

South African brandies shine on world stage

South African brandy-makers scooped up 18 medals at the International Wine & Spirit Competition (IWSC) and were the only SA recipients of Gold across categories at this year's prestigious event.



KWV 20 Year Old XXO Brandy. Source: Supplied

South African companies were presented with awards across every category from whisky to gin, but it was South African brandy that brought home the top honours. Of just 17 Gold medals awarded in the brandy category comprising entries from 26 countries, two went to South African brandies. These were for the KWV 20 Year Old XXO Brandy and Viceroy 10 Year Old Brandy.

“South Africa’s brandy-makers continue to make us proud,” says the South African Brandy Foundation director, Christelle Reade-Jahn. “These accolades are a display of the world-class quality of our brandies as well as how broadly that quality is spread across the array of brandies available.”

When awarding Gold to the KWV 20 Year Old XXO Brandy, the judges described it as "bold and authoritative. [It is] densely layered nose of cedar, sandalwood and honeycomb caramel, with grape and candied orange peel notes. Soft Muscat character on the palate, revealing allspice and cinnamon alongside caramelised pineapple before a warm, spicy finish."

The panel said of the Gold-winning Viceroy 10 YO, the brandy was “elegantly nutty on the nose with a wonderfully evolving mouthfeel full of the joyous flavours of plump raisins, floral saffron, earthy nutmeg and sweet honey. [It] boasts a delightfully long, crispy, dry finish with a delectable trace of melodious maple spice.”



Viceroy 10 Year Old Brandy. Source: Supplied

South Africa's other medal-winning brandies at IWSC were Klipdrift Export Brandy and Premium Brandy; KWV 10 YO Barrel Select Pot Still Brandy, 12 YO Small Batch Pot Still Brandy, 15 YO Alambic Blend Pot Still Brandy, 3 YO Pot Still Brandy and 5 YO Pot Still Brandy; Olof Bergh Solera Brandy; Richelieu 10 YO Brandy, 8 YO Pot Still Brandy and International Premium Brandy; Van Ryn's 10 YO Single Pot Still Brandy; 12 YO Single Pot Still Brandy; 15 YO Single Pot Still Brandy; and 20 YO Single Pot Still Brandy; and, Viceroy 5 YO Brandy.

The annual grand prizes, including Trophy for the Producer of the Year, will be presented at the IWSC Awards Dinner on 19 October in London.

Brandy pedigree

Brandy is the fourth-largest category in the landscape of South African spirits, and blended and potstill brandy comprise 92% of the South African brandy market by volume, with Cognac contributing 8%. The South African Brandy Foundation supports the category's excellence through education, tastings and masterclasses, innovation, the Cape Brandy Distillers Guild and Brandy Homes.

According to Reade-Jahn, the success of South African brandy is underscored by its pedigree.

"South African brandy has always been a trusted category, and even more so in the wake of the Covid pandemic. Post Covid we saw consumers stocking up on products with an authentic backstory, and no category does authentic better than brandy. It has emerged as the spirit to share with friends when relaxing at home, and the volume growth reflects this trend,"

she says.

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