

Fifth Soweto Wine Festival nears

The fifth annual Standard Bank Soweto Wine Festival is only a few weeks away. It will be held on 4 - 5 September 2009 at Soweto Campus, University of Johannesburg. The “black middle-class audience is worth R180 billion plus and, in the future, will constitute around 70% of their consumers”, a festival spokesman said on Friday, 17 July 2009.



The festival has seen a steady growth in numbers of exhibitors and visitors.

Sponsors of the festival are Standard Bank with SAN Parks, Johannesburg Tourism Company, Cradle of Humankind and Pick n Pay Hyper, with media partners Kaya FM, *City Press* and DStv. New to the sponsorship stable are Vodacom, Nederburg Wine Estate, Alto Wine Estate, JC Le Roux and 4th Street Wine.

Standard Bank has partnered the Cape Wine Academy for the last three years to bring the festival to Soweto.

“We intend to use this opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the upliftment of the community of Soweto and the agriculture industry at large, particularly the wine industry, said Hannah Mphelo-Abbas, Gauteng provincial director, Standard Bank.

Four-pillar approach

Marilyn Cooper, Cape wine master, joint founding member of the festival and MD of the Cape Wine Academy, which is the organiser of the festival, says that the skill to consistent growth, even during a recession, is the four-pillar approach - growth must be prevalent in equal measures in the four major sectors that make up the festival - the big brand sponsorship, the wine estate exhibitors, the visitors to the festival and, finally, the communications around the festival. If there is failure in any one of these pillars, then the festival will not grow as it should and provide what it must - community upliftment, wine education and growth in local wine sales. She commented: “Wine is a big part of our South African heritage and has been for 350 years - we will celebrate this Soweto-style at the festival”.

Babalwa Shota, *City Press* lifestyle and features editor said: “Being part of the Soweto Wine Festival is extremely exciting for us as we’ve recently established a wine club and have been steadily introducing our readers to the wonders of the grape and its history on our shores, with the guidance of the Cape Wine Academy.”

Importance to empowerment farms

Mnikelo Mangciphu, joint founding member of the Soweto Wine Festival and owner of Morara Wine Emporium in Soweto, said: “I believe that the Soweto Wine Festival is a ‘must-do event’ for every South African wine label, especially empowerment farms. Black wine enthusiasts come from all over South Africa, Africa and a few international visitors. Our wineries cannot ignore the fact that the black middle-class audience is worth R180 billion plus and, in the future, will constitute around 70% of their consumers. This is the only growth market in South Africa when it comes to their products. These are their future consumers.”

Growth in wine education

Soweto Wine Festival statistics researched by wine.co.za year-on-year since 2005, shows collective growth in wine

education, wine consumption and purchasing price decisions within the black middle-class visitors.

In 2006, 43% of visitors at the festival could not name a type of wine. In 2008, 100% named a favourite type of wine, with Chardonnay peaking at 37%.

Purchasing price paid for a bottle has also significantly increased. In 2006, 32% of visitors were spending up to a maximum of R100 per bottle. In 2008, over 27% said they spend over R100 per bottle, with 17% spending over R200 per bottle. This is a premium-label audience not to be sniffed at.

Visitor numbers up

Growth in visitors to the festival has also steadily increased. In 2005, the first festival was attended by 1500 visitors with 82 wineries exhibiting. In 2006, the second festival had 3000 visitors attending with 88 wineries exhibiting and in 2007, 4225 visitors came to the festival with 94 wineries exhibiting. Last year 4635 black wine enthusiasts and 103 wineries packed the hall to capacity.

In celebrating five years in Soweto and 350 years in South African winemaking, the festival is running a major "Soweto Loves Cape Wine" competition in conjunction with Pick n Pay Hyper. Winners go on an all-expenses-paid tour to the Cape Winelands for three nights.

Michelle Waters, Pick n Pay Hyper's national category strategist on liquor said: "In line with the company's policy and ethos, Pick n Pay Hyper believes in working with, and within, the communities surrounding their stores".

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>