



What's in a name?

Striving for the perfect wine (or spirits) with a bit of help from Michelangelo

In South Africa alone in excess of 25 wine competitions are held annually. It may sound extreme, but we all know that everyone has a place in the sun. However, not all wine awards are created equal. Take the Michelangelo International Wine & Spirits Awards. Having recently celebrated its 20th year with a record number of 1829 entries, it is South Africa's largest wine competition and the only one in the country which is considered truly international. The 2016 judging panels consisted of 28 hand-picked judges, representing 20 countries. (Since the start of the Michelangelo in 1997, more than 172 different judges from 45 countries have served on the panels.) This, together with the use of the international 100-point scoring system and the fact that only one third of entries are awarded medals, makes the Michelangelo not only extremely competitive but also results in importers and distributors asking for – and often insisting on – Michelangelo award stickers on the bottles (a wine has to score 96/100 to be awarded a Platinum medal, 93 for a Grand'Or or Double Gold, 89 for a gold and 86+ to qualify for a silver medal)



The Michelangelo team, from left: Mariëtte de Beer (office manager), Kelvin Kapoloza (logistics assistant), Eddie Coetzee (logistics manager), Lorraine Immelman (CEO) Nicholas Tegere (logistics assistant) and Christine Rudman (technical director)



Having your wine or spirits appraised and awarded a medal or a trophy by a team of internationally acclaimed wine judges and Masters of Wine, has to be Top of the List of any winemaker. And this was exactly the thinking behind the establishing of the Michelangelo International Wine and Spirits Awards in 1997, namely to allow South African wine and spirits producers the opportunity to present their products to top wine and spirits judges from around the globe, without the cost and risk of sending their wines abroad.

The competition annually receives in the region of 1800 wine, brandy and liqueur entries from both South Africa and international producers. For the 2016 competition 120 entries were received from countries including China, France, Italy, Australia, Croatia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic and 52 of these were awarded – including two trophies and five Grand’Or medals.

Major developments over the past few years were the creation of South Africa’s only Liqueur awards in 2014

and the inclusion of spirits in the line-up from this year’s competition.

670 wines and spirits awarded at Michelangelo’s 20th

At a glitzy awards ceremony for 400 guests, held at the Lord Charles Hotel in Somerset West on Monday evening (26 September), a total of 670 awards were announced. Of these 18 were platinum, 113 were Grand’Or, 271 were gold and 253 were silver medals.

The Berrio Weather Girl 2015 Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon blend walked away with the top honours when it was awarded the Grand Prix Trophy for the highest scoring wine in the 20th Michelangelo International Wine & Spirits Awards. With 1828 other entries to compete against, it is no mean feat for The Berrio to have received the highest score of 98 points from the Michelangelo panel of international judges.

Chenin Blanc takes three trophies

Chenin Blanc was undoubtedly the star of the show with three of the 15 trophies being awarded to this varietal

Trophy winners

Multi Color Corporation Grand Prix Trophy for the highest scoring wine

The Berrio Weather Girl 2015

Multi Color Corporation Dessert Wine Grand Prix Trophy for the highest scoring dessert wine

Badsberg Wine Cellar
Badsberg Badslese 2012

Juvenal Chenin Blanc Trophy

Stellenrust Barrel Fermented
Chenin Blanc 2015

Rx South Africa Organic Trophy

Stellar Winery, Running Duck
Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon 2016

JF Hillebrand Pinotage Trophy

Anura Pinotage Reserve 2014

Toneleria Naçional Coffee Pinotage Trophy

The Grinder Pinotage 2015

Brandy Trophy

Distell Van Ryn’s Collector’s
Reserve 20 Year Old

Garagiste Trophy for the best boutique wine

Stofberg Family Vineyards
Mia Chenin Blanc 2016



The 15 trophy winners – BACK FROM LEFT William Wilkinson, wine maker of Wildekrans (Cape Blend Trophy); Joban du Toit and Oliver Kirsten of The Grape Grinder (Coffee Pinotage Trophy); Lance Bouma from Anura (Pinotage trophy); Mariëtte Coetzee, wine maker at Stofberg (Best Boutique wine/Garagiste); Tertius Boshoff, wine maker at Stellenrust (Chenin Blanc Trophy); Larry Berger with the Most Innovative Wine/Spirits Trophy for his Spirit of Rooibos Aperitif; Tielman Roos of Mooiplaas (Golden Oldie Trophy).

