



From top left - Colin Frith, wine judge and honorary Cape Wine Master; Vincent Lignac, a sixth-generation winemaker from St Émilion and this year's international judge; Margaret Fry, Cape Wine Master and wine judge and commentator Neil Pendock. From bottom left - Ntsiki Biyela, winemaker for Stellakaya Winery; Dave Hughes, chairman of the panel of judges and Carrie Adams, wine judge and specialist liquor retailer.

DINERS CLUB WINEMAKER OF THE YEAR TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON

Judging has been completed for one of the major competitions in the South African wine industry, the Diners Club Winemaker of the Year for 2011 and the Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year.

The winners will be announced on 26 November at a gala dinner in Paarl. In addition to a trophy, the Winemaker of the Year also receives a return ticket to any wine-producing country in the world plus a R50 000 travel allowance, while there is a cash prize of R25 000 for the Young Winemaker.

The Winemaker of the Year competition is now in its 31st year and has seen prominent winemakers such as Walter Finlayson, Beyers Truter and Nicky Krone, amongst other, as previous winners. The competition was extended 11 years ago to create a separate category for young winemakers.

Dave Hughes, chairman of the panel of judges, said 110 entries had been received for the Winemaker of the Year, which ranks amongst the highest number in its history. Of the 110, nine went through to the final round while 64 entries were received for the Young Winemaker competition.

Entrants are judged every year in a different wine category. This year participants in the Winemaker of the Year competition were judged in the category Bordeaux-style red blends while young winemakers competed in the category dry white wines.

Hughes said the art of blending tested the winemaker's skill at the highest level, the classic Bordeaux-style blend in particular requiring considerable mastery. "The wines submitted for judging covered vintages from 2004 to 2010, with six of the nine wines in the final being from 2009, confirming again what a great vintage that was. However, all of these nine wines were of the highest quality."

Hughes said in the Young Winemaker category for dry white wines both blends and single varietal wines were submitted. "It was interesting that in the final stages of judging, the blends fell away, with only single varietal wines remaining. Again, as in the case of the Winemaker of the Year competition, the white wines that made it through to the finals were of an exemplary quality."

The other members of the judging panel were Vincent Lignac, a sixth-generation winemaker from St Émilion and this year's international judge; wine judge and commentator Neil Pendock; Carrie Adams, wine judge and specialist liquor retailer; Margaret Fry, Cape Wine Master; Colin Frith, wine judge and honorary Cape Wine Master and Ntsiki Biyela, winemaker for Stellakaya Winery.

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