

South Africa's Pinotage wine industry shows a decade of growing success

According to the latest statistics published by SA Wine Industry Information & Systems (SAWIS), the South African Pinotage wine industry is the only red cultivar to have grown in hectares over the past 10 years. As one of the top 10 most-planted wine grape varieties in South Africa, the report shows that the total area under Pinotage vines is now at 6,979ha - up from 6.5% to 7.4%.



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From three million litres of Pinotage a year at the turn of the century, domestic sales have increased to over five-million litres and exports since 2001, have gone from just over eight-million litres a year to close on 19-million litres – contributing an estimated R495m to the local economy in 2017.

Pinotage sales in South Africa's two biggest export markets, the UK and Germany, have grown from 3.5m and 0.8m litres in 2001 to over 5m and 5.4m litres respectively, with 2017 sales to China and Russia (2.6m and 1.5m litres) now greater than those to other standout markets including Sweden, the USA, France and Denmark.

Pinotage has been a talking point in the context of Wine SA's trump cards since the first commercial release of the Pinot Noir /Cinsaut cross under a Lanzerac label in 1961. However, the improved quality and appeal of the variety have been particularly noteworthy over the past 10 years. In 2017, for example, Pinotage weighed heavily in favour of Kanonkop cellarmaster Abrie Beeslaar being named Winemaker of the Year at the prestigious International Wine and Spirit Competition in London – Kanonkop's iconic Black Label Pinotage 2013 from special grapes grown on the Simonsberg in Stellenbosch was a big success at IWSC 2017.

A year later, at the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show, a batch of the 2017 vintage of Arabella Pinotage from Ashton in the Robertson Wine Valley impressed the judges to the extent that it was lauded as Discovery of the Show.

The research, marketing and knowledge transfer efforts by the Pinotage Association and its stakeholders are among the key factors in a remarkable decade for Pinotage.

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