

JOHAN JORDAAN THE 2011 DINERS CLUB WINEMAKER OF THE YEAR

Johan Jordaan, senior winemaker at Spier Wines since 2007, is the 2011 Diners Club Winemaker of the Year. This was announced at a gala event in Paarl on Saturday night (26 November). The Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year is Matthew van Heerden of Uva Mira Vineyards.

It was the 31st time that the Winemaker of the Year Award, one of the most prestigious competitions for the South African wine industry, has been made and the 11th time in the case of the Young Winemaker's.

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

Jordaan won the award for his 2009 Spier Creative Block 5, a blend of the five classical varietals that make up the Bordeaux-style blend. His was chosen from 110 entries, among the highest number yet received for the Winemaker of the Year. In addition to the trophy he also receives a return ticket to any wine-producing country in the world plus a R50 000 travel allowance.

Matthew van Heerden won the title Young Winemaker of the Year for his 2009 Uva Mira Chardonnay, a single-vineyard wine of which 50% was aged for 11 months in new French oak. His entry was selected from a total of 64 and brought him, in addition to the trophy, also a cash prize of R25 000.

Chairman of the judging panel Dave Hughes lauded the quality of the entries saying South African winemakers had proved once again their world-class winemaking. "The winning wines in this year's competition are both absolutely world-class. The fact that both are from the 2009 vintage confirms the excellence of that year for winemaking. It is probably our top vintage of the past 15 years."

Diners Club MD Ebrahim Matthews said the growing number of entries confirmed the extent to which the competition had become the benchmark for the local wine industry. "Its stature has grown over more than three decades with so many of South Africa's foremost winemakers earning the ultimate accolade it bestows."

The Creative Block 5 to win Johan Jordaan the title is a Cabernet Sauvignon-led blend, that also includes Merlot, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec which together produced, according to the judges, "a great balance of fruit, tannins and alcohol".

Matthew van Heerden, who also serves as the chairperson of the SA Chardonnay Forum and is passionate about this cultivar, said he strove in his winning wine for the utmost fruit purity and a wine that would reflect a true sense of place.

In addition to Dave Hughes 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.

Ends

ISSUED BY De Kock Communications (DKC)
ON BEHALF OF Diners Club South Africa
DATE ISSUED 26 November 2011
ENQUIRIES Jane Ledger, Diners Club regional manager: Western Cape,
021 795 5400, winemaker@dinersclub.co.za
Linda Christensen, DKC, 021 873 2199, linda@dkc.co.za,

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE WINNERS

Johan Jordaan, Diners Club Winemaker of the Year

Johan worked at the Slanghoek Winery in the Breedekloof before he went to study oenology and viticulture at the Elsenburg Agricultural College, as it was then known. After qualifying in 2002 he was appointed assistant winemaker at Slanghoek. He was given the opportunity to travel overseas and gained experience working at Hugues de Beauvignac in the Languedoc and later in the Napa Valley in California and the Barossa Valley in Southern Australia. He was back at Slanghoek as viticulturist and winemaker before being appointed at Spier Wines as senior winemaker in 2007.

Matthew van Heerden, Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year

Matthew obtained the degree B Agric in viticulture and oenology at the Elsenburg Agricultural College, as it was then known, in 2001. In the same year he was appointed winemaker and viticulturist at Iona Vineyards in Elgin. Two years later, in 2003, he became viticulturist and winemaker as well as managing director of the boutique winery Uva Mira on the slopes of the Helderberg near Somerset West. The vineyards on the farm are located from 420 m to 620 m above sea level and are ideal for the production of cool-climate cultivars. His preferred cultivar is Chardonnay and he is the present chairperson of the SA Chardonnay Forum. He places very strong emphasis on viticulture as a way of ensuring a vineyard produces exceptional fruit for the making of exceptional wines. Under his guidance Uva Mira has gone from strength to strength as a quality wine producer.