



## 10 reasons sommeliers should enter the Wines of South Africa Sommelier Cup

By David Clarke, vice-chairman of the South African Sommeliers Association –May 2016

1. Chenin Blanc – no other country has more planted than South Africa. The range of wines it produces is dazzling: from Craig Hawkins' ethereal wines from the Swartland to Ken Forrester's rich FMC from Stellenbosch and all the others in between, it is clearly uniquely South African now, having been here for centuries.
2. Syrah/Shiraz – whatever you know it as, South Africa is starting to produce excellent, terroir-specific examples. Stylistically speaking, it lies between the stereotypical 'French' and 'Australian' styles, giving it an authentic South African flavour. The best wines (for me) show a 'fynbos' (indigenous vegetation) character – like the 'garrigue' in France or 'eucalyptus' in Australia.
3. Brandy – why no one outside South Africa seems to know about its brandies is a huge shame. A long history of production ensures the products in bottle are mature and balanced. Seriously underrated.
4. Gin – so many boutique gins distilled in South Africa have hit the market that it is hard to keep up but lots of fun! Many use fynbos (see point 2) in production, making the gins super-local.
5. Cinsau(l)t – doesn't matter if you use an 'L' or not – is super delicious. Effortlessly medium-bodied (similar in a way to Gamay), Cinsaut has started having somewhat of a resurgence and the results are juicy, crunchy and freeesshhh.
6. Braai – the South African name for barbeque. They love it! You will too. Loads of tasty meat, a bit of smoke and a cold beer. Total win.
7. People – genuinely warm, caring and accommodating, the people in the South African wine industry (and in the wider community) are some of the nicest you'll ever meet. Just don't mention cricket, or rugby, or football (soccer) and you'll be fine ☺.
8. The wines from the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s – if you get the rare chance to taste some of the wines made in South Africa 40+ years ago you will not be disappointed. Despite not having a reputation for cellar-able wines, South Africa made some ripping wines in those four decades – I can still vividly recall a 1945 Chateau Libertas I tasted three years ago.
9. Pinotage (seriously) – if you think Cinsaut is on its way back, check some of the lighter wines made from this bad boy. Think savoury, taut and loooong.
10. The next 10 years (or so) – the industry has changed so much since I've been here (three-and-a-bit years) and is almost unrecognisable in a lot of ways from the one I saw in 2006 (my first visit) with the exploration of terroir, the freedom felt by the newer generations of winemakers and the beginnings of a rethink on viticulture, the next 10 years promise so, so much.