

One case, six leading ladies in wine

Over the years, women have been instrumental in changing the course of South Africa's history and traditions - and Women's Day is a reminder of that. Breaking ground and closing the gender gap in SA's male-dominated industry is no small feat, and the wine industry is no different.

Women are making it happen, however. Just last year, American publication Wine Enthusiast with a worldwide readership 800,000 named a South African Winemaker, Andrea Mullineux, as Winemaker of the Year for the first time ever. Female winemakers in SA are making waves in the winemaking sector, pushing limits and producing fine wines which are causing immense excitement worldwide.

To honour these winemakers, Roland Peens and James Pietersen of Wine Cellar have curated a case of six of SA's finest wines by female vintners - the Once Case Wonder.



One Case Wonder

"It was not difficult to highlight six leading South African winemakers for Woman's month. But it would have been a decade ago," says Roland Peens, director of Wine Cellar. "We have put together what we feel to be SA's finest wines produced by women winemakers".

One Case Wonder



Andrea Mullineux

1. Andrea Mullineux – Mullineux Syrah 2015

Mullineux, named Winemaker of the Year 2016 by Wine Enthusiast, is co-owner and winemaker at Mullineux & Leeu Fam Wines, based in the Swartland region at Roundstone Farm. Mullineux also has a California brand, Fog Monster Wines and is a member of the Cape Winemaker's Guild. Since the launch of the brand in 2007, Mullineux wines have notched up 18 five star wine ratings from Platter's South African Wine Guide as well as being named Winery of the Year in both 2014 and 2016.

The first wine in this One Case Wonder is the Mullineux Syrah 2015, a true and complete expression of the shale, schist & granite terroirs in which the vines grow. This perfumed Syrah has notes of spicy citrus rind, refined black fruit, violets and lilies. The palate is elegant and restrained with a silky texture balanced by fresh natural acidity. Supple tannins lend a long smooth finish.



Samantha O'Keeffe

2. Samantha O'Keeffe – Lismore Chardonnay 2014

Yet another one-woman pioneer in the winemaking world is Californian native Samantha O'Keeffe at boutique Lismore Estate Vineyards, a 232-hectare winery and former dairy farm in Greyton in the Western Cape producing Syrah, a barrel-fermented Sauvignon blanc, Viognier and Chardonnay predominantly for the five-star restaurant and hotel market.

O'Keeffe found that the barren mountain-top shale soils of this remote farm produced exceptional wines, not least the Lismore Syrah, which has gained recognition from Robert Parker in his list of the 50 Best New Releases from 2015, receiving 94 points.

It's her very special Lismore Chardonnay, however, which Wine Cellar selected for the One Case Wonder, made in a traditional Burgundian style. It shows intense citrus and soft fruit layered with honey and vanilla, carried by a distinct minerality and crisp acidity with a lingering citrus finish.



Nadia Barnard

3. Nadia Barnard – Waterkloof Circumstance Cape Coral Rose 2017

Barnard, winemaker at Waterkloof Estate nestled almost in the centre of the embrace of the Hottentots-Holland and

Helderberg mountains. Barnard is a firm believer in the biodynamic and organic philosophies of Waterkloof. She has been at Waterkloof since the cellar opened its doors in 2009, and, after five years working at Waterkloof as assistant winemaker, Barnard truly knows every square inch of vineyard on the farm, excited each day about unlocking the amazing potential that lies within.

The Waterkloof Circumstance Cape Coral Rosé, selected as the only rosé for the case, displays a pale salmon hue with delicate floral aromas and hints of minerality prominent on the nose. The palate is soft with a lingering aftertaste. Traditionally, the wine is served chilled on its own but also marries well with salmon and fresh dishes for that little promise of Spring in the air.



Rianie Strydom

4. Rianie Strydom – Strydom Rex Cabernet Sauvignon 2014

Strydom knew since high school that she wanted to make wine. Although the wine industry is male-dominated, Strydom says that she has always felt welcomed and respected. Strydom was the first female member in many a year to be invited to join the prestigious Cape Winemakers Guild and is still only one of two in that exclusive club of the country's finest winemakers.

After 10 years as the winemaker at famous Morgenhof, she took over at Haskell Vineyards and Dombeya Wines in the dual role of general manager and winemaker in 2004. In 2007, the Haskell Pillars Syrah won three trophies at the Tri Nation Challenge against Australia and New Zealand. The trophies were Best Shiraz, Best Red Wine and Best Wine in Show – the first time since the inception of this prestigious competition that a South African wine had won these significant accolades.

This wine under her own label - the Strydom Rex, a 100% Cabernet Sauvignon - is a full-bodied wine with a brooding nose of red and black fruit, pencil shavings, oyster shell and earth. It's rich and full on the palate with layers of red cherry, cassis, hint of tobacco and a particularly long finish.



Trizanne Barnard

5. Trizanne Barnard – TSW Signature Wines Sauvignon blanc 2017

Barnard went solo with her own brand in 2008 after years of building experience locally at Klein Constantia, launching

Anwilka wines and various international vintages. Barnard's focus since her own first vintage has always been on two very diverse wine regions - Elim and the Swartland.

Barnard lives in Kommetjie and makes her wines in Noordhoek. Apart from everything wine-related: making wine, judging various panels and sampling the finest, she is an avid surfer who draws patience and respect for nature from each aquatic experience.

The grapes for this 100% Sauvignon blanc are sourced from Elim, where prevailing winds provide a cool ripening season. This is a wonderfully fresh, vibrant Sauvignon that celebrates the distinctive saline and white fruits so typically found in Elim fruit. The 2017 is a particularly fine vintage with impressive balance.



Marelise Niemann

6. Marelise Niemann – Memento Wines Grenache 2016

Niemann launched Memento wines in 2011, working with vines from all corners of the Western Cape, searching for grape parcels that truly express the region and soil of the vineyard. Her winemaking approach is gentle and 'hands-off', respecting the grape and its place and allowing the wine to express its own character and origin.

The Memento Grenache is a worthy addition to the One Case Wonder, produced from Swartland and Paardeberg fruit, with minimal handling to express the delicate character of the grapes. A little bit of Carignan adds freshness. Although Grenache as a varietal generally remains outside the limelight, Niemann feels she is at the tip of a potential zeitgeist. Pure, gentle aromas of blossoms and crushed cherry are supported by textured and focussed tannins. It ends wonderfully dry, with great vibrancy.

Did those tasting notes make you wish you were already savouring a glass of SA's finest in celebration of Women's Month?

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