just 5ml of one cultivar to the next can result in dramatic flavour profile difference, so the choices made are extremely deliberate, and, as we learned at a recent blending workshop at **Zonnebloem Winery**, can take a fair amount of professional arguing between the vintners to get it *just* right.

Although blending does have humble origins in that it was created out of historical necessity – there were often environmental and other elements out of the winemaker's control that were destroying vineyards, so wines were blended to alleviate the financial burden – the modern winemaker has a deeper understanding of the chemistry involved in the structure of blended wines. Combining truly great wines, that are perfect on their own, can work to enhance those wines' aromas, balance acidity and build a wine with a better balance and smoother finish.

So, how does crafting a blended wine work, you may ask? Firstly, a blend can constitute combinations of any percentages of any different cultivars. For example, [Zonnebloem's flagship wine, Lauréat](#), comprises 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 5% Shiraz, 5% Mourvèdre and 5% Petit Verdot. This combination is the recipe to create this particular wine year on year with the same tasting profile.

To accomplish this mammoth task, Zonnebloem's winemaking team including cellar master **Deon Boshoff** and red wine makers **Bonny van Niekerk** and **James Ochse**, need to taste an array of current vintages in their library of reserves that change annually in the cellar. Each of these wines are made from grapes sourced from different vineyards, so creating the exact same wine over and over is a highly technical and articulated chemistry. The vintners will then decide (and evidently argue!) on which wines to assemble in which absolute quantities to create a similar cuvee. Achieving the right balance of sugars, tannins, acidity and pH is therefore astonishingly complex a process.

And *that*, dear reader, is an art.

Go on, try a blend and let us know what you think!

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