



Rainbow's End Takes 1st Place in 2023 Taransaud Merlot Top 10

Stellenbosch winery Rainbow's End took pride of place in this year's Hallo Merlot Top 10 Competition as the highest scoring wine in the second running of this event aiming to annually discover South Africa's ten best Merlot wines. Besides the honour of its Merlot 2020 headlining the Top 10, Rainbow's End also won a new oak barrel, courtesy of French cooperage Taransaud who this year became headline sponsor of the Hallo Merlot Top 10.

In this year's competition two wineries repeated their Top 10 showing from last year, with Bein Merlot 2020 and Vondeling Barrel Selection Merlot 2020 again finding their way onto the list of best Merlots.

The other seven wines comprising this year's Hallo Merlot Top 10 honours list are from the following producers, their Merlot wines' vintages in brackets: Nabygelegen (2022), Ridgeback (2020), Holden Manz (Reserve 2019), Nilberg (2018), Zorgvliet (2020), De Grendel (2019) and Carmen Stevens (2021)

Dawie Botha, chairman of the Merlot Forum and winemaker at Anthonij Rupert Wines, said the results of the second Top 10 Merlot Competition again underscored the overall commitment to quality by South African winemakers crafting Merlot, as well as the regional terroir-expression found in the producing of these wines.

"As the top-selling single varietal red wine in South Africa, the missing link in the country's Merlot offerings has been the lack of a competition to assess the state of the wines made from this variety as well as to recognise the top producers," says Botha.

"This second Hallo Merlot Top 10 has done just that with 69 wines entered from all major Cape wine regions, showing diversity of terroir harnessed by a collective commitment to making excellent wines from this esteemed Bordeaux variety. With local wine drinkers buying more Merlot than any other single red variety, this competition aims to create an awareness of the high standard of winemaking and the specific regional identities found in the country's Merlot



offering. The popularity of Merlot is the result of wine lovers experiencing quality when they are enjoying this wine, and the competition also wishes to celebrate this fact.”

Botha made special mention of Taransaud who are from this year not only primary sponsors but added extra incentive to the Hallo Merlot Top 10 by presenting a new French oak barrique to the top-scoring wine out of the winning ten.

“The judicious use of quality barrels is a vital part of any producer wising to make a quality Merlot wine, and Taransaud has for years been an integral part of offering Cape winemakers the best wood vessels to allow us to make top-class Merlot,” he said. “Taransaud is thus not only an important partner to the Hallo Merlot Top 10 but a vital link between us winemakers and our aim of showing the diverse quality of South African Merlot wines.”

This year’s judges for the Hallo Merlot Top 10 were Matthew Copeland, winemaker at Vondeling who also convened the panel, Cathy van Zyl MW, Malu Lambert, Raymond Noppé and Francois van Zyl.

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