

Black-owned wine brands make history at ProWine China

Eleven black-owned wine brands, which included Libby's Pride, Thokozani, Bayede!, Cape Dreams, Carmen Stevens Wines, La RicMal, Koni Wines, Lathitha, M'hudi, Women in Wine and Bridge of Hope Wines, made history as the biggest delegation to attend the annual ProWine China trade show in Shanghai, China held from 12 to 14 November 2019.



From left to right: Beverly Farmer from Women in Wine, Malrsey Rangaka from M'hudi Wines, Denise Stubbs from Thokozani, Sheila Hanjwa from Lathitha Wines, and Carmen Stevens from Carmen Stevens Wines at the recent ProWine China.

This is due to a partnership between the SA Wine Industry Transformation Unit (SAWITU) and the Western Cape Department of Agriculture that financially supported the brands to participate, some of them for the first time.

Creating valuable business opportunities

"Our investment in the black-owned brands to participate in this trade show is especially aligned with one of the wine industry strategic exercise (WISE) objectives that identified China, Africa and the US as new focus markets for South African wine," says Wendy Petersen, operations manager of SAWITU. "Profitability in the wine industry is under pressure. The competition is tough, especially for our developing wine brands that are competing on a global scale with countries such as Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Australia and France, among others."

ProWine China creates valuable business opportunities and interactions among producers, importers, distributors, buyers and industry experts from across the world. It also provides a strategic brand positioning platform for developing wine brands in this very challenging market.

Strengthening the transformation agenda of the wine industry

Bogiswa Matoti, director for agricultural economic services at the Western Cape Department of Agriculture, emphasised the role of government in creating and maintaining an enabling environment in which businesses can thrive. They also provide demand-led, private sector-driven support for key growth sectors, such as the wine industry.

"For this to happen, partnerships are important. The Western Cape Department of Agriculture, therefore, collaborated with the South African Wine Industry Transformation Unit and Wines of South Africa to support eleven black-owned brands to participate at ProWine China, one of the biggest promotion platforms in China.

"In addition to strengthening the transformation agenda of the wine industry, ramping up exports and market access are the apex priorities of provincial government. China is therefore one of the growing and targeted markets for South African products, especially wine," says Matoti.

"China is a huge market, and significant impact in this market can only be realised if various role-players join hands in supporting the sector in its marketing drive," says Matoti.

Exciting prospects for black-owned brands

Petersen is excited about the prospects and opportunities for black-owned brands in China. "The overwhelmingly positive response to Pinotage, a unique South African wine variety, was a highlight at this year's ProWine China. However, it also clearly indicated that a lot more should be done in terms of educating the Chinese market about the variety and quality of our wines," says Petersen.

"Packaging and presentation of our wines play an important role when consumers make decisions about which products they are going to purchase."

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