The 18 platinum medal winners – FRONT FROM LEFT Marlene Bester, master distiller at Van Ryn's (Brandy Trophy); Izelle Swanepoel from Stellar (Organic Trophy), Henry Swiegers from Badsberg (Dessert Wine Grand Prix Trophy); Seugnet Rossouw, Senior wine maker at Home of Origin Wine (Best International Wine); Abraham van Heerden, wine maker at Windmeul Kelder; Francis Pratt, The Berrio (Grand Prix Trophy) and Tinus van Niekerk of Spar Group Private Label Wines (Méthode Classique Trophy).



BACK FROM LEFT Leon Esterhuizen (winemaker at Journey's End); Werner Schrenk (winemaker at Peter Falke Wines); Carel Nel (cellar master/owner of Boplaas); Anri Truter (winemaker at Beyerskloof); Grant Newton (Groot Constantia Marketing & Sales Manager); Bernard le Roux (winemaker at Zorgvliet Wines); Pieter de Bod (brandy master, KWV); Samuel Viljoen (Red winemaker, Nederburg); Abraham van Heerden (wine maker, Windmeul Kelder); Alex Nel (winemaker, Cederberg Wines); Erni Leicht (winemaker, Niel Joubert Wines).

FRONT FROM LEFT André Schriiven (winemaker, Rooiberg Winery); Brandon Smit (De Grendel Wines); Sacha Muller (assistant winemaker, KWV); Marlene Bester (Master Distiller, Van Ryn's Distillery, for Distell Richelieu); Natasha Boks (White winemaker, Nederburg); Albertus Louw (Cellar Master, Perdeberg Wines); Gerhard Swart (bead winemaker, Flagstone Wines)



– a confirmation of the current growing interest and a better appreciation of the varietal and its many styles. 140 Chenin Blanc entries were received, and in addition to the three trophies, a further one platinum, 8 Grand’Or, 16 gold and 12 silver medals awarded.

This year the Pinotage class again experienced a record number of entries, namely 126. Here the judges awarded 44 wines as follows: 2 Trophies, 2 Platinum medals, 10 Grand’Ors, 18 gold and 12 silver medals. The best Pinotage trophy, sponsored by JF Hillebrand, went to Anura for their Pinotage Reserve 2014.

The Grape Grinder received the exciting Coffee Pinotage Toneleria

Nacional trophy for their 2015 Pinotage. This exciting trophy is awarded annually to the producer which best manages to draw out the mocha flavours from French oak into Pinotage and create a unique wine.

A dessert wine Grand Prix trophy, sponsored by Multi Color Corporation, was introduced in 2015, with the aim of giving South Africa’s excellent dessert wines more exposure and recognition. The 2016 Multi Color Corporation Dessert Wine trophy was awarded to Badsberg for their Badslese 2012. In addition, five platinum medals, 12 Grand’Or medals, 32 gold and 17 silver medals were awarded to dessert wines. Says Michelangelo founder and CEO,

Golden Oldie Trophy

Mooiplaas Wine Estate Chenin Blanc Bush Vines 2011

Trane Cape Blend Trophy

Wildekrans Wine Estate Cape Blend Barrel Select Reserve 2014

Tonnellerie de Mercurey French Style Red Blend Trophy

Windmeul Kelder The Legend 2014

Trane International Trophy for the highest scoring international entry

Home of Origin Wine La Folie Douce Merlot 2014

Liqueur Trophy

Distell Amarula Cream

African Cellar Suppliers Methode Classique Trophy

Spar Group Private Label Wines Champagne Pierre Mignon Rose de Saignee

IQ Business Trophy for the most innovative wine/spirits

Spirit of Rooibos Aperitif



Francis Pratt of The Berrio and Multi Color Corporation MD, Rian Moore

Lorraine Immelman, “By employing internationally respected and highly experienced judges, and abiding by the highest international technical standards, the Michelangelo has become a global player on the world map of wine and spirit awards. This year showed a 9% growth taking us to a new record number of 1829 entries, submitted by 296 local and 42 foreign producers. This makes Michelangelo the biggest wine competition in South Africa – the culmination of 20 years of very hard work!

