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'Judgement of Harris' pits South Africans against Californians
May 25, 2007



Adam Lechmere

The obsession with comparative tastings shows no sign of letting up, with the South Africans holding their own 'Judgement of Paris' tomorrow.

This time it's the Californians versus the South Africans instead of Bordeaux, and it's in Harrisburg in Pennsylvania – not Paris. And if it's taken in the spirit of lighthearted rivalry, there's no doubting the seriousness of the wines on show.

The occasion, this Saturday, is a taste-off between six cult Napa wines and eight top South Africans, introduced by veteran Californian winemaker Zelma Long, who makes Vilafonte in the Paarl appellation of the Western Cape in South Africa.

The Californian wines are a roll call of some of the most expensive – and often notorious – bottles in the world: Bryant Family, Colgin Cellars, Screaming Eagle, Dalla Valle Maya, Harlan Estate and Araujo.

In the South African corner are Long's own Vilafonte, Ernie Els, De Trafford Elevation 393, Boekenhoutskloof Cabernet Sauvignon, Anwilka, Sadie Family Columella, Warwick Trilog and De Toren Fusion V.

All the wines are highly rated, with the one major difference being the price tags. In 2005, for example, **decanter.com** reported the new £30-40 Vilafonte wines as among the first South African 'icon' wines. Then, they were some of the most expensive wines the country produced.

The Californians, meanwhile, weigh in at slightly more. Bottles of the the Screaming Eagle 2004 are changing hands for around US\$1000, the Dalla Valle Maya 2002 and the Colgin Cabernets are cheaper at around US\$400, and the Araujo Cabernet can be less than US\$100 depending on the vintage.

The wines will be tasted blind by panels made up of local and national wine experts.

The wines have been chosen on the basis of good reviews and points earned, Mike Ratcliffe of Warwick Estate, which produces the Trilog, told **decanter.com**.

Ratcliffe is also one third of the joint venture with Long and her husband Phil Freese, which produces Vilafonte.

'As it takes place in Harrisburg, it's the Judgement of Harris,' he added.

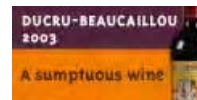
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