

## **Women Judges awarding excellence at the 2018 SA Women's Wine & Spirits Awards**

*The 2018 SA Women's Wine & Spirits Awards discovered some stellar wines and spirits.*

On a bright and sunny but cold morning, on June 21<sup>st</sup>, the women selected to be the judges for SA Women's Wine & Spirits Awards, united at the Nietvoorbij campus in Stellenbosch. Michelle Grimbeek, convenor of judges and her team handled the double-blind tasting. For the first time spirits were welcomed in the fold of this competition and an expert panel was selected to taste the spirits separately. SA Women's Wine & Spirits Awards has seen a steady growth and this is the third year the competition was held. The support from every sector in the industry, as in the previous year, made this event a pleasure to host.

The aim of the annual competition is to find worthy wines and spirits judged by an all-female panel, and to crown the best products entered.

### **The producers with the highest scoring top wines were:**

#### **Wine Category:**

- Ashton Winery
- BC Wines
- Clos Malverne
- Kanu Wines
- Landzicht

#### **Spirits Category:**

- Craft Link (Pty) Ltd
- Old Packhouse Distillery
- Silver Creek Craft Distillery

#### **Spirits Judging Panel:**



**Dr Caroline Snyman CWM**

Judge at numerous spirits competitions both locally and internationally, including Veritas, Michelangelo and the International Spirits Challenge in London.



**Marlene Bester**

Master Distiller at van Rhyn's and member of the Centre of Excellence spirits panel.



**Mare-Loe Prinsloo**

Judge at the ISC (International Spirits Challenge 2016, 2017 & 2018)

### **Wine Judging Panel:**



The judges were from left to right: Top – Karen Freitag, Meryl Weaver, Chrisna Gerber, Catherine Dillon and Wanda Cronjé. Bottom – Michelle Grimbeek (Convenor), Katie Barret, and the auditors from Theron du Plessis, Melissa Crous and Lihani Lesch.

A lot more red wines were entered this year compared to white. The all-female judging panels awarded reds and whites almost exactly in the ratio entered, underlining quality over a broad spectrum of wines.

Feedback from our panellists was very positive. The diversity of Chardonnay and Chenin blanc was much-admired. Especially the 2018 Chenin blanc wines were highlighted as outstanding, with comments on the fruit and acid balance. One panellist said the 2018 vintage is “top notch – outstanding quality and thus will add longevity too.”

Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Sauvignon blends were a highlight for some of the judges and some Pinotage wines were singled out as outstanding.

Interestingly there were a couple of positive comments in the Blanc de noir class, remarking on “good balance and freshness of fruit with delicate mouth feel, yet lingering.”

The panel tasked with evaluating spirits, found interesting variation among the different infused Gins. The new-styled Gin performed very well and the use of botanicals made an impression. It is easy to see why Gin is such a growing category. Although the various Gin categories were the biggest spirit style entered, Brandy, Vodka, Moonshine and Tequila styled spirits also featured.

The expert spirits panel from this competition gives guidance about the many different styles of Gin available, including flavoured and infused Gins, as it becomes a minefield for consumers.

Details about the 2019 SA Women’s Wine & Spirits Awards will be announced in the last week of January 2019.

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