

Investing in protégés to ensure the long-term sustainability of SA's wine industry

Since its inception in 2006, 24 aspirant winemakers and viticulturists have participated in the Cape Winemakers Guild Protégé Programme. For the third year in a row, Amorim Cork has renewed its support for the programme, bringing its total contribution to this skills development initiative in the wine industry to R320,000.



Left to right: Sydney Mello, Joaquim Sá (Managing Director of Amorim Cork South Africa), Morgan Steyn

"By committing to the Protégé Programme, Amorim aims to contribute towards the development of skilled and dedicated individuals who may otherwise not have had the opportunity to partake in an industry in which we feel they could make valuable contributions," says Joaquim Sá, managing director of Amorim Cork South Africa.

The intricacies of winemaking

For Sydney Mello, one of the protégés to come through the ranks, valuable experience, decisiveness and an intense love for sparkling wine stand out as the greatest gifts of his three-year mentorship experience.

While growing up in Mahwelereng in Limpopo, Mello's curiosity about the intricacies of winemaking motivated him to make the journey to the Cape Winelands. After graduating from Elsenburg Agricultural College in Stellenbosch, he enrolled in the Protégé Programme and has never looked back.

"The Protégé Programme has provided me with a place of learning from the most brilliant minds in the wine industry. Not only do I see it as preparation for becoming a winemaker, but also as practical experience in making important decisions in my future career," says Mello, who is spending his final year in the programme alongside Etienne le Riche, one of the founding members of the Cape Winemakers Guild.



Sydney Mello with his mentor, Etienne le Riche

A passion for bubbles

Thanks to substantial support from sponsors, as well as funds raised by guild members themselves, one of the initiatives empowering the protégés, is valuable experience acquired in some of the world's most renowned wine growing regions.

For Mello, travelling to France last year was a once in a lifetime opportunity: "It was my first time abroad and the experience that I gained participating in an international harvest was priceless. After spending time in Burgundy, we travelled to Champagne. Here, surrounded by bubbles I felt most at home. We visited big champagne houses as well as smaller producers, giving me insight into the wonderful world of sparkling wine. After graduating from the programme at the end of the year, I would love to specialise in the production of Méthode Cap Classique for its complexity and mystery."



Cape Winemakers Guild sends protégés to France and USA

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Given the opportunity to bring his bubbly dreams to life, Sydney crafted his very own MCC in 2017 as making their own wine is an essential part of the Guild's Protégé Programme. Special Protégé wine presentation packs, including Sydney's sparkling wine, will be auctioned later this year at Gala Dinners in Johannesburg and Cape Town and at the Silent Auction that takes place during the annual [Nedbank Cape Winemakers Guild Auction](#) on Saturday, 29 September 2018. The money raised will be ploughed back into the Protégé Programme.

More than just winemaking

Second-year protégé Morgan Steyn, of Riversdale in the South Western Cape, will be crafting his own wine this year. He believes that the Protégé Programme not only helps him to become a good winemaker, but also a good leader: “I see myself working with others to strengthen the wine industry in South Africa,” he says. Steyn is spending his year with Morné Vrey as part of the team at Delaire Graff.

Under the auspices of the Nedbank Cape Winemakers Guild Development Trust, the CWG Protégé Programme gives young winemakers and viticulturists the rare opportunity of working side by side with members of the Guild. By cultivating, nurturing and empowering promising individuals to become winemakers and viticulturists of excellence, the Protégé Programme plays an active role in the long-term health and sustainability of the industry.

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