

Rallying the wine people for Project Laduma

Wines of South Africa (Wosa), the country's generic international wine promotion organisation, has launched a novel job-creation campaign to train 2 010 wine stewards ahead of the 2010 Fifa World Cup.

2 010 wine waiters trained for 2010

Named Project Laduma, meaning "goal", this initiative aims to ensure that domestic and foreign tourists are treated to world-class wine service in 2010, by raising funds for training through the sale of a top calibre red wine, created expressly for this purpose. All profits from the wine, expected to retail locally at R120 a bottle and to sell from licensed on-consumption outlets for no more than R150 a bottle, will be directed towards the Seta-accredited training of wine waiters.

The wine will sell to retailers at R85 a bottle. Members of the trade are being asked to partner with the wine industry in selling the wine quickly by sticking to the same retail trade prices.

Su Birch, Wosa CEO, says they plan to recruit candidates for training from both the hospitality industry, as well as among the unemployed. The initiative has the full backing of hospitality industry body, Fedhasa.

The training module, designed by specialists already successfully training in the hospitality industry across Southern Africa, will give candidates a

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basic understanding of wine that is relevant to their own life experience. It will allow them to communicate with a fair degree of knowledge about the wines they will be selling in the restaurants, hotels and lodges where they are working or will be seeking jobs, and equip them to convey to customers what makes South African wines so special.

Birch stresses that while the overriding purpose of the initiative is to ensure World Cup visitors a positive experience when ordering wine, the goal is also to build awareness among a new and potentially influential group of wine ambassadors who can contribute to increased wine sales in the domestic market.

"We have identified an exciting and innovative training programme that demystifies wine and makes it more accessible to everyone. Wosa previously worked with Let's Sell Lobster, on training in local Cape townships and found that the courses were tremendously well received by learners.

"Our dream is that among this group there will also be some who are sufficiently inspired to advance their training and become *sommeliers* either by studying through the Cape Wine Academy or by gaining experience or training abroad."

Wosa was currently exploring the possibility of establishing bursaries for waiters to be trained internationally as *sommeliers*, she said.

A total of 17 500 six-bottle mixed cases of wine are to be released for sale locally and abroad with a view to raising R4.5 million for the training programme. Branded Fundi, the isiZulu word for "learner", their labels will feature a sunflower as a symbol of hope. Each bottle will carry a beaded neck tag, produced by informal roadside beaders, who have been commissioned for this purpose.

The initial batch will be from six wineries, each individually identified on the back labels of the bottles. The industry had been invited to submit wines for consideration in an open tender. Tank sample submissions were selected in a blind tasting by members of the Cape Winemakers' Guild according to the same exacting standards applied when choosing wines for its annual auction.

It is essential that the selected wine be of exceptionally high quality to promote the image of South Africa and its wines. The first wines chosen are from Anwilka, Stellakaya, the company of wine people, Hartenberg and Waterkloof.

A range of companies is supporting the project by donating their goods, such as glass, corks and labelling, while other service providers are reducing their costs for legal, accounting, banking, marketing and related fees.

The Winelands District Municipality has committed R250 000 to the initiative, to be used for training candidates in the winelands. "Mayor Clarence Johnson's generous move allows us to begin training immediately in the heartland of the wine industry, where visitor expectations for good wine service will, understandably, be at their highest," said Birch.

The wines, scheduled to be released into the market in early August, will also be showcased at the bi-ennial wine industry exhibition Cape Wine 2008, to be held in Cape Town in September and attended by the international wine trade. It is hoped that about 20% of the wines will be sold abroad. "Our dream is to sell all the wine by Christmas!"



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