

How I became a "Nederburg Wooded Wine Expert" in just one day



By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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A glass of heartwarming sweet wine, a couple of smiling faces, and mouth-watering canapes welcomed us upon arrival at Nederburg in Paarl.



It was set to be a day of tasting delights but also some learning - and learning seems to be so much more enjoyable when food and wine are in the mix.

Now, for those who aren't aware, Nederburg has an exceptional track record for international and local awards, trailblazing innovations and refreshing, contemporary wines that combine rich fruit flavour with superb structure. The winery is especially well known and respected for its enviable reputation for excellence in the making of Cabernet Sauvignon and dessert wines.

The wine farm recently presented The Wood Diaries - an intimate late afternoon event expressed in a fun, hands-on way.



It offered us the chance to learn the intricacies and impressive skill associated with not only the ageing of wine in oak, but also the blending of a number of wines matured using different types of oak and ageing techniques, into one beautifully balanced blend.



We were broken up into random teams and our tables made the dining hall look a bit like Dexter's Laboratory. The aim of the game? Blend a winning new Cabernet Sauvignon!

With a tasting session done and dusted, we started mixing up four variants of Cabernet Sauvignon aged in the following types of oak: French Oak (intense), French Oak (classic), American Oak, and Eastern European Oak.



Our third blend was the one we loved most. We chose to use majority Eastern European Oak, a little bit of each of the French Oaks, and only a touch of the American Oak.

Not only did we love our own blend, but after a blind tasting session, Nederburg's red-wine maker, Samuel Viljoen; assistant red-wine maker, Heinrich Kulsen; white wine-maker, Elmarie Viljoen; and assistant white-wine maker, Jamie Fredericks selected our blend as the winner! Apparently, they tasted some hints of pencil shavings...

"We set out to give the audience a sense of what being a winemaker is like, while imparting knowledge of the impact of different types of wood used, time spent in barrel as well as frequency of barrel fill. The blending of various Cabernet Sauvignon wine components to make up a final ensemble seemed to really drive the point home that winemaking is not for the faint-hearted!" says Patrick Kutumane, Nederburg's SA brand activation manager.

We each walked away with a selection of six of Nederburg's awarded wines, presented in a wooden box. Absolutely gorgeous and I can't wait to open them one by one on very special occasions!



My fellow teammates included Bradley Rossiter of *World Wine Wanderings*, Lindy Hibbard of *Smile FM*, and Claire Horn of *Ilovefoodies.co.za*.



#Winning

And that, friends, is how I suddenly went from "expert wine drinker" to "Nederburg Wooded Wine Expert" in just one day...

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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