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INTERVIEW WITH MARJIN SMIT – THE NETHERLANDS FINALIST

WOSA: *What is so great about being a sommelier?*

Marijn: Making people enthusiastic about wine through your own passion for it and the contacts with wine producers (very important). And being off when others work (and vice versa).

WOSA: *Do you see being a sommelier as your long term profession?*

Marijn: I'm afraid so, because I miss it as soon as I start doing other work (Marijn has been a sommelier on and off the last few years).

WOSA: *What springs to mind immediately when you think of South Africa?*

Marijn: Its beautiful nature. And especially its stunning coastline.

WOSA: *What are the most interesting cultivars and regions at the moment in South Africa, according to you?*

Marijn: When it comes to grape varieties, my favourites now are chenin blanc and pinot noir. And then it is no surprise that I like Swartland, Elgin and Hemel en Aarde.

WOSA: *Which South African wines do you work with?*

Marijn: At Vyne I used to work a lot with Warwick, Springfield and Momberg (Middelvlei). Also Newton-Johnson, Mullineux and Scali were regulars. At Vroeg, where I work now, we have Viljoensdrift and Beau Joubert by the glass.

WOSA: *How do you get to know new South African Wines, were do you get inspiration?*

Marijn: Mainly at (international) wine fairs. I must say that I don't drink a lot of South African wines at home, but that is about to change. Also in preparation of the Sommelier Cup in South Africa, I hope for the support of some good importers, I will need that.

WOSA: *What is your opinion on pairing South African wines with food? How do they compare to other wines from the Southern Hemisphere?*

Marijn: I think they do well because of their general flavour profile and their good pricing. Compared to other countries, I feel Chilean wines are often too fruit-driven and too bold. Argentina has some great Malbecs, but these are not abundant. Australia is especially good with high end Shiraz and Chardonnay, the lower, cheaper end of their wines doesn't appeal to me. New Zealand wines can be superb with fusion food, but can be –just like Chile– a bit exaggerated. And they are quite expensive, compared to South African wines.

WOSA: *What is your opinion on the availability of good information in Dutch on South African wines?*

Marijn: It's okay, I think, although personally I mostly read English wine literature. But I believe that there is some solid wine information online in Dutch about South African wine. And magazines too give South Africa its due attention.

WOSA: *What was the most difficult question of the test?*

Marijn: Honestly I thought most questions were quite tough. Especially the one with all the abbreviations. I will have to work on my theoretical knowledge before going to the finals!