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Good Life

Drinks



Kholeka Kumalo and Ntsako Mitenda pairing food and whiskey at the Whisky Journey.

Journey of time and place

World lapping up SA whiskies



Len Maseko

Drinks on the House

When there are five whiskies to taste in the house, the palate is bound to experience an illuminating journey straddling the countries where these spirits were created.

Each bottle is an essence of its own distinct taste, sense of place and the peculiar tradition and style cherished by the blender master or distillery.

The five whiskies – Black Bottle, Bunnahabhain, Three Ships, Scottish Leader and Bain's Cape Mountain Whisky – originated from South Africa and Scotland.

Notably, Black Bottle, Bunnahabhain and Scottish Leader are Scotch whiskies owned by SA liquor giant Distell, which also produces the award-winning Three Ships and Bain's labels locally.

Distell's decision to buy the three Scotch whiskies was

obviously informed by South Africans' preference for Scotch-styled and double-distilled malts over the Irish's triple-distilled expressions.

While the five labels might be shaped by different climates and styles, there is a common thread among them – mostly evident in their smoothness, richness, fruitiness and mouth-warming palate devoid of the alcoholic burn that tends to scare away some first-time tasters.

Conspicuous too is the lack of pungency sometimes inherent in old-style Scotch whiskies – an aroma reminiscent of spoil eggs.

At the recent Distell showcase of the five whiskies, master blender Andy Watts emphasised the pleasure and magic of perceiving one's appreciation of whisky as a journey of discovery.

In 2009, Watts saw a gap in the world of whiskey and launched Bain's Cape Mountain Whisky, using maize and the double-matured distillation process at the Distell-owned The James Sedgwick Distillery in the Cape.

The rest is history as Bain's was declared the world's best grain whiskey in 2013 and has scooped several other awards.

As American whiskies have a peculiar sweetness about them, Watts decided to use American oak casks



Thobeka, Yoliswa and Nandipha Mqoco flanking Xolani Sibanyoni at the Whisky Journey. / FRONTPAGEPIX



Bain's single grain whiskey.

used once for the maturation of bourbon to age Bain's.

He believes the slightly sweeter taste profile of the

whiskey makes it a perfect base for cocktails.

When it comes to the sense of history, Black Bottle's distinctive opaque black bottle is something of a relic from the past and owes its existence to the World War 1 era when its owners first imported it to Scotland from Germany.

It reeks of rich aromas, with the palate layered with honeyed sweetness, punctuated by subtle smoky notes.

But none of the lot express a greater sense of place as unmistakably and acutely as Bunnahabhain, redolent of salty seaside aromas that stem from the location of its

Event of the week

Stellenbosch Street Soirees, a food and wine jamboree, takes place in the Cape winelands today and on January 25.

The wine-laced street parties bring together wine farms, restaurants, locals and visitors on the bustling Drostdy Street of the town on January 11.

Tickets: R70 it gets one a glass to taste as many wines as you wish.

Speak like a pro

Tertiary aromas describe the scents in a wine emanating from the effects of ageing.



Whisky Whip Cocktail

Ingredients:

375ml 3 Ships BCF
20ml Runny honey
20ml Freshly pressed lemon juice
2 Slices fresh root ginger
2 Dashes Angostura bitters
Garnish: Maraschino cherry drop

Method:

Pour ingredients into a glass and shake hard.

distillery in the Isle of Islay.

It is as delightfully smooth as it is richly full-bodied and unpeated.

In all, SA faces some exciting times ahead as the world laps up its fledgling whiskies, which are happily punching beyond their weight.

Well-travelled Desiree Chauke has a nose for the finer things

TV personality and socialite Desiree Chauke (née Makote) is one of the most recognisable faces in television, having carved out an illustrious career as a presenter since the 1990s.

Who has been the greatest inspiration in your life?

My mom; she's turning 80 this year. She drives and runs her own business and remains a source of inspiration.

What odds did you overcome to become a TV presenter?

Not much really. I was fortunate to have access to the entertainment industry through my mother's contacts. I would tell anyone who gave me two minutes that I wanted to be on TV.

And, when the time came, Andrew Shale, who was an executive producer at the SABC, came through with news of an audition, from which I got three callbacks. Eventually I got the job of

the first black English prime-time newsreader on SA television.

What has been your career's most memorable highlight?

The recent ANC elective conference at Nasrec. When you are in those heated sessions, you wish our youth could have had the first-hand experience of the horse-trading.

I also got to travel throughout the continent and globally. Interviewed African presidents, leaders and ordinary Africans doing amazing work.

What is the funniest on-air moment you have experienced?

I can't think of one right now, but I'm sure there have been quite a few.

How did you develop your passion for wine?

At home I used to serve Bellingham and JC Le Roux to my mom's clients.

In my early working life I was a public relations executive for Gilbey's Distillers and Vintners. As a result, my appreciation of the drink upped a few notches. Last year I was introduced to Vika Shipalana from Perrier Jout champagne, spawning yet another drink to explore.

What is your favourite food and drink?

Braai meat. When I am with friends, there's always something popping.

Where have you had your best holiday so far?

Rome, Italy, on my honeymoon was the best ever. A four-state US trip in 2015 was also unforgettable.

What made the holiday special?

I was a newlywed; our host family was amazing. They literally took time off to chaperone us around Rome. I'm

Catholic, so to be at the Vatican was religiously significant for me.

What is your personal motto?

Be present and live everyday to the fullest.

Your favourite restaurant?

Yeoville Dinner Club in Yeoville. Also Mash in Douglasdale in Sandton.

What is your biggest extravagance?

My children's education.

Who would be your three ideal guests?

Mam' Winnie Mandela, just because. Cyril Ramaphosa, I'd like to be the first to know how he plans to implement the "New Deal" and my dear friend Ethel Nyembe who is an amazing conversationalist. She always helps clarify complex conversation.