“Michelangelo’s results always have very unpredictable and frequently huge revelations, as small or new wineries often get recognition alongside their large and well known peers. The international palates of our judges

Platinum medals

Beyerskloof

Diesel Pinotage 2014

Niel Joubert

Christine-Marié Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

Rooiberg Winery

Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2014

Journey's End Vineyards

Destination Chardonnay 2014

Flagstone Winery

Flagstone Writer's Block Pinotage 2014

Cederberg Private Cellar

Cederberg Shiraz 2014

De Grendel Wines

De Grendel Shiraz 2015

Peter Falke Wines

Peter Falke Exclusive Blend 2014

Zorgvliet Wines

Richelle Bordeaux Blend 2014

Windmeul Kelder

Chenin Blanc Reserve 2015

KWV

Classic Collection Cape Tawny NV

Nederburg Wines

Nederburg Private Bin Eminence 2007

Groot Constantia Wine Estate

Grand Constance 2013

Perdeberg Wines

Natural Sweet Chenin Blanc 2014

Nederburg Wines

Winemaster's Noble Late Harvest 2014

Boplaas Landgoed

Boplaas Reserve Potstill 12 Year Brandy

KWV SA

KWV Alambic 15 Year Old Limited Release

Distell

Richelieu 10 Year Old Vintage Brandy



Chris Alblas,
brandy judge from The Netherlands

often react differently to the locally produced wines and therefore every Michelangelo's result is interesting.

Adding value

"It remains the aim of Michelangelo to add value to the medals which our winners receive, and to this end we have signed a three-way agreement with Tamasa Wine Trading and Media Nova Publishing to host prestigious wine shows at selected international venues. At these glittering events only the crème de la crème of the Michelangelo winners will be on show, namely the trophy, platinum and Grand'Or medal winners.

In addition we have entered into an agreement with Fiera Milano, owners and organisers of The Good Food & Wine Show to host a Michelangelo Pavilion at every show,

where our winners will have the opportunity to offer their wines and spirits for tasting and for sale to the public.

Today we honour the genius of the medieval Italian sculptor, painter, architect, poet, and engineer of the High Renaissance, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, who famously painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome and sculpted the Pietà and the famous David statue. As Michelangelo Buonarroti strived for perfection in every area, our entrants strive to create the perfect wine or spirits and be awarded with a prestigious a medal or trophy.

The first Michelangelo was held in 1997, attracting all of 146 entries. Although this was a slow start, the organisers were confident that the support reflected the local wine industry's endorsement of the new competition, what it stood for, and still stands for. Entries have since increased steadily by an average of 30% per year and broke the 1 000-mark in 2003. In 2009 annual entries surpassed the 1 500 mark and 2016 saw entries approaching 2000.

Inaugural spirits judging

Following the successful inclusion of the Liqueur Awards since 2014, for the first time this year the Michelangelo accepted white spirits for judging, including vodka, gin and rum. This resulted in 55 entries in these classes.



The brandy and spirits panel was again chaired by one of South Africa's three Honorary Cape Wine Masters, Dave Hughes, who was joined by spirits consultant Kristina Wolf from Germany and brandy and spirits specialist Chris Alblas from the Netherlands. Local judges Dr Winnie Bowman and Dr Andy Roediger joined the spirits panel, which also judged the liqueur and brandy entries. Dave commented that South African brandies have always stood out on the world stage, which is evident in the number of awards received by our brandies abroad. The 2016 Brandy trophy was awarded to Van Ryn's Distillery for their Collector's Reserve 20 Year Old.

Increased foreign entries

For the first time this year the competition received a number of Champagne entries from France, as well as Prosecco entries from Italy. In total, sparkling wine entries showed an increase of almost 30% with a total of 91 entries. In this class the Méthode Classique trophy, sponsored by African Cellar Suppliers, was awarded to the Spar Group Private Label Wines' Champagne Pierre Mignon Rosé de Saignee from France. In addition

three Grand'Ors, 13 gold and 16 silver medals were awarded in this class.

2016 also saw a drastic increase in the number of entries received from foreign producers, and more than 120 wines and spirits were entered from Australia, Italy, France, the Czech Republic, Lebanon, Chile, Moravia, China, Croatia, Slovakia and Slovenia. The best foreign wine was awarded the Trane International trophy, and went to the Home of Origin Wine for their French La Folie Douce Merlot 2014.

A few statistics

The class which received the highest number of entries, was Sauvignon Blanc, with 185 entries. Of these 24% were awarded 18 gold and 26 silver medals.

Classes which were awarded the highest number of medals in the 2016 Michelangelo were:

- Shiraz: 41% of the 180 Shiraz entries received awards as follows: 2 Platimums, 15 Gran d'Ors, 32 gold and 24 silver medals
- Pinotage: 35% of the 126 Pinotages entered, received awards
- Chardonnay: 141 entries were received, of which 34% received awards
- 185 Sauvignon Blanc were entered, of which 24% received awards



Jean Smullen from Ireland



Ronnie Lau from China



Eduardo Viotti, judge from Brazil and Andrej Ondrejmska, judge from Slovakia, discuss a point while judging a flight of the 180 Shiraz entries



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