

Raising profiles, creating jobs

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By Nicola Jenvey

Durban – A new initiative on the cards aims to see more bottled wines exported from our shores to raise South Africa's profile as a premium producer and consequently promote job creation.

Currently, South Africa exports more bulk than bottled wine, driven by the global shift from international supermarket chains to curtail their costs.

The bottling campaign follows the recently negotiated Economic Partnership Agreement, effective 2016, whereby South Africa's duty-free wine quota exported to the European Union (EU) more than doubles to 110 million litres.

However, only 84 million litres of what the industry presently produces is eligible for the exemption, being the annual amount currently shipped to the EU in packaging under two litres.

To take full advantage of the raised quota, the industry must boost its bottled output to the EU by 26 million litres – the goal for this year's campaign, which wine guru Su Birch reckons would bring in another R550 million to the industry. Accounting for 72% of South Africa's exports last year, the EU is our largest export market.

Origin Wines MD Neville Carew says among the benefits of the new agreement will be the ability of producers to bottle locally and export at less than the current cost to export in bulk and bottle in the EU.

Currently, the country loses around R1.9 billion in revenue because wines are bottled outside our shores – and that translates into jobs and security.

On the home front, though, it is always rewarding to read about international successes for our local products.

Swartland-based Leeuwenkuil Family Vineyards has received a 92-point score from Decanter magazine for its 2013 Shiraz, a wine retailing for only R45.



The panel was apparently blown away by the calibre of South African shiraz and identified the Swartland as the country's leading shiraz-growing region from "bring the most Rhône-like" and producing wines consistently offering "purity, restraint, fragrance, intensity, freshness and ripeness".

This is a wine that pairs well with feast-worthy foods like roast duck, grilled meats and wild mushroom pasta, but is equally as outstanding on its own.

Another treasure that reared its head this past week is the Place in the Sun Unwooded Chardonnay 2014 (retail price R42), a wine that pairs well with oysters and steak tartare, so no cooking involved as our summer days wind down to cooler autumn nights.

Place in the Sun is a Fairtrade-certified brand, meaning the winery pays a premium to the growers of its Devon Valley grapes. Thereafter, the Fairtrade Premium Committee decides on how to spend this money, with projects to date including a series of educational, recreational and nutritional initiatives to improve the quality of life for farm workers tending the fruits. For consumers, there is the reward of purchasing a great wine at a good price and knowing there is a socio-economic benefit along the way.

Diary date: Get Wine returns to Durban with its popular wine sale on March 24. It takes place at 6 High Grove, Umgeni Park, from 5pm. Tickets can be purchased at the door for R30 and the event offers the opportunity to taste and buy top estate wines for exceptional value.

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