

Viticulture protégé makes his debut in the wine industry

 By Cari Coetzee

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The Cape Winemakers Guild Viticulture Protégé Programme has yielded its first graduate. Logan Jooste, who honed his skills during his two-and-a-half-year internship after graduating with a BSc degree in Viticulture and Oenology from the University of Stellenbosch, has made his debut in the wine industry with a full-time position as a viticulturist at Bartinney Wine Estate in Stellenbosch. Jooste tells us about his experience.



Logan Jooste

■ Tell us about yourself and why you chose a career in viticulture and oenology?

I was raised in Kylemore, Stellenbosch, where I went to both primary and high school. It was never my plan to enroll in a career in viticulture and oenology. Since primary school, I wanted to become a pilot. This was my dream until Grade 11 when I started to do a bit more research on where I could study and how much it would cost. I found that it was much more expensive than I initially thought and even with a bursary, I felt that it would be too much pressure. At the end of my matric year in 2009, I still have not applied for any tertiary course.

Early in 2010, I enrolled in a bridging course at the University of Stellenbosch called SciMathUS (Science and Maths at the University of Stellenbosch). Even after completing this course I still didn't know what I wanted to do and thought I might pursue a career in engineering. So, I applied for mechanical engineering at the University. I also remembered that an aptitude test I did in high school suggested that I enroll in a career of wine making, thus I put this down as my second choice. I also applied for sports science as a third choice.

The only answer I got back was from the faculty of agriculture and I was accepted into BSc Agric (Viticulture and Oenology). My initial plan was to become a winemaker but over the four-year course, my passion for viticulture grew so much that I knew this is where I wanted to be.

■ What did the Cape Winemakers Guild Viticulture Protégé Programme involve and what role did your mentors play?

The Protégé Programme was designed to expose young graduates to the industry and empower them with experience by learning from members of the Guild – all masters of their craft. I completed my programme over a period of two and a half years, gaining six months experience under the mentorship of Louis Strydom at Ernie Els Vineyards, one full year with

Charles Hopkins at De Grendel Wines and one full year at Graham Beck Wines with Pieter Ferreira as my mentor.

In combination with the Cape Winemakers Guild, part of my program was to gain insight from VinPro. I attended monthly technical meetings, had the opportunity of being a judge in block competitions three years in a row and also the opportunity to be a delegate at the Australian Wine Industry Technical Conference in Adelaide, Australia. The role of my mentors was to expose me to viticulture, farming and managing techniques and guide me as viticulturist. From each one, I gained different viticulture experiences.

■ ***What is the most important lesson that you learned during the programme?***

I have learned many important lessons. These include getting to understand that theory is just a guideline and that being a viticulturist is more than just looking after vineyards. It is about planning, managing people, keeping records, maintaining implements and equipment, making sure everything is going according to plan, maintaining the vineyard of course, and so the list goes on.

■ ***How important is it that youth continue to fill the ranks in the industry and why – and what role should the industry take in encouraging them to do so?***

It is very important that youth continue to fill the ranks in the industry seeing that at some stage some of the renowned winemakers and viticulturists will retire. Obviously, if this gap is never filled, this will lead to a decrease in wine production in South Africa and eventually a collapse of the South African wine industry.

It is important that the industry encourages the youth of today to become part of the wine industry, not only in production side but also marketing. This can be done by starting to educate learners at school so that they understand what the industry is about and that wine is so much more complex than just alcohol. This also needs to be done to ensure that learners understand why they are enrolling in a specific tertiary course.

■ ***What advice would you like to share with other young people who are interested in this or a similar field?***

It is all about the passion. When you are passionate about what you are doing then there will almost never be a dull moment in that career.

■ ***You were appointed a full-time viticulturist at Bartinney Wine Estate after you graduated the programme. What do you look forward to the most working at Bartinney and what are your plans for the future?***

Even though I have gained a lot of experience over the past two and a half years, I still have a lot to learn about the vine. I am looking forward to gaining much more experience and being able to experiment.

ABOUT CARI COETZEE

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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