

SAUVIGNON BLANC SA IS THE NEW AMBASSADOR FOR A GLOBAL FAVOURITE

South Africa's champion for Sauvignon Blanc, one of the country's most widely planted wine grape varieties, has undergone a transformation that brings momentum to its international success. Formerly known as the Sauvignon Blanc Interest Group (SBIG), **Sauvignon Blanc South Africa** not only announces a new name but taken the opportunity of International Sauvignon Blanc Day (3 May) to ring in a string of changes.

The organisation originally established to foster excellence and promote the cultivar has amongst others appointed a new marketing and support agency; revamped its logo and website; and, engaged the services of a well-known specialist to expand its knowledge centre.

Sauvignon Blanc SA chairperson RJ Botha says the change has been a long-time coming. "The former title as SBIG didn't express strongly enough what we needed it to. Now anyone in the wine world will know what we're about and where we're from.

"The change has injected fresh energy to our cause. For starters, the conversation around Sauvignon Blanc Day 2020 and Concours Mondial du Sauvignon 2021 has already begun and we're very excited about the prospects," Botha says.

Sauvignon Blanc is the third most widely-planted white grape variety in the Cape Winelands and among the most extensive in New World wine countries. It is SA's most popular grape variety – in total 40% of all white wine sales are Sauvignon Blanc, the most of all varieties. This in mind, Sauvignon Blanc SA came about to promote the quality of South African Sauvignon Blanc locally and internationally.

The interest group's re-birth in celebration of International #SauvBlancDay – traditionally the first Friday in May – adds prominence to the occasion.

The organisation's task has further been bolstered by the appointment of Agri-Expo, the long-standing promotion and marketing agency for the agriculture sector, to take care of day-to-day operations.

"The previous management committee laid a solid foundation with invaluable support over the past eight years from people like promotions dynamo Elsabe Ferreira," says Botha. "The new team will build on this success with an eye to creating even more opportunity for our members and South African Sauvignon Blanc."

Among the members' new benefits will be the specialist insights of Dr Carien Coetzee from Basic Wine, who has been contracted to write a series of exclusive technical reports. In addition to having a PhD Agric Oenology from the University of Stellenbosch, her experience includes attending the International Sauvignon Blanc Celebration in New Zealand and serving on the tasting panel for Concours Mondial du Sauvignon international wine competition.

Sauvignon SA's transformation furthermore includes a re-designed website www.sauvignonblanc.com, integrated with social media platforms to maximise the conversation around the variety.

Anyone can become a member of Sauvignon Blanc SA to access the benefits of pooled expert knowledge. Members' networking and information exchanges include technical seminars and workshops, selection and training of specialist tasting panels for wine competitions, and early-warning marketing opportunities and events.

From a public perspective, most people get to know the organisation through its most prominent annual **FNB Sauvignon Blanc Top 10 competition**, which was started in 2007 to reward producers making wines of true distinction. Cape Wine Master Dr Winifred Bowman, an experienced judge and commentator, is the convenor of the panel.

The championship's important dates for this year are the opening for entries at end July; judging from 3 to 6 September; and, the gala awards evening on Wednesday 9 October. A technical seminar based on this year's performance is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 20 November in Franschoek.

The current members of the Sauvignon Blanc SA committee are: Chairperson RJ Botha (Kleine Zalze Wine Estate), vice-chairperson Thys Louw (Diemersdal Estate), Carien Coetzee (Basic Wine), JD Pretorius (Warwick Wine Estate), Lukas Wentzel (Groote Post Vineyards), CP Conradie (*Conradie Penhill* Artisanal Wines), Emul Ross (Hamilton Russel Vineyards), and Daniel Keulder (Nitida Wine Farm).

For more information or to sign up to the Sauvignon Blanc SA newsletter, visit www.sauvignonblanc.com or call 021 975 4440. Join the online conversation about #SauvignonBlanc and tag Sauvignon Blanc SA on Twitter @SauvignonSA and on Facebook and Instagram as @sauvignonblancsa.

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