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## **SOUTH AFRICAN WINE & BRAAI DAY**

**Navruz-Shater Restaurant, St. Petersburg**

**27 May 2014, Tuesday**



St. Petersburg is the second biggest city in Russia and is an “aristocratic” and cultural capital. It is also the second biggest industrial and trade hub of the country. The city is more “westernized” than the rest of Russia and is fairly open to new trends and ideas. Located very close to the border with Finland and the Baltic Sea, it is influenced by the Northern Europe in its habits and tastes.

Several prominent wine importers – such as Marine Express, Nesco, Centrobalt, Ladoga, etc. – are headquartered in St. Petersburg. All other big importers and distributors have their branches in the city. St. Petersburg bolster a well organised and active sommelier community and its sommeliers regularly win national contests.

It is therefore very important to demonstrate our presence in this area and give our wines the much needed push and support. Taking into account the sophistication of the market it is important to approach it from an unorthodox and creative angle. That’s why it was decided to run a Day of SA Wines and Braai with an attempt to recreate a South African traditional atmosphere in this Northern city. We also wanted to highlight the links between SA wines and cuisine, as well as with general culture and lifestyle in South Africa.



The first Day of SA Wines and Braai in St. Petersburg took place in June last year and attracted a lot of interest and enthusiasm. Over 100 guests attended the event and most of them were impressed with the unusual format. The only problem was a relatively low attendance at the second part of the day. That’s why it was decided to repeat the action at the same venue and in the same format, but with the bigger number of participants and invited guests.



The venue - Navruz-Shater – is an restaurant with Uzbek (middle eastern) menu. Attractive feature of the restaurant is that all its window panes can be removed and in good weather the sitting is virtually *al fresco*. Tandyr (grilled) lamb and fried rice with carrots and onions are some of the staple meals here. Combined with open coal and gas grills it is as close as we can get to South Africa. (There is not a single South African restaurant in Russia today.)



The weather unfortunately didn't play along with us. Last year it was the hottest day of the month since the weather records had started, and we struggled without the proper air-conditioning and were bothered by braai smoke. This year was another extreme: after two very hot weeks the temperature dropped dramatically on the Day, and we had to keep all the windows closed and stay inside. Rain started in the middle of the day, which interfered with the braai. So, it looked like Cape Town winter at best.



Seven well-known Russian importers presented their wines on the verandah of the "Navruz-Shater": Marine Express, Eurowines, Starboar, Arsenal & La Vinchi (DGB Brands), Fort and Rusimport. Gary Jordan of Jordan Wine Estate - the only representative of SA wine producers - poured his wines at the table of his importer. Altogether, over 30 SA wine brands were shown. The guests were impressed with the variety of wines presented to them. It does not happen often that so many SA wines are assembled under one roof.

208 guests attended the Day and the venue was packed most of the time. The visitors were mainly from the city wine trade: sommeliers, cavists, buyers from supermarkets and independent retail. Mr. Vusi Mveli, Minister-Councillor: Economics from the SA Embassy in Moscow was an honorary guest of the event.

39 guests attended the morning WOSA Seminar "20 Years of Freedom" on changes experienced by the wine industry of South Africa in the past two decades. Another highlight of the Day was the show-case tournament of League of Sommeliers. 6 sommeliers teams of four members each competed in the SA focussed game, which included theoretical questions and blind tasting of SA wines. The young and cheerful sommeliers demonstrated very good knowledge of SA wine industry.



During lunchtime the guests were introduced to the traditional South African dishes. There was an attempt to cook Cape Breyani, but without a South African chef the flavours were not quite authentic. The lamb on spit braai was not very impressive either, mostly because of the



weather. But there were a lot of greens, fruits, cheese and honey on the tables, and nothing could spoil the festive feeling of the event!

Imperia Vkusa wine magazine was a media partner and helped in selecting, inviting and registering visitors and running the event.

Overall, the event went very well and we received numerous positive comments from both exhibitors and participants again! The was a lot of wine, education, excitement and fun. And all of it happened in a relaxed and

friendly atmosphere - typically South African! If anything, the venue has become too small for us and we should think about finding a bigger site for the next Day of SA Wines and Braai in St. Petersburg.

There are strong indications that our activities do help distributors to promote wines from South Africa and increase their sales in the region. We should continue to show our presence and support!

For the detailed photo report of the Day click here: <https://yadi.sk/d/9ekMEZq1RcPMP>.



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