

Nigeria gets taste of South African wines first hand

In its first business-to-business showcase, 10 South African wine producers participated in the South Africa-Nigeria Week, held in Lagos earlier this month. The Nigerian wine market is valued at around US\$300 million a year.



Matome Mbatha, WOSA market manager for Americas and Africa

Hosted by Wines of South Africa (WOSA), in partnership with the South African High Commission in Lagos, the South African contingent included DGB, Origin Wines, Rooiberg Wines, as well as international exporter Baarsma Wine Group, the family-owned Bellevue, and a selection of black-empowerment labels such as Ses'Fikile Wines, Re'Mogo Wines, Thokozani Wines and Bayede! Wines.

Arranged as a networking opportunity to access leading Nigerian importers and members of the hospitality trade, it met with such an encouraging response, say the organisers, that another event is being scheduled for next year.

Fastest emerging market sets scene for more African encounters

While South African wines currently account for about a fifth of all wine sold in Nigeria thanks to the efforts of individual wineries, this is the first time a cross-section of producers has collaborated in bringing their offerings to the country, identified as one of the world's fastest-growing emerging markets.

The two-day event, at the Federal Palace Hotel in Victoria Island, attracted capacity crowds, from importers to well-heeled consumers interested to experience what is new in wines from their own continent. While the first day was reserved for trade, the second day was opened to the public.

The Grand Tasting follows similar exhibitions held in Angola and will provide the model for a comparable showcase in

Uganda later this year.

Thandi Mgxwati, political counsellor of the South African High Commission in Lagos, said the event had succeeded on several levels. "It highlighted the variety and excellence of South African wines available to the local market, where sophistication and interest in luxury goods is growing and it created an excellent opportunity to further cement trading ties between our two countries."

WOSA's market manager for Africa and the Americas, Matome Mbatha, said the occasion was an opportunity for Nigerian trade to experience a mix of large-scale and smaller boutique producer offerings from South Africa. "Delegates were impressed by the quality and stylistic diversity of what they tasted.

"Exposure to wines made in Africa is exciting for Nigerians. We used the platform to highlight that our wines originate in ancient soils and that our wealth of biodiversity makes it possible to produce a vast array of wines and wine styles. Trade, media and consumers were so responsive to the wines on offer that our intention is to arrange several more of these events to raise the profile of South Africa as a producer of prestige and premium wines."

After Kenya, Nigeria is South Africa's biggest African destination for its wines. Volumes sold to Nigeria grew 15% in 2011.

Mbatha said it was critical that WOSA develop the presence of South African wines in Nigeria's key metropolitan areas of Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Onitsha and Port Harcourt. "Not only European producers but also those from Chile and Argentina are keen to capitalise on the country's growth and we need to maintain the visibility of our wines."

The second Grand Tasting was scheduled for July 2013, he said, and would form part of the International Nelson Mandela Day celebrations.

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