

South African brandy celebrated on world stage

South Africa - and KWV specifically - has been hailed once again as the world's best producer of brandy and cognac, having scooped trophies at the prestigious International Spirits Challenge (ISC). KWV Brandy's Héritage XO received the trophy for Best Cognac, and KWV 15, won the trophy for Best Brandy while KWV itself was named Best Producer overall.



Source: Supplied

KWV also led in the medal stakes, which were announced in the first instalment of the competition earlier this year. KWV 20 won Double Gold and KWV 10 and 12 each won Gold. Silver medals were awarded to Richelieu 10, Richelieu International, Klipdrift Premium, Van Ryn's 10, 12, 15 and 20.

"Congratulations to all the South African brandy masters who were again voted by an international panel as being at the top of their game. They are truly the cutting edge of the country's 350-year brandy history," says South African Brandy Foundation director Christelle Reade-Jahn. "South Africa remains enshrined as a world leader of quality brandy."

The most recent accolades follow just weeks after Van Ryn's 20-year-old potstill brandy was named World's Best Brandy by the panel at the World Brandy Awards. At the same event, both 20-year-old brandies from Van Ryn's and KWV took Gold.



KVV brandy master Pieter de Bod. Source: Supplied

Team effort

Commenting on KVV Brandy's trophies at ISC this year, brandy master Pieter de Bod said they represented a "real achievement" for the team. "The ISC is the major event for spirits in the world, with more than 2,500 entries from more than 70 countries for spirits alone," he says.

A characteristic that makes the competition tower above others is the quality of its panels. "Virtually every category panel includes one or more cellar masters who are involved in the making of the product," De Bod says. "This helps during judging when questions arise, or agreement must be reached in discussions about quality."

"Winning at this level of competition is of course not the work of one person," he adds. "The entire value chain is involved, from production to bottling. In this entire process, I must however single out two teams: Lourens Stander and his team, which is responsible for distillation and maturation, and Ilse du Toit and her team, which is responsible for blending and preparing the product for bottling. I'm very proud of these two teams, from general workers to the respective managers."

This was the fourth time KVV Brandy has taken the highest award at the ISC, whose location provides an indication of the prominence of the event. The awards this year were presented at One Great George Street, an Edwardian building over 100 years old that has hosted functions over the decades for the British Royals amongst others.



Consistent delivery on quality

ISC judge panellist Dr Winifred Bowman says the performance of the KWV this year was “just phenomenal”.

“The judges were in awe of the brandies over the different categories, which just again confirms the hard work that Pieter de Bod and his team put into consistent delivery on quality. And to pick out those brandies as the best of the crop every time is no fluke – they stood out because of their quality.”

In addition to serving on the ISC panel and being an experienced international spirits judge, Bowman judges as chair of the Veritas panel, for Platter's South African wine guide and for The Drinks Masters. She is an international senior consultant at International Drinks Specialists.

“We can be very proud of the team at KWV,” Bowman says. “It is of course also very significant to receive these accolades in a year when South African brandy celebrates 350 years of brandy production – the cherry on the cake or rather flambé on the chateaubriand! Also do not forget that the trophy-winning 15-year-old has also been awarded 100 points in competition, so another thread of provenance and consistency!”

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