More black-owned selections make the cut on SAA's wine list

South African Airways (SAA) has announced the selection of locally produced wines that will be served on its flights and in its Business Class lounges over the next 12 months.

Winemakers from across the country submit wines for consideration every year, so the selection represents the very best vintages that South Africa has to offer.



Each entry is scored after a blind tasting, and the results are compiled by both internal and external auditors. The airline selects 24 white and 24 red wines from more than 500 submissions. Different wines from the annual selection are allocated for service on board on a month-to-month basis.

“Our South African wine selection is fundamental to our passengers’ flying experience and is a unique added value,” says Kim Thipe, SAA’s head of marketing. “It is an important aspect of marketing our product offering to passengers worldwide.”

12 top judges

Nine local judges and three international judges were responsible for this year’s selection.

The local judges included Nomonde Kubheka, who was born in Soweto, but who now works at the Pinotage Youth Development Academy in Stellenbosch; Luvo Ntezo, a sommelier from One & Only Cape Town; Yegas Naidoo, a Voyager Platinum lifetime member and the founding director of Miles for Style; Derek Ramsden, a Cape Wine Master and a lecturer at the Cape Wine Academy; Meryl Vivienne Weaver, a Cape Wine Master who has been a judge for many leading wine competitions; Nina-Mari Bruwer, a Cape Wine Master and a winemaker at Mont Blois in Robertson; Carmen Stevens, Winemaker of the Year in 2015; Colin Frith, who was instrumental in establishing the Cape Wine Masters programme; and Catherine Dillion, the founder and operator of a specialist company offering wine tours.

The international judges included Paula Bosch, a world-renowned sommelier, wine author and judge (Germany); Lynne Sherriff (UK), a London-based wine consultant; and Corey Ladouceur, an eminent member of the Court of Master Sommeliers and the Guild of Sommeliers.

Increase in black-owned producers

A number of the wines submitted this year were produced or distributed by suppliers that have a black ownership component of more than 50%, an indication that transformation in the wine industry is taking place. These suppliers included KWV South Africa, MWT Investments, Bayede Marketing, Hyde Park Wine and Spirit Merchants and Tropical Paradise.

“SAA has been showcasing locally produced wines on its flights for over 30 years now,” says Thipe. "The airline is regarded as a trend setter in this regard. Our selections are always notable, and we’re delighted that more black-owned producers are submitting wines for consideration.

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