

Media release

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DIVERSE STYLES SHINE AT THE 2025 SHIRAZ SA CHALLENGE

The results of the 2025 Shiraz SA Challenge, South Africa's benchmark competition for Shiraz, Shiraz-based blends and rosé, were announced on Thursday, 7 August at a festive awards ceremony at Blacksmith's Estate in Paarl. The Challenge once again celebrated the richness, range and rising excellence of South African Shiraz across its many expressions.

Riaan Möller, Chair of Shiraz SA, praised this year's lineup: "We're seeing a continued rise in innovation and terroir focus, not only in premium single-varietal Shiraz but also in blends and rosé. The quality across the board has never been stronger."

JUDGES IMPRESSED WITH EXCEPTIONAL RANGE AND EXPERT EXECUTION

A respected panel of industry experts judged the entries for the 2025 Shiraz SA Challenge over four days, from 24 to 27 June, at Nederburg – the longstanding venue for this benchmark competition since its inception in 2013. A total of 173 wines were entered from across South Africa's diverse wine regions, with the majority of submissions hailing from Stellenbosch.

This year's judging panel was chaired by Edmund Terblanche, cellar master at La Motte and the founding chairman of Shiraz SA. He was joined by winemaker Elzette du Preez, formerly of De Grendel and a member of the Shiraz SA management committee; Morgan Steyn, winemaker at De Grendel (and former protégé in 2019); and husband-and-wife wine professionals Samarie Smith-Meletiou and Georgio Meletiou rounded out the panel. Samarie is a seasoned wine journalist with international judging experience, while Georgio is the resident sommelier at Spier and a multilingual wine expert with an extensive hospitality background.

This year's Cape Winemakers Guild protégé and junior panellist was Nompumelelo Mosaka, currently working at De Grendel.

The panel followed Shiraz SA's unique judging method, in which each judge receives their own individual tasting order, with no discussion permitted during tasting – a format designed in collaboration with Stellenbosch University to ensure impartiality and independent assessment.

The software and support company Wine MS, which has been involved since the competition's inception, once again assisted the judges. The auditing firm Exceed Group monitored the procedure and verified the outcomes. Crystal Direct supported the judging process with a sponsorship of large glasses perfect for tasting Shiraz, as in previous years. The bottle seals for winning wines were once again sponsored by Lebone Paarl Labels. As usual, a number of bottles of unused wine was donated to the Pebbles Project.

According to Terblanche, the panel was impressed by the breadth of styles and consistently high quality. "It's encouraging to see both classical and contemporary interpretations of Shiraz being made with such care. From bold, structured examples to fresher, whole-bunch styles with lifted aromatics, the diversity of expression is something South Africa can be proud of."

EIGHTEEN WINNERS AWARDED IN THREE CATEGORIES

Eighteen winners were named in the three categories of the Shiraz SA Challenge. De Grendel performed exceptionally by achieving an unprecedented three places in the Top 12 Shiraz. Diemersdal and Stellenrust also performed well, each placing with two wines in the Top 12, while Saronsberg and Babylontoren each won a Shiraz and Shiraz Blend.

2025 Shiraz Challenge winners were (in alphabetical order):

Shiraz Top 12:

- Babylonstoren Shiraz 2022
- De Grendel Op die Berg Syrah 2023
- De Grendel Op die Berg Syrah 2022
- De Grendel Shiraz 2021
- Diemersdal Shiraz 2023
- Diemersdal Syrah 2023
- MAN Vintners Skaapveld Syrah 2024
- Saronsberg Provenance Shiraz 2023
- Stellenrust ArtiSons Blueberry Hill Shiraz 2023
- Stellenrust ArtiSons Missing Link Shiraz 2023

- Tokara Shiraz 2022
- Von The Sir Shiraz 2023

Shiraz-based blends:

- Babylonstoren Babel 2023
- Flagstone Velvet Shiraz Blend 2023
- Guardian Peak SMG 2022
- Saronsberg Full Circle 2022
- Spier Creative Block 3 2021

Rosé:

- Eerste Hoop Shiraz Rosé 2025

2025 BERNARD PODLASHUK SHIRAZ TROPHY

The Bernard Podlashuk Shiraz Trophy, sponsored by Bellingham and awarded in conjunction with the Shiraz SA Challenge, was introduced in 2022 to recognise visionary winemaking and sustained excellence in Shiraz.

First awarded to Saronsberg in recognition of a decade of consistent top-tier performance, the trophy now acknowledges producers who demonstrate innovation, sustainability, creativity, and social responsibility. Producers were invited to submit detailed entries and answer a series of questions. Selection was made based on strict criteria and the judges reviewed responses to the detailed series of questions that covered each of the four levels of criteria accordingly. The panel consisted of Francois Haasbroek (Chairman), Dr Etienne Terblanche (Vinpro) and Prof Jako Volschenk (Stellenbosch University Business School).

The 2025 trophy and R30 000 cash prize went to Journey's End, a producer widely admired for its quality and community-focused initiatives. Journey's End is the fourth winner of this prestigious award, presented this year by Andrew Harris, Marketing Director: Wine at DGB.

Also named as finalists were DeMorgenzon and Stellenrust, with Stellenrust receiving recognition for the second consecutive year – a testament to its ongoing excellence.

PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT EXCELLENCE

Vinventions SA, the long-standing main sponsor of Shiraz SA since 2013, proudly supported this year's Challenge, joined for the first time by Fermentis Lesaffre.

To make the top wines more accessible, [Port2Port](#) has been named as the official sales partner for Shiraz SA. This partnership means that all awarded wines will be showcased on their website and featured in a newsletter, distributed to a curated database of over 65 000 engaged wine buyers, collectors, and industry insiders. In addition, wine enthusiasts can look forward to a curated 12-bottle pack featuring this year's Top 12 winners, assembled by [Pieter Badenhorst of For the Love of Wine](#).

A CELEBRATION OF CHARACTER AND COMMITMENT

"The Shiraz SA Challenge continues to raise the bar for South African wine," concluded Terblanche. "Each year brings new stories, new expressions, and above all, an unwavering commitment to excellence."

Shiraz SA once more extends an invitation to all Shiraz aficionados to participate in the countrywide celebration of Shiraz on Thursday, 21 August, following the success of the inaugural National Shiraz Day launched in 2021.

For more information, visit www.shirazsa.co.za

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Join the conversation with the hashtag #ShirazSAwards

For any queries, please contact info@shirazsa.co.za

