

NEETHLINGSHOF CHAMPION PINOTAGE TAKES TOP HONOURS AT ABSA TOP 10

South Africa, Stellenbosch, August 2017; **NEETHLINGSHOF ESTATE** vineyard, responsible for the best Pinotage wine at last year's International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC), has added another glittering accolade to its collection – the sought-after title of ABSA Top 10 Pinotage.

The winners of the biggest and longest-running competition of its kind were announced this week during an award ceremony held at the uber-stylish Cavalli restaurant and function venue near Stellenbosch. In attendance were most of the country's top Pinotage luminaries; many of them finalists this year. In addition, the championship featured many wines from the 2015 vintage, widely acknowledged as one of the best since 2009.

The victory for the **2015 Neethlingshof 'The Short Story Collection: The Owl Post Pinotage'** was made all the more auspicious this year by the 21-year milestone celebrated by the competition itself. To mark the occasion, one additional entrant to the 20 wines shortlisted was permitted after the first round of judging.

"The continued achievement of this single-vineyard wine makes us tremendously proud," says Neethlingshof winemaker De Wet Viljoen. *"It speaks of the quality of fruit, terroir and team expertise that applies to every Neethlingshof wine, but especially of Pinotage in general."*

Pinotage is a truly South African variety that was developed in Stellenbosch during the 1920s and is now grown successfully across the world. Speaking in the run-up to this year's ABSA Top 10 Pinotage, Pinotage Association founder and chairman Beyers Truter said that he remained amazed by the growth and quality of the category, and the passion of producers and stakeholders. *"That there are now quality Pinotage wines originating from such a wide array of areas with various terroirs underlines the versatility of this grape, and highlights the winemakers' commitment to constantly improve, adapting to the environment and the challenges of the marketplace,"* he said.

The 2015 Neethlingshof 'The Short Story Collection: The Owl Post Pinotage' hails from a single vineyard, which makes it unique in many respects. *"It is also undoubtedly responsible for much of its success,"* says De Wet Viljoen. *"The wine consistently enjoys appeal and recognition at the highest level of competitive assessment."*

It was named best wine of the variety last year when it received the Abraham Perold Trophy for Pinotage at the 2016 International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC).

"Credit is due to the entire team at Neethlingshof and to the industry in general, reflecting that Pinotage is on the right road," says Viljoen.

The grapes were harvested in mid-February, yielding around eight tons per hectare. Its vinification included transfer to 300-litre oak barrels, where it completed fermentation, followed by further maturation in oak barrels for 15 months. The result was a dark, rich and velvet wine displaying aromas of ripe fruit and bananas with traces of vanilla oak that follow through on the palate.

"This wine will continue to improve for a decade from vintage," says Viljoen, adding that since inception, The Owl Post Pinotage has evolved into a modern-style – fruit-driven with elegance.

The wine is named to draw attention to the estate's integrated pest management system that forms part of the winery's focus on production integrity to reduce its dependence on pesticides. The rarity of nature-in-balance is accomplished with the majestic owl's natural contribution to maintaining the organic and hierarchical equilibrium of the estate. The enthralling creatures share in Neethlingshof's secrets and adventures; telling of a rich heritage, preserving that which is sacred and pure – a part of the many philosophical and historical facets reflected by the Short Story Collection reserve tier of Neethlingshof wines.

Neethlingshof lies in the heart of the Stellenbosch Winelands and is flanked by the Bottelary Hills and Papegaaisberg Mountains. It has more than a dozen distinguishable terroirs that allows grape varieties to be matched perfectly with the best soil, aspect and climatic conditions.

This understanding is borne only as it can - of the farm's 300-year heritage; and, a custodial respect for the land itself.

Along with the beautiful manor house, the estate is steeped in history distinguished by the beautiful avenue of stone pines. In addition, Neethlingshof is a member of the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative (BWI) and set aside land for conservation.

Neethlingshof Estate recently returned to its status as a family-owned enterprise. On July 1, full ownership of Neethlingshof reverted back to the Schreiber Family when its joint venture with Distell came to an end. The farm was first acquired by Hans J Schreiber in 1985.

The Neethlingshof Short Story Collection Owl Post Pinotage 2015 is available from the tasting room at R250 per bottle.

For more information on Neethlingshof's extensive wine range and other offerings, visit www.neethlingshof.co.za or call 021 883 8988. Stay up to date with the latest events on the estate by visiting Neethlingshof on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/neethlingshof>) or twitter ([@NeethlingshofW](https://twitter.com/NeethlingshofW)).