



Praisie Dlamini from HER Wines.



Ntsiki Biyela from Aslina Wines.

RAISE A GLASS TO WOMEN IN WINE

Meet two Boland winemakers who are making waves in the industry. By Hilary Biller & Sanet Oberholzer

HER WINES

Praisie Dlamini, general manager and winemaker

HER Wines, based in Wellington, is represented by young black women who work in the industry and is led by Praisie Dlamini, who saw a gap in the market for an all-female, all-black business offering a brand women could be proud of.

“We pride ourselves on sourcing the best grapes from local vineyards as it gives us control over the complexity and depth in flavour in each collection, satisfying the avid local wine buyer,” says Dlamini.

Supporting the local economy has been a core part of HER Wines, whose mission is to give back to the community. The team has pledged to contribute 2% of profits to a scholarship fund that enables talented and driven individuals to achieve their dreams through the HER Wine Collection Bursary. The first two students to receive funding have started their journey and will be mentored by the team.

“We are a group of trailblazers, growing a business in uncharted territory. We’re passionate about investing in more young women who will be pioneers in their own fields, while they inspire others to reach higher and wider,” says Dlamini.

When did HER Wines start?

In late 2020. More than two years later we are in awe of how the brand has been received. We have maintained steady growth but, more importantly, expanded our reach beyond the Cape winelands to the global market. We have used wine platforms to tell our story of going against the odds and entering the spaces that were historically not where you’d find women, let alone those of colour.

What wine did you enjoy with your dinner last night?

I enjoyed our HER Shiraz 2022 vintage with a hearty beef stew, a great duo for a chilly evening.

What made you embark on this wine journey?

I was fortunate to receive a bursary to study any profession in agriculture. I was fascinated by winemaking after seeing students in the cellar making wine, so oenology, the study of wine and winemaking, was my pick.

Ups and downs on this journey?

I wouldn’t say anything has been disastrous, but it has been a journey not for the faint-hearted. Every day it takes remembering the why rather than what you get out. Most importantly, the goal that’s outlined by the vision is leaving a legacy by impacting and inspiring others.

As a woman in a male-dominated industry, how have you succeeded and what do you believe is your winning edge?

Our team is all-female, with eight of us working together to create HER Wines. Teamwork and discipline allow us to create a network that can provide support and assistance – and working alongside a group of women with similar goals and ambitions has been our path to success.

What tips do you have for young women wanting to venture into the industry?

I would tell her to follow her passion because the wine industry is diversified, to train to establish a solid foundation of knowledge, to attend wine tastings and wine clubs, and to understand wine-related terminologies. Seek out mentorship and be dedicated to your craft.

What varietals do you produce and how does each work with different food?

We produce four varietals: two white wines and two reds which are easy-drinking, crowd-pleasers. Our sauvignon blanc pairs well with grilled fish dishes or crunchy salads, and is a refreshing summer drink. Our chenin blanc goes well with any white meat. I particularly enjoy it with a chicken platter. And for the red there’s a pinotage which is amazing with spicy dishes like curries and even a cheese platter. The shiraz is a good, easy-drinking wine and goes well with red-meat stews.

What’s next on your wine journey?

There’s a lot that we still want to achieve as a team and business, including expanding our bursary offering to more young people and growing our brand in many parts of the world.

If you could choose your last meal, what would it be? What wine would you enjoy with it?

I love oxtail curry, so that would be my choice of last meal. It wouldn’t be complete without HER Shiraz as the perfect accompaniment.



ASLINA WINES

Ntsiki Biyela, winemaker and director

Almost 20 years ago, Ntsiki Biyela made history when she became South Africa’s first black woman winemaker. She grew up in Mahlabathini, a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal, and spent a year working as a domestic worker before her fortunes changed and she was awarded a scholarship to study winemaking by South African Airways.

After graduating, she worked as a winemaker for Stellegaya Wines in 2004. Twelve years later, she took the plunge and started Aslina Wines, named after her grandmother, in Stellenbosch.

Apart from the long list of accolades her wines have received, Biyela was voted South African Woman Winemaker of the Year in 2009, was listed as one of the Most Innovative Women in Food and Drink by Fortune’s Food & Wine in 2017, received the Diversity and Transformation Award at the 2021 Wine Harvest Commemorative Event and was named one of Food&Wine’s Drinks Innovators of the Year for 2023.

She also gives back by sitting on the board of directors of the Pinotage Youth Development Academy, which prepares young South Africans for work in the wine and tourism industries.

Did you start making wine immediately after your studies?

Wine was a foreign thing and when you’re studying something that is foreign it is important that you try to figure out what is it. So I got a job, part-time, to work at Delheim Wines to learn about what I was studying and I got excited about it. That was the reason I continued with my course through the difficulties I was going through, which were based on the environment and language barrier.

As a woman in an industry dominated by men, how have you succeeded and what do you believe is your winning edge?

It’s been important to know that the men I’m working with are my colleagues and because they are my colleagues, I can ask them stuff and they ask me stuff. A friend used to say: “See and be seen.” When I started, I made sure to go to seminars, meet new people. It’s been about building relationships.

What tips would you share with young women wanting to venture into the wine industry?

It’s important, irrespective of which field you want to go into, to make sure you understand what the field is about. It mustn’t be money orientated because then you are going to struggle. It’s important to know the ins and outs of the sector, understand it, but also go in with an open mind of learning from people.

What was a high for you in this journey?

Starting Aslina Wines has been the high and it’s an everyday high because we’re growing – we now have a tasting room which we are opening in September. So it’s been the most amazing, humbling moment to say we are finally going to have a home for the tasting, while we are working at having a production facility.

Tell us about your wine. Where did it start and where you are today?

We started with four wines: sauvignon blanc, chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon and a red blend called Umsasane. In 2021 we introduced a skin-fermented white wine, which is our chenin blanc, and at the end of that year we introduced the MCC, which is named after my mom.

What dishes pair well with your wines?

I love my pap, my traditional food. I love dumplings and oxtail and chicken curry because my grandmother loved chicken curry using masala. When I make that, I’ll have it with the sauvignon blanc or chardonnay. I enjoy the cabernet sauvignon with pap or dumplings. If I’m making an oxtail or lamb stew, then I do Umsasane. Although Umsasane is one of those wines that when I open it, I ask myself: “Why do I deserve it?” because I feel it’s a wine for celebration. The MCC is also a wine of celebration. If I could, I’d open it most of the time and just celebrate anything.

What wine did you most recently enjoy with dinner?

I opened a bottle of the skin-fermented chenin blanc with soup that had a bit of spice to it, so it brings out a lot of sweetness in the wine. When you taste the wine, it’s almost got a dryness because of the tannins, but when I had it with the soup, there was this sweetness, so it brought out the fruit.

