

2024 Wine Harvest Commemorative Event honours a prestigious line-up of industry greats

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Few events are as keenly anticipated, nor held in as high regard, as the annual Wine Harvest Commemorative Event, which took place on 1 February 2024 – marking the momentous occasion of the birth of South African wine, while also paying tribute to the country's rich wine heritage, and calling for a blessing on the new harvest.



A highlight of the Wine Harvest Commemorative Event – which was fittingly hosted at South Africa's oldest wine-producing farm, Groot Constantia – is the honouring of key individuals and organisations who have made extraordinary strides towards the ongoing success of South African wine.

Over the years, many great wine legends have been recognised under the categories of Visionary Leadership (with the 1659 Visionary Leadership Award), Growing Inclusivity, Wine Advancement, and Viti- and Viniculture.

This year's recipients are in keeping with the exceptional pedigree of leaders that have been acknowledged and praised over the years and include: Tim Hutchinson, who has been chosen for the 1659 Award for Visionary Leadership; Cathy Marston, honoured in the Wine Advancement category; Ilse Ruthford honoured in the Growing Inclusivity category; and Dawid Saayman, who was selected in the Viti- and Viniculture category.

Newly elected chairman of the Groot Constantia Trust, Clifford van der Venter, says that, after several years of honouring individuals who have made significant contributions to the SA Wine industry, the Wine Harvest Commemorative Event continues to attract candidates of exceptional quality.

"As in the past, this year's honourees are indeed a reflection of the strength of the SA wine industry and bear testimony to the extraordinary efforts of the many talented individuals and committed organisations who work tirelessly to ensure that South African wines occupy their rightful space amongst the leaders of the global wine industry. I believe that our industry is healthy and well poised for an even brighter and more sustainable future."



Award recipients Cathy Marston, Dawid Saayman, Tim Hutchinson, and Ilse Ruthford

The 1659 Award for Visionary Leadership: Tim Hutchinson

This year, the highly esteemed 1659 Award for Visionary Leadership was bestowed upon Tim Hutchinson – a true luminary in the world of wine.

Hutchinson navigated his way from humble beginnings to leading one of the largest and fastest-growing independent wine companies in South Africa, and his bold moves forever shaped the course of South African wine, whilst his philanthropic efforts and socially responsible projects have left an indelible mark on communities throughout South Africa. His leadership and dedication to the South African wine industry have been instrumental in its success and growth and his unique vision, commitment, and business acumen have enriched the country's wine sector in many ways.

“They say nothing is impossible, and this award is a true testament to that. By pursuing a vision day in and day out, it is possible to achieve your dreams and goals. Being recognised by one’s peers makes all those years of hard work and good old-fashioned grit even more meaningful. But I’d be remiss if I didn’t recognise my family and all those who have worked shoulder-to-shoulder with me through the years. A man is not an island unto himself, and in my case, nothing is more true. Thank you to everyone who has shared my vision. This award is as much for you as it is for me,” said Tim Hutchinson.

Recognition for Wine Advancement: Cathy Marston

Cathy Marston has been selected as the 2024 recipient in the Wine Advancement category for her contributions towards the image of South African wine and the South African wine industry as a whole.

In addition to being an esteemed wine taster, judge and journalist, Marston is a formidable wine educator with a global reach and influence and is the founder and head lecturer at the prestigious International Wine Education Centre (IWEC) based in Cape Town, which offers the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) qualifications. She has made great efforts in promoting diversity and inclusivity within the South African wine industry and breaking down socio-economic barriers, and her unwavering passion for wine education and invaluable contributions to the wine industry, continue to elevate the appreciation and understanding of South African wine locally and internationally.

Growing Inclusivity category: Ilse Ruthford

The 2024 honouree in the category Growing Inclusivity is Ilse Ruthford, managing director of Compagniesdrift for the past 13 years. With her passion for empowering emerging generations of farmers, she is a mentor and inspirational leader to multitudes of young people, for whom she creates a strong sense of hope.

Ruthford has 27 years of experience in the wine industry, and her current role sees her at the head of an exceptional empowerment project – Compagniesdrift is a 100% black-owned company. She has taken her passion and experiences to inspire others and has promoted farmworker development, whilst mentoring and uplifting her staff. In addition, she plays a pivotal role in the community as board member of the Stellenbosch Wine Route, where she guides socio-economic development.

Viti- and Viniculture category: Dawid Saayman

The 2024 recipient in the Viti- and Viniculture category is Dawid Saayman, a soil scientist, specialising in viti-viniculture. This prestigious award recognises individuals who have introduced innovative ideas, technologies, and practices to the winemaking industry. In his 50-year career, Saayman has made significant contributions through groundbreaking research, teaching, and mentoring.

One of Saayman's most influential contributions to the industry was his work in defining the concept of terroir in South Africa. He played a vital role in identifying and understanding geology, soil types, and climate in the South African 'Wine of Origin' scheme, empowering winemakers to create unique wines that showcase the natural factors of their specific regions. His internationally recognised expertise is evident in his extensive list of 28 scientific and 39 semi-popular publications and his lifelong commitment to advancing viticulture and viniculture has had an immeasurable impact on the South African wine industry and its continued success.



Dr Ivan Meyer, Western Cape MEC of Agriculture says that the Western Cape Government is proud to be associated with the SA wine industry and the Wine Harvest Commemorative Event.

“The SA wine industry is vibrant, sustainable, innovative, resilient, and one of the cornerstones of the Western Cape, and South African, agricultural sector. Together we are working towards growing the economy, creating jobs, and a safe Western Cape, while promoting the well-being and dignity of its citizens. Over the last 365 years the wine industry has overcome many challenges and through visionary leadership, such as that honoured at this annual event, developed into an iconic sector which has strong linkages to tourism.”


“The Western Cape is renowned for its winemaking legacy and is a source market of choice around the world. Wesgro is pleased to support the Wine Harvest Commemorative Event this year, which acknowledges the achievements of the industry and the individuals inspiring new levels of excellence in an inclusive way,” says Wesgro CEO, Wrenelle Stander.

The Wine Harvest Commemorative Event 2024 was made possible with the generous support of Groot Constantia, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, Wesgro, South Africa Wine, Standard Bank, Checkers, Die Burger, and Cape Town Tourism.

Visit www.sawineharvest.co.za to learn more about the Wine Harvest Commemorative Event, the honourees, and the South African wine industry in general. For more information on Groot Constantia www.grootconstantia.co.za.

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