



## Report by Christine Rudman, CWM

There were 148 entries from throughout the winelands, from Cape Agulhas to Northern Cape to Olifantsrivier and points in-between. A large proportion (45%) came from Stellenbosch, Paarl and Robertson – not surprising, if you consider the general distribution of wine producers. Vintages ranged from 2004 to 2012. This participation from such a wide spectrum of Shiraz producers in its first year of

operation bodes well for the future of the competition: it is clearly seen as something serious and meaningful.

All the wines were tasted blind, with no regional or vintage information supplied. The panel was carefully chosen for its wine-tasting ability, knowledge of Shiraz, and to represent a particular aspect of the wine market. It comprised two winemakers, Carl Schultz from Hartenberg and Richard Rowe from the KWV; a sommelier, Miguel Chan; a technical expert, Dr Andy Roediger, and a journalist/wine judge, yours truly. Carl has been making wine at Hartenberg Estate since 1993 has multiple awards to his name, the help of 2 winemakers and with 5 different Shiraz wines in his portfolio, he was well qualified to judge the quality presented in the competition. Similarly, Richard brought a wide experience of Shiraz, not only locally as consulting winemaker to a 5-strong team of KWV winemakers with a range of 4 Shiraz wines plus some blends, but also given his Australian background in Clare Valley and Margaret River.

Mauritius-born Miguel is the group sommelier for the Tsongo Sun Group with 100+ hotels throughout Africa which include 310 restaurants. Andy, a Cape Wine Master and Chairman of the Institute, is a polymer scientist and consults to the South African wine industry on phenolic ripeness. Christine, who chaired the Shiraz panel, is also a Cape Wine Master. Her background is marketing and education (ex-principal of the Cape Wine Academy), and she currently occupies her time with journalism and tasting on panels in South Africa and overseas.

The consensus of the panel after a 3-day tasting, was that the wines generally showed attractive elegance and freshness, good fruit expression, balanced oak and had moved away from the tarry, smoky, very ripe styles that had represented local Shiraz in the past. There was a nice divergence of styles and where Viognier has been used, it was done with restraint, added to the character of the wine. There were relatively few faults, not many over-ripe clumsy styles, high alcohol, over-oaked or wines with brett.

The ratings reflected the generally positive evaluation: 45 of the wines scored 4 stars or more, and if you include the 3 and 3½ star wines, fully 114 or 77% were regarded as 'good', 'very good', 'excellent' or 'outstanding'. A very impressive result.

Finally, here are a few observations made over the 3 days. Richard was concerned about high pHs giving an artificial sense of sweetness and affecting the colour; he would have liked more purple and greater depth of colour. All the tasters found less peppery styles than they expected, thought it was an attractive characteristic the wines lacked. Andy thought there were still too many over-ripe wines, a fault that's easy to address.

