

The toast of Makro

Supporting black empowered wine making

MASSMART CONTINUALLY looks for products from previously disadvantaged South Africans as part of its commitment to preferential procurement.

Massmart's Massdiscounter chain, Makro, is a leader in the wine retail sector, and boasts a selection which blends the group's commitment to supporting growing businesses with its commitment to offering customers exciting new products.

Entrepreneurship in wine making

Today, there are eight wines procured by Makro from broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) producers, and Makro Woodmead carries the entire range. These labels include Fives Reserve, Thokozani, New Beginnings, Bouwland, Thandi, Lindiwe, M'Hudi and Ses'fikile. Each of

these producers has a different story to tell, but all share the spotlight that Makro is shining on local wine entrepreneurs.

Ses'fikile: three women on the move

Jackie Bacela, Nondumiso Pikashe and Nomvuyo Xaliphi had all been looking for new challenges. It was Pikashe who first decided to take the plunge into wine making, and she enlisted the help of women she knew could work with her to build the fledgling brand.

"It just came at the right time," recalls Xaliphi, "when I was despondent with my job as an administrator. I felt I needed to be somewhere challenging and Nondumiso (Pikashe), who by then had already embarked on pursuing a career in the wine industry, took me to meetings and wine tastings at Flagstone Winery in Somerset West. From these tastings, I learnt



Jackie Bacela, Nondumiso Pikashe and Nomvuyo Xaliphi's Ses'fikile wines are more than just a successful business venture. "This is our response to the call by our president for women to do things for ourselves," says Pikashe (centre).

that wine, being taken in moderation, has class, style and elegance, which is the total opposite of how we, the black community, perceive wine."

Bacela, who says the business partners have been friends since university, had also felt trapped in a dead-end job. Once Pikashe approached her about the company, Bacela's next move was clear: "I was so thrilled. Ses'fikile had really thrown me a lifeline."

Today, each of these women has her favourite wine. For Pikashe, it's Matriarch Shiraz Reserve 2004, "because it represents who we are: strong, powerful women." Xaliphi's favourite is Rainsong Chenin Blanc 2006, "because of its freshness, tropical and guava flavours," she offers. "It's easy drinking and has recently made us proud when it was voted one of the top 10 Chenin for September and October 2006 by the *Sunday Times*."

Finally, Bacela's choice is Folklore Chardonnay 2006. "I find the Chardonnay to be a wine that is full-rounded on the palate, and when you swirl it, you get the aroma of summer fruit combined with floral and citric tones. It's a wine I enjoy on any occasion."

Makro and BEE wine

These ladies, as the isiXhosa name 'Ses'fikile'

suggests, have 'just arrived' on the viticulture scene, but their passion for winemaking is impossible to ignore. It's Makro's aim, in fact, that customers don't ignore the variety of BEE wines on-shelf.

"Makro is one of the leading retailers in SA," says Pikashe, "We are grateful for the confidence shown by them in Ses'fikile, being a new brand and headed by people new in the industry. The support is valued; it encourages us to look forward and it strengthens our sense of business."

"We're working hard to promote these wines," says Carolyn Barton, Makro national wine buyer. The chain is developing signage and promotional ideas to highlight the range of BEE wines in stores.

"The Woodmead store currently has all these wines in prime trading locations," says Barton. "They're stocked in the wooden section intended for premium wines at the front of the store."

Getting a slice of South Africa's world-class wine market is important to all the previously disadvantaged wine producers. Makro is committed to making sure that both its customers and the women of Ses'fikile have something to celebrate. ■