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THE III FESTIVAL OF SOUTH AFRICAN WINES IN MOSCOW **Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, MOSCOW, 20 April 2012**



There are all indications that South African wine is ready to take off in Russia in a big way! After the 12% drop in volume of bottled wine exported from South Africa in 2009, the same volume grew by 25% in 2010 and by 9% in 2011. If one looks at the latest available data from SAWIS (the year rolling until March 2012) the figures are even more upbeat: the growth is 26% and the volume has reached 1.7 million litres!

Russia also imports a lot of bulk wine from South Africa. Overall, the country is the 8th biggest export market for South African wines with total volume of 11.5 million litres. The growth of 40% makes it the 3rd fastest growing market after the USA and Kenya.

There is also an obvious growth of interest from wine experts and connoisseurs on the market. Even the Moscow chapter of the Commanderie du Bordeaux in Russia, the main purpose of which is to promote the wines from this famous French region, invited the Wines of South Africa to make a presentation at their dinner. And our wines shined with full sparkle there! (The separate report to follow.)



Our monthly news-letter in Russian is currently reaching over 2 000 readers and we receive a lot of positive feedback to the information we distribute.

The III Festival of South African Wines in Moscow was another confirmation of this trend. Comparing with the two previous Festivals we had the record number of exhibitors, seminars, visitors from South Africa and guests.

The Festival was held at the same location as the previous two – the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel in Moscow city centre. The venue is very conveniently located and offers comfortable exhibition space and efficient service. Expecting the growing number of guests we occupied the main conference facility of the hotel and a separate seminar room.

The main idea of the Festival is to popularize the SA wine brands among the Russian consumers and increase the presence in restaurants and bars. Consequently, mostly wines that were present on the Russian market were invited to participate. 14 major Russian importers presented their South African portfolios to the demanding and spoilt by choice Moscow public. Over 40 South African brands with more than 150 different wines which were present on the Russian market already were offered for tasting at the degustation tables.



These were complemented by several producers that did not have representatives in Russia as yet, but came to the Festival to get acquaintance with numerous importers that attended at the Festival.



The highlight of the Festival was the vertical tasting of the Kanonkop wines delivered by the proprietor of the estate Johann Krige. Accolade Wines also invited the international wine expert from Germany to present their brands. The opening seminar of the day themed “Why our Winelands are Wild” was presented by WOSA representative in Russia. All three seminars attracted a lot of interest and were filled to the limit.



Over 850 people registered to attend the Festival and 650 actually did. More than 100 guests took part in the seminars. Over 75% of visitors were directly involved in wine business. The majority was from wine wholesale and import businesses (19%), HoReCa sector (17%), wine retail (15%), wine education (9%), wine journalism (8%) and wine marketing (8%). The rest were the representatives of the government and the city administration, diplomats, business people and wine connoisseurs and collectors. There were also over 70 event organisers and exhibitors running the stands.



The Festival was organised in close cooperation between the Wines of South Africa (WOSA) and the Department of Trade and Industry (the DTI) and was actively supported by the Embassy of RSA in Russia. Mr. Mandisi Mpahlwa, the Ambassador, has opened the Festival with warm address to all participants and guests and attended the seminars.



The new feature of the III Festival was the performance of African ethnic group “Kimbata”. Although not from South Africa themselves, the three African musicians filled the wine tasting hall with energetic and rhythmic sounds and added excitement to the Festival.

Of course the full impact of the Festival will only be seen in the next few months (and in the years to come). Many importers reported 15 to 50% increase in sales of South African wines in the aftermath of the previous two Festivals. Many web-portals have already made announcements of the Festival, and more are to follow. There will undoubtedly be printed publications and reports as well.



Mr. Raubenheimer, the Minister at the Embassy in Russia had the following to say about the Festival: “This has grown so large, that it is definitely becoming a known and established event on the calendar of wine events in Moscow. It has also become more than just a wine festival, but a successful South Africa branding event as well!”

We are confident that our focused and well-orchestrated efforts will result in substantial increase of South African wine exports into this difficult but lucrative market!

Some articles about the Festival on the internet can be viewed here:

- <http://www.horeca.ru/news/market/13271/>
- <http://www.lenta.ru/news2/2012/04/17/wines/>
- <http://www.pischeblog.ru/2012/04/17/3-ij-festival-yuzhnoafrikanskix-vin-v-moskve/>
- <http://sfera.fm/news/3-iy-festival-yujnoafrikanskih-vin-proydet-20-aprelya-v-moskve-18-04-2012.html>
- http://bbqmag.ru/news_331.html

The full photo report from the Festival can be viewed here: <http://sd.icelord.net/photos/2012/uar/>.

