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South African Jam Jar hits US sweet spot

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Cape Classics has released Jam Jar Sweet Shiraz 2009 nationally in the USA and this unique semi-sweet red wine has literally hit the American consumer's sweet spot. Now this ground-breaking phenomenon has been unleashed on South African taste buds.

Jam Jar, made from grapes grown in the Paarl region, is unapologetically accessible and populist. Its evocative packaging has a nostalgic "retro" feel with a red and white checkered screwcap, inspired by traditional jam jar lids.

The unique recipe is working and the wine is "selling like wildfire" in the USA. The wine has been launched in South Africa and is available through Pick 'n Pay, says Andre Shearer, the South African-born founder and CEO of Cape Classics.

"We have never had the luxury of releasing a wine that has depleted such a significant case volume in its first month of release, even though it only had a limited release in certain US markets to start. We even had people ordering the wine untasted, based on the name, packaging and style description alone. This is testament to a market need, as well as great packaging and marketing," Shearer said.

Outlets that have ordered the wine in the USA include several independent wine retailers and major restaurant chains, as well as HEB which is a \$12 billion privately held grocery chain in Texas. The suggested retail price in the USA is a modest \$11.99 per bottle.

Locally, Jam Jar is available exclusively through Pick 'n Pay (initially in the Western Cape, but with national distribution to follow) and retails for R39.99. "Pick 'n Pay has made a solid opening order, which displays faith in the capacity of the brand," Shearer says.

Jam Jar is crafted in a lighter style than a typical Shiraz, and strikes a balance between sweetness and acidity, making it a refreshing aperitif as well as a versatile partner for both savory foods and desserts. The wine is punted as "sweet perfection...simple, pure and honest!"

Jam Jar differs from traditional sweet or dessert red wines like Muscadell in that the sugar levels are much lower (about 50 g/l). Also, unlike most dessert wines, the grapes are not late harvested nor do they undergo botrytis. Texturally, the wine is lighter in style than most dessert wines.

Shiraz grapes were an obvious choice for this unique wine. "Shiraz has such a fruity intensity and lends itself to richness and fun. It is also a very well known varietal in the USA, due to the massive Australian marketing machine," Shearer says.

The target market is people who are new to wine, as well as existing wine drinkers looking to expand their horizons. "Many people talk dry and love something much less dry. Jam Jar appears sweet at first but finishes very smoothly and richly. Both Cape Classics and Pick 'n Pay believe that the style of product is unique, the packaging brilliant and the prices excellent for the great quality," Shearer says.

Wine consumption generally has a snob-value, but that has not been a factor in the USA and Cape Classics does not believe it will negatively impact on South African sales of this accessible wine.

"Jam Jar was born out of the realisation that there were not a lot of options available to consumers seeking quality sweet red wine. This fresh, fruity, semi-sweet Shiraz aims to fill that void," Shearer says. "One taste is all it takes! Thankfully, snob value has not been in any way an association for this brand. It is a truly people-centric brand."

Established by CEO André Shearer in 1991, Cape Classics is the preeminent importer of South African wine into the USA, proudly representing 18 of the Cape's finest estates and labels. Nearly 25% of all bottled wine from South Africa available in the US bears the Cape Classics seal. Visit www.capeclassics.com or email info@capeclassics.com for more information.