

## Robertson gets international wine tourism award

The Great Wine Capitals Global Network added Robertson Wine Valley (RWV) to its network at a gala dinner awards ceremony held in late November 2009 in Bordeaux. Tourism specialists, dignitaries and producers attended the event from wine-growing regions in Europe, North America, Latin America, South Africa and New Zealand.



Elizma Spangenberg receiving Robertson Wine Valley's Great Wine Capitals award from Clarence Johnson.

This dynamic winemaking region, comprising the towns of Ashton, Bonnievale, McGregor and Robertson, received the following citation from the Great Wine Capitals Global Network.

“The Robertson Wine Valley is a non profit organisation that was founded in 1983 by a group of farm owners in the area with the aim to promote wines of origin, Robertson, as well as the region itself. To date, the Robertson Wine Valley consists of 56 members (situated in Ashton, Bonnievale, McGregor and Robertson) and plays host to four wine festivals throughout the year, ranging from boutique events, such as the Robertson Slow to the ever popular Wacky Wine Weekend.”

### Marketing gets results

Elizma Spangenberg, who has recently taken over from the dynamic Bonita Malherbe as manager of the Robertson Wine Valley, added that, “We are very proud of these four events, which have wine as the central theme and embrace the wide diversity of activities and experiences on offer. These events have evolved over the past six years through the intelligent use of market research and visionary thinking. This ongoing process is now concentrating on attracting visitors to the area all year round, which thus far has been very successful. Wine magazine, in its latest annual reader poll, rated Robertson Wine Valley the second most popular wine route destination in the Cape Winelands.”

### Local is lekker

Clarence Johnson, deputy mayor of the winelands district municipality, who is also the president of the Great Wine Capitals organisation, said the advances made in the quality of local offerings by the Robertson Wine Valley members impressed the judges.

He also said, “Despite the recession, they found little evidence of cutting corners. If anything, they noticed an even greater effort by competitors to draw custom in an environment of narrowing disposable income. These winners demonstrated a capacity to face down the credit crisis by offering better value, enhancing the quality of their experiences, innovatively focusing on local highlights in the natural environment, in cuisine, arts, crafts and culture and by paying extra attention to detail. The judges were also especially gratified by the growing sense of collaboration amongst competitors and their desire to work with their neighbours in building regional awareness.”

The RWV has identified wine tourism development as one of its core objectives and is positioning itself by means of wine tourism events, the key element in building the Robertson Wine Valley brand, locally and internationally.

## **Famous Four**

*Hands-On Harvest* was launched in February 2009 and preparations are well under way for the 2010. This boutique event offers wine aficionados and budding vintners the opportunity to experience the ‘magic of harvest’ for a day. Besides taking part in grape picking and ‘stomping’, and the preliminary stages of wine making, visitors are able to make their own barrel of wine. Also on offer are viticulture demonstrations and lectures, wine tastings, special ‘harvest’ meals, tractor trips through vineyards, and much more.

*Wacky Wine Weekend* is an event where all member farms open up their doors for a variety of fun activities, including wine tastings, river trips, adventure sports, fishing, hiking, music etc. The inaugural June 2004 festival was an instant hit and within five years over 16 000 visitors were pouring into the Robertson Wine Valley for this event alone.

*Robertson Slow*, a more sedate and leisurely collection of activities at wine farms across the Valley, was launched in August 2007. It seeks visitors who want to experience the traditional way of farming life in intimate and personal settings. Small groups interact with wine farmers and winemakers to get to know them and their families. Events include wine tastings, cheese making, stargazing, boat cruises and fishing.

*Wine on the River* replaced the Voedsel en Wynfees, the original public wine event staged by the Valley farmers. It was modernised by changing the name and moving the venue from a hall in the town to the banks of the Breede River. This vibrant annual riverside festival was launched in October 2006 to instant popularity and acclaim. More than 200 wines from over 40 wineries are on show for tasting and sale. Other attractions include tutored wine tastings; picnics; an array of food delicacies; Robertson Farmers' Market for fresh produce; and live music.

## **Best of Route 62**

Only 90 minutes drive from Cape Town on the popular Route 62 lies the Robertson Wine Valley. The wine route members (90% are family-owned) offer uninhibited and generous country hospitality and, above all, excellent wines with fantastic value at all price points. Cupped between the Langeberg and Riviersonderend mountain ranges, visitors are mesmerised by the rugged beauty of the wide valley with a river running through it, a landscape of rose- and canna-fringed roads and vine-covered rolling hills.