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Pinotage's Potential Unlocked: Absa Vintage Awards Highlight Aging Prowess of South African Varietal

Absa Vintage Awards of Excellence 2024: Celebrating the Aging Potential of South African Pinotage

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The Absa Vintage Awards of Excellence, hosted by the esteemed Pinotage Association, has once again cast a radiant spotlight on the singular aging potential of South Africa's iconic Pinotage wines. This year's competition, held at the picturesque Vergenoegd Löw Wine Estate, showcased a remarkable array of aged Pinotage, underscoring the varietal's unique characteristics and evolving complexity.

A Unique Celebration of Pinotage

What sets the Absa Vintage Awards apart is its exclusive focus on Pinotage, a varietal that stands as a testament to South African viticultural innovation and heritage. Unlike any other competition in the country, this event is dedicated solely to the aged expressions of Pinotage, providing an unparalleled platform for vintners to display the fruits of their labor. Adding to the prestige, the judging panel consists exclusively of Cape Wine Masters, whose expertise ensures a meticulous and authoritative evaluation process.

The 2024 competition attracted an impressive lineup of over 38 exceptional wines, reflecting a growing enthusiasm among producers to present their aged Pinotage offerings. Bennie Howard, Cape Wine Master and panel chair, noted, "This year's competition has reinforced Pinotage's position as a symbol of South African viticulture. The wines showcased a remarkable range of styles, reflecting both the heritage and innovation within the industry."

Vintage Highlights

The judges provided insightful commentary on the various vintages, each bringing forward its unique story and character:

- 2014 Vintage: Demonstrated expressive fruit and diverse styles with excellent quality. The wines were fresh, youthful, and exhibited deep dark colors with well-integrated wood, indicating further aging potential of up to another decade.
- 2013 Vintage: Showed elegance and balance with fresh, youthful qualities. The wines displayed persistent quality, emphasizing their graceful aging process.
- 2012 Vintage: Enthralled the judges with its high quality and consistency. The wines were extraordinarily fresh and attractive, indicating significant aging potential.
- 2011 Vintage: Offered more mature expressions with mellow tannins and seamless balance, showcasing excellent fruit integration.
- 2010 Vintage: Presented powerful and bold wines with great structure, freshness, and youthfulness, suggesting a promising future.

- 2009 Vintage: Highlighted as an outstanding year with opulent wines, optimal ripeness, and harmonious balance, still demonstrating maturing potential.
- 2008 Vintage: Featured bright ruby colors, excellent structure, length, complexity, and elegance.
- 2001 Vintage: Displayed dark ruby hues with mellow, generous, and bold flavors. The wines remained impressively youthful, attractive, smooth, and delicious.
- 1997 Vintage: Exhibited youthful complexity, balance, and elegance, with soft, smooth textures, making it a standout vintage.

Award-Winning Wines

The winners of the Absa Vintage Awards 2024 are a testament to the exceptional quality and aging potential of South African Pinotage. The results, officially announced at the awards ceremony, highlighted wines that received over 90 points from the discerning panel:

Beeslaar Wines:

- 2013 Beeslaar Pinotage (Stellenbosch)
- 2012 Beeslaar Pinotage (Stellenbosch)

Bellingham:

- 2010 The Bernard Series Bush Vine Pinotage (Coastal)

Beyerskloof Wines:

- 2014 Diesel Pinotage (Stellenbosch)
- 2012 Diesel Pinotage (Stellenbosch)
- 2010 Diesel Pinotage (Stellenbosch)
- 2013 Pinotage (Western Cape)
- 2011 Pinotage (Western Cape)
- 2011 Pinotage Reserve (Stellenbosch)
- 2001 Pinotage Reserve (Stellenbosch)

Darling Cellars:

- 2012 Premium Pinotage (Darling)

Fairview:

- 2009 Primo Pinotage (Coastal)

Flagstone Winery:

- 2008 Writer's Block Pinotage (Breedekloof)

Grangehurst Winery:

- 2009 Pinotage 350 Celebration Vintage (Stellenbosch)
- 2007 Pinotage (Stellenbosch)
- 2001 Pinotage (Stellenbosch)
- 1997 Pinotage (Stellenbosch)

Groot Constantia Wine Estate:

- 2013 Pinotage (Constantia)

Kanonkop Wine Estate:

- 2014 Pinotage (Simonsberg/Stellenbosch)

Môreson:

- 2008 Pinotage (Coastal)

Neil Ellis Wines:

- 2012 Vineyard Selection Pinotage (Jonkershoekvallei)

Rijk's Cellar:

- 2014 Reserve Pinotage (Tulbagh)

Simonsig Wines:

- 2014 Redhill Pinotage (Stellenbosch)

Vondeling Wines:

- 2014 Bowwood Pinotage (VoorPaardeberg)

Wildekrans Wine Estate:

- 2011 Pinotage (Botrivier)

Windmeul Kelder:

- 2012 Reserve Pinotage (Paarl)

Absa Vintage Awards

The Absa Vintage Awards is an annual wine competition that celebrates the aging potential of Pinotage, South Africa's signature grape variety. Judged exclusively by Cape Wine Masters, the competition ensures the highest standards of evaluation and recognition. Wines entered must be 10 years and older, showcasing the exceptional durability and evolving complexity of Pinotage over time.

"Absa is a proud sponsor and partner of the Pinotage Association for the past 27 years because of the visionaries, winemakers, and cellar masters who contribute to the advancement of the agriculture sector," says Abrie Rautenbach, executive of agribusiness.

The Absa Vintage Awards of Excellence 2024 has once again demonstrated the unparalleled quality and aging potential of South African Pinotage, cementing its status as a symbol of the country's viticultural prowess.