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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...**Samantha de Morney-Hughes, Assistant Winemaker at Stellenzicht**

Life took some interesting turns before Stellenzicht's Assistant Winemaker, Samantha de Morney-Hughes, pursued her passion for wine. Although she grew up in Paarl surrounded by vineyards, she first studied Public Relations followed by a career in the hospitality industry. Finally in 2003, after a lot of soul searching, Sam decided to take the plunge, gave up her job and started her Diploma in Cellar Technology at Elsenburg Agricultural College.

"It was mainly my fascination with the vineyard that encouraged me to follow my dream as it always intrigued me how something as elementary as a vine can produce grapes with such sweet nectar that end up being so complex."

Sam joined the team at Stellenzicht in 2007 working side by side with accomplished Winemaker Guy Webber.

"I'm still busy honing my skills and Guy plays a huge part in shaping my knowledge. I'm very fortunate to have him as a teacher as he is extremely innovative and likes to experiment with new techniques and ideas. His passion is infectious."

At the end of 2008, Sam grabbed the opportunity to gain experience internationally, working a harvest season in France at Chateau Le Grand Verdus, a family farm that has been producing wine since 1875.

Working in France confirmed my passion for wine and the vineyard and it was a great learning experience during which I had the chance to observe and learn more about their techniques which I'll definitely be able to apply positively in our cellar."



As Assistant Winemaker Sam's responsibilities start from the time the grapes are crushed right up until bottling the wine – including the monitoring of fermentation, laboratory analysis, monitoring barrel maturation, general quality control of the wines in the tanks and barrels, stabilisation and filtration of the wines, the necessary paperwork and tasting the wines with Guy to decide which barrels will be used for blending.

“We are working with a product that has been around for centuries and the basic principles have not changed much. However, winemaking techniques have evolved and changed. Wine is a natural product that should get minimal intervention and that is how we operate at Stellenzicht. The quality and complexity of a wine is much dependent on care taken in the vineyard and practices and techniques applied in the cellar.”

For this up and coming winemaker a working day at Stellenzicht is just as Forrest Gump describes in the movie “like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are going to get,” which means there is never a dull moment.

“Although Stellenzicht is a big cellar we are a very small team that works really well together, even under pressure,” Sam concludes.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

Cape Legends partners with top wine importer in Norway

Excellars, agents for some of Cape Legends top performing wines including Stellenzicht, Allesverloren, Neethlingshof, Lomond, Le Bonheur and Tukulu, have just been rated one of the top performing wine importers in Norway.

A survey based on overall wine sales in 2008, placed Excellars amongst Norway’s top three best wine importers.

New York Times raves about Alto Cabernet Sauvignon

Respected New York wine critic Eric Asimov has rated the 2005 Alto vintage amongst his top 10 South African Cabernet Sauvignons. Commenting on his top 10 choice in the New York Times, Asimov described South Africa as “one of the greatest sources for moderately priced Cabernet Sauvignon on the planet today.” This bodes well for South African wine exports to the lucrative and largely untapped USA market.

NEWS FROM THE FARMS

Lord Neethling Cabernet Franc enlivens popular Wijnhuis dish

The 2002 vintage of Lord Neethling Cabernet Franc so inspired the team at The Wijnhuis Stellenbosch, that when asked to pair it with food, they chose one of their most popular dishes on the menu, the Tagliata Zucchini. Whilst this dish might have a vegetarian ring to it, it is very much a carnivore’s delight composed of seared sirloin slices adorned with grilled zucchini, rocket leaves, pine nuts and parmesan shavings.



The Wijnhuis team believes the mouthfilling fruitiness of the wine, with its grassy undertones and beautifully softened tannins, along with the lingering strawberry and chocolate aftertaste, makes the 2002 Lord Neethling Cabernet Franc the perfect pairing for this dish.

“The wine complements the delicate smokiness of the sirloin and zucchini, the spiciness of the rocket and the tartness of the parmesan shavings,” says Beverage Manager Allan Ware.

The Wijnhuis, situated in the charming Dorpsmeent building on Church Street in the heart of Stellenbosch, offers wine from more than 50 mainly local producers ranging from iconic big names to rare boutique wineries.

Hill&Dale launches on-line recipe for success

The Hill&Dale recipe and wine pairing challenge is on! On-line, in fact, from February to November 2009, on the mega-popular, Food 24 contemporary lifestyle site, which attracts over 300 000 unique monthly impressions!



Each month, browsers on the site's recipe and competitions section will be challenged to submit recipes for dishes that suit the wines' personalities. From dreamy desserts, creative salads, spontaneous sea foods and free-spirited picnics, Food 24 will feature the top 10 recipes and browsers will vote for their best!

Monthly winners receive a case of Hill&Dale wines. Visit www.food24.com and check it out.

Flat Roof Manor launches 'purrfect' on-line promotion

The cat's out the bag as Flat Roof Manor Wines go on-line with a 10 month interactive campaign on the Channel 24 and Woman 24 sites. The trendy campaign targets 350 000 site visitors from a young market with a passion for fashion.



Each month, browsers on the site's fashion and beauty sections will join the cat fight by submitting cat's tales (stories), cat shows (pictures), catastrophes (disaster moments) and many other 'purrfect' ways to enjoy Flat Roof Manor Wines. The sites will feature the top 10 submissions each month for browsers to vote.

Monthly winners receive a case of Flat Roof Manor wines. Visit www.channel24.com and www.woman24.com sites.

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