

## South African wines score well in US blind tastings

In a recent annual comparative blind tasting, held in New York, Indaba Sauvignon Blanc 2011 outscored higher priced, well-respected Sauvignon Blancs including Mount Nelson from New Zealand and Montes from Chile. The Indaba Merlot topped category-leading Merlots from California's Bogle Vineyards and Washington's Columbia Crest.



Competitive brands were chosen within the same price bracket, or one to two times higher, based on their significant brand recognition, national sales, or success with key partners. The wines were evaluated based on overall quality, varietal correctness and market "saleability".

The blind tasting, attended by Cape Classics' executives, consulting winemaker Bruwer Raats and an influential retail partner is an opportunity for the brand's decision makers to evaluate how well the current 2011 vintage stacks up against competitor brands in the US.

"Our goal with the annual tastings is to ensure the South African quality is as high, or higher, than the brands that lead the market today," said Cape Classics president Rob Bradshaw. "With Raats in attendance, he is able to gain valuable insight and feedback and then make the necessary winemaking decisions to keep the range as a leading brand, known for its quality and value."

The blind-tastings are essential for the winemaker to get a sense of American tastes. "We've been hosting these tastings for three years now, and he has really caught on to what styles and flavour profiles excite our customers."

"We all know branding is critical in wine sales, but if you really want to stimulate the US market the juice in the bottle has to be exciting. The tasting showed us the range has this factor and we are pleased with the direction it's heading."

The Indaba range, composed of Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Merlot and Shiraz, was launched in the US in 1996 by New York based wine importer Cape Classics. The wines are crafted by Raats in a fresh approachable style and have a suggested retail price of \$9.99.

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