

## **Boela Gerber: The man who bottles the beauty of Contantia's vineyards**

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For Cape Winemakers Guild chairperson and Groot Constantia winemaker Boela Gerber, wine is more than just fermented grape juice – it's a labour of love, carefully crafted into an expression of his vineyard and the people who care for it.

Gerber began his winemaking journey in the cellar at Stellenzicht in Stellenbosch. The passion of his first boss, winemaker Andre van Rensburg, soon spread to Gerber. After four years, he moved to Rickety Bridge in Franschhoek to take up the position as vineyard manager and winemaker. This groomed him to take up the role as winemaker at Groot Constantia in 2001.

Van Rensburg's mentorship planted the seed for Gerber's philosophy towards winemaking, which employs minimal interference and allows the terroir to speak for itself. He believes in early intervention in the vineyards to ensure the best quality grapes, arguing that once poor quality grapes arrive at the cellar, it's too late to remedy.

"Making wine on Groot Constantia Estate, where we only vinify the grapes we grow on the farm, gives me the opportunity to express the uniqueness of this beautiful property in our wines," he says.

"It is interesting to note how often the wines of a region or a company mirror the personalities of the people involved as much as it reflects the soil and climatic conditions."

His approach to winemaking has borne fruit – the estate has won over 100 awards in the last decade. Gerber has also collected his fair share of accolades, starting with the Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year Award in 2002. Added to his string of achievements, Gerber was inducted as one of 41 members of the [Cape Winemakers Guild](#), a collective of some of South Africa's greatest winemakers in 2010.

Membership of the Guild is by invitation only and is extended to winemakers who have been responsible for the production of outstanding wines for a minimum of five years and who show promise of not only consistently exceeding industry standards, but also promoting the values of the Guild.

The members are eligible to submit wines exclusively for the annual Nedbank Cape Winemakers Guild Auction. The submitted wines face a rigorous peer review process before they are selected for the auction. Gerber has had 10 wines selected for the auction since 2011.

The membership to the Guild also brings an opportunity for continued learning, as winemakers are able to participate in technical tastings as well as learn from one another.

"South African winemakers are a bit further down the road than their 'new world' counterparts when it comes to innovation, exploring new areas and reviving forgotten, old vineyards. A lot of this is made possible by the collaboration of winemakers who work together towards a common goal. Essentially, this is what the Guild is all about: Passionate, like-minded winemakers that regularly get together to share knowledge and experience to improve their own wines and, in the process, take the whole wine industry forward."

Gerber has travelled extensively to increase his winemaking knowledge, having participated in harvests in France, Spain, the USA and Italy.

"As winemakers we spend a lot of time traveling and tasting interesting and expressive wines from all over the world. Back home, the challenge every year is to unlock the potential of our own vineyards, to create something that like-minded people around the world will enjoy and appreciate."

Ends.