

Record attendance for seventh Tops Soweto Wine Festival



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A total of 8550 wine lovers around South Africa flocked to the three-day Tops Soweto Wine 2011 Festival held at the University of Johannesburg Soweto Campus last week, as the 'swirl, smell, taste, spit' event entered its seventh edition since it was jointly founded by Mnikelo Mangciphu and Cape Wine Academy MD Marilyn Cooper.

Speaking to Bizcommunity.com on Sunday night, Mangciphu said he was extremely happy about the number of people who attended the festival. "It is a record attendance," he said, adding that increasing the entrance fee this year from R60 to R100 did not deter wine lovers from coming in big numbers.

As early as Thursday night, 1 September 2011, 2851 people already invaded the UJ Soweto premises to start their 2011 wine discovery adventure, and that number reached 3265 by Friday 2 September, pushing the total to 8550, the organisers said.

Mangciphu, who is the owner of Morara Winery, told Bizcommunity.com that about R3.5 million was spent to host the event and this, he said, includes marketing spend, security, logistics, venue hiring, among others.

"We felt that it was the right time to make the festival a platform where people could come and learn about the industry and its products, not just seeing it a cheapest place where they could get drunk."

Over 950 wines - from the well-known brands such as Nederburg, The Saints and Four Cousins to the famous but lesser known products such as House of Mandela and Bayede - were up for tasting, and people who thought they were impressed by a particular wine were asked to go and buy it at the Norman Goodfellows Wine Shop counter.

"This is a good investment for farms and we always try our utmost best to ensure that they get the returns for their efforts," Mangciphu said.

This year's innovation includes the introduction of a range of new wine lounges for people to chill out as well as wine bars.

"This is an amazing event, and I would say it without exaggeration that it is the most wonderful gathering in Soweto. I really enjoyed myself but also bought seven bottles of different brands at a reasonable price, which I really liked after tasting," wine enthusiast Mpumi Ndaba said, as the event was drawing to a close.

Apart from Tops at Spar which recently [signed a three-year deal as the festival's main sponsor](#), the following sponsors also supported this year's event:

- *City Press* newspaper
- Kaya FM
- DStv
- Vodacom
- 4th Street
- Nederburg
- JC Le Roux
- The Saints wines
- Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
- Café Culture

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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