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By Fred Tibbitts Jr.

# WINES THAT SHINE

## South African Appellations Become Global Stars

If one was to ask the average wine consumer in any American wine store or restaurant how long they believe South Africa has been producing wine, the typical response is anywhere from 25 to 75 years. I know, I've tried it before and after comparing notes with other industry colleagues, the results are very similar. The correct answer is more than 300 years.

South Africa is blessed with a marvelous agricultural region, the most renowned for winemaking being Stellenbosch. There are plenty of other appellations in South Africa, including Robertson, Paarl, Wellington, Constantia, Walker Bay and Franschhoek.

The history of the South African wine industry has been the story of many independent wineries that never aspired to increased production and instead focused on quality year after year, while on the other hand the largest wine entity, now known as KWV International, was the coopera-

majority of the production was what most would describe as "commercial grade" wine.

### Better With Age

Today the picture is very different: South Africa has become a global star. The small growers are still producing quality, but with a better knowledge of farming and winery techniques, while KWV has instituted conventional grape quality minimum standards, even for products destined for the bottom of the domestic market and far higher standards to be competitive for export.

The variety of premium wine types from South Africa is splendid: The traditional Chenin Blanc, Colombard and Pinotage, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Sauvignon Blanc and many more. It is said that South

al wine competitions bears forth this truth.

The flavor profile of most South African exports has traditionally favored the "Old World" European style, earth and mineral toned with lower alcohol, higher acid and lighter bodied, because the largest export markets were the U.K. and the European continent and this style of wine complements their cooking.

But recently, after at last accepting that the American market requires the "New World" southern hemisphere style of fruit forward, heavier bodied and sometimes spicy (black pepper) style of wine that compliments a culinary tradition that includes heavy seasoning and now often spices, the new generation of South African wine makers are responding with the right wines for the U.S. market. This in great part could explain the double digit, annual sales increases in the U.S. recently. **BR**



### The new generation of South African wine makers are responding with the right wines for the U.S. market

tive of choice for the majority of grape growers. And while many fine wines were produced over the years, the

Africa produces some of the world's finest Sauvignon Blancs and a review of the internation-

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## 4 Top Tips for Selling South African Wines

Peter Morales, president and CEO of 57 Main Street Wine Co. which works in partnership with South Africa's KWV International, says there are many selling points and strategies for promoting these wines. Here are four tips that he has found successful across the country.

**Schedule Special In-Store Tastings.** "South African wines are unlike most other new world wines in taste profile," Morales explains. "They embody a true synthesis of new and old world winemaking styles and techniques."

**Build Out Your South African Section.** "Establish a section and accentuate it with a map," he says. "Colorful maps peak consumer curiosity and help them to understand... where in the world the wine is coming from."

**Brand South Africa With Creative Displays.** "Build eye-catching displays that include South African motifs," Morales suggests. "In addition, help to continue the consumer's education by suggesting appropriate food pairings."

**Support Brand Development Efforts.** For example, KWV has a Floodberg Passport Program in which 10 lucky couples win a South African wine expedition. For more information, call (516) 357-2070 or log onto 57mainstreet.com.

