

## A Cape Blend triumphs

22 July 2004 by Marius Labuschagne

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*The results of the prestigious annual International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC) in London has been announced and history was made. The Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2001 became the first so-called Cape Blend to be selected as the Best Red Blend in the world. More than 30 wine producing countries participated at the 2004 IWSC.*

Red blended wines which contain South Africa's homegrown red variety, Pinotage, is referred to as a Cape Blend. The Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2001, which received the international Trophy for the Best Red Blend consists of 40% Pinotage, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Merlot.

'Most winemakers and marketers agree that a so-called Cape Blend should contain at least 30% Pinotage, but I wanted to make our homegrown red wine grape variety even more prominent - therefore the 40% Pinotage. South Africa must have its own unique red blend rather than always imitate other countries. This award is a blessing from God and one will always be grateful,' says Danie Steytler, owner and winemaker of Kaapzicht Estate.

In addition, the Kaapzicht Steytler Pinotage 2001 also received at the same competition the international trophy for the Best Pinotage. The Pinotage grapes and wine used for the Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2001 red blend and Kaapzicht Steytler Pinotage 2001 came from the same vineyard on this estate in the Bottelary ward near Stellenbosch.

The Steytler family has been cultivating vineyards and making wine on Kaapzicht since 1946, and these two international awards and history being made with the Vision 2001, came at a very appropriate time. Kaapzicht this year is celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the very first wines were bottled on the estate under the Kaapzicht label in 1984. Up until then all the wines were sold in bulk to the wholesale wine producers.

'My viewpoint is that if you want to make a top blend you must select the very best wines. The blend is as good as the building blocks you use. One thing is for sure, South Africa's homegrown Pinotage is an excellent variety to use in top quality red blends. This highest international award at one of the world's most prominent wine competitions confirms it,' says Danie.

The specific Pinotage vineyard which was the source for these award winning wines, was planted by Danie's father, George Steytler, in 1970. It is a bush vine cultivated in Clovelly soil on the northeasterly slopes of the Bottelary Hills.

'In the cellar the wine was pumped over the skins softly but continuously for many hours and many days to obtain maximum colour and flavour extract. After three years it is now showing its full potential - wines made in this way need time in the bottle. It will probably reach its peak in 2007,' says Danie.

The slopes of the Bottelary Hills are indeed a prime terrain for Pinotage. One of many examples is the 1999 Absa Top 10 Pinotage Competition, when three of the Top 10 wines came from the Bottelary ward, namely the Kaapzicht, Mooiplaas en Uiterwyk. Kaapzicht also entered a Top 10 Pinotage winner for four years consecutively between 1997 to 2000.

According to Beyers Truter, Chairman of the Pinotage Association and previous winner of international awards at the same competition, this Cape Blend receiving the award as the world's best red blend is indeed wine history made on the international wine scene and in South Africa.

'This true Cape Blend competed with the all the styles of blends in the world which contain the noble European wine varieties and it was selected as the best. The unique Cape Blend is making its mark internationally and is here to stay.

'However, this historic award is not only an endorsement of South Africa's high quality wine variety, Pinotage, but a very well-deserved accolade for the dedication and craftsmanship of Danie Steytler, who in a very humble manner is one of South Africa's top creators of the finest wines,' says Beyers.

According to David Wrigley, British Master of Wine and Chairman of the Technical and Judging Committee, the IWSC boasts the most highly qualified group of international judges of any wine and spirit competition in the world. 'We make sure that our 40 Masters of Wine and our prominent trade judges from all over the world are balanced by knowledgeable consumer judges. All judges, including the Masters of Wine, must go through an induction process and a trial judging day before they are allowed to officially judge on a panel.'

According to the judges the Kaapzicht Steytler Vision 2001 is an excellent example of the blender's art. 'A complex elegant refined wine with lovely backbone and structure. The blending skills extend to the fine use of oak. Rich fruit is beautifully balanced throughout'. The same wine also received a double gold medal at the 2003 Michelangelo International Wine Awards.

The Kaapzicht Steytler Pinotage 2001 has a good combination of vanilla and banana, as well as good complexity from the spice and ripe fruit. A full-bodied serious wine, yet elegant and with a lingering aftertaste. The same wine also received 5 stars in the 2003 John Platter SA Wine Guide.

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