

# THE MAKING OF A MODERN WINEMAKER

*Marnich Aucamp is the  
2025 Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year*

This year's Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year trophy has found a deserving owner in Marnich Aucamp, assistant winemaker at Stellenbosch Vineyards. His winning wine, the Credo Chenin Blanc 2024, served as both a statement of his talent and ambition. It was this expression of Chenin Blanc that secured him the 2025 award in the White Wine category.

Marnich Aucamp's journey to the cellar has been somewhat unconventional. Born in Benoni, he spent two years in Somerset West before relocating to Arusha, Tanzania, with his family. From grade eight onward, he boarded near Durban while still living in Tanzania. After matriculating, he initially embarked on a BA in Sport Science at Stellenbosch. It was only after a working gap year – during which he turned his hand to his first harvest, then crossed to the United States to work on a carnival circuit to save up – that he enrolled for a B.Agric in Cellar Technology at Elsenburg.

It was during that first harvest, with zero prior winemaking background, that he discovered a different direction. "When I did my first harvest ... it was the passion and knowledge that Riandri Visser and Adriaan Jacobs had that just rubbed off, and it just snow-balled from there, and I haven't looked back since," Aucamp reflects.

What marks the pivot is that Aucamp realised early on that office work wasn't for him: "I always knew that I am not a person who can sit in an office the whole time and much prefer being outside." With that clarity, he embraced the vineyard-to-bottle process and began to carve his path in winemaking.

This win is significant because



Aucamp was previously nominated as a finalist in the Young Winemaker of the Year category, underscoring the steady progress he has made. His repeated recognition demonstrates both his persistence and the industry's confidence in his talents.

## THE WINNER'S WINE: CREDO CHENIN BLANC 2024

While Aucamp submitted two finalist wines in this year's competition, it was the Credo Chenin Blanc 2024 that



sealed his triumph. His second entry, Credo Chenin Blanc Verdelho Viognier 2024, also made the shortlist but played a supporting role in this story.

In his own words, he describes the Chenin Blanc as “an expression of the cultivar in the sense that it is a relatively big wine but still elegant. The wine is matured in French oak barrels, where only the select few are chosen to make the final bottling. What we look for is beautiful maturation from the barrels, but also not being overpowered by the

wood; we don’t want you to feel like you are biting into the barrel itself. This allows us to still showcase how great Chenin Blanc is as a varietal.”

He further notes that the wine is “well structured, bursting with flavour and has a lovely, almost sweet finish that makes it also great to pair with pasta, curries.” That description speaks to a wine with personality, precision and a sense of place.

#### **WHAT LIES BEHIND THE BOTTLE**

Aucamp highlights that the most

rewarding part of his job is two-fold. First, “getting the wine in the bottle and enjoying” it; and second, “the people. It’s the stories and getting to know everyone that play a vital role in the process. There are so many people involved throughout the process, no matter how big or small the cellar is. It’s a culmination of so many people’s hard work and dedication.”

By emphasising this collaborative dimension, Aucamp shows a maturity beyond his years: he fully acknowledges

that his achievement is grounded in a team, a vineyard, and the infrastructure of Stellenbosch Vineyards.

His proudest moment to date? "There have been a few very significant moments, but definitely one that still stands out the most is having my first wine bottled, that feeling of having it in the bottle and knowing all the hard work from everyone involved is finally put together in a bottle and to be enjoyed."

#### **A VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Looking ahead, Aucamp is both ambitious and grounded: "To make wines that are of a very high standard and enjoyable by everyone and not just wine lovers. But also to keep learning as I think there is so much to learn about wine as it is always evolving and bringing new challenges..."

That humility combined with ambition positions him well not just to build a career, but to contribute meaningfully to the narrative of South African white wines – especially in the premium Chenin Blanc space.







### WHY THIS WIN MATTERS

The Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year award is now in its 25th iteration, with the 2025 category focused on White Wines. The competition emphasises the winemaker behind the bottle rather than the bottle alone, acknowledging creativity, skill and vision. Finalists competed among an increased field of entries as the organisers recorded a high level of interest this year. (In fact, this year's nomination list confirmed Aucamp's two entries.)

In this context, Aucamp's win is not just personal – it is symbolic. It tells the story of a new generation of South African winemakers who combine technical training (B.Agric Cellar Technology) with real-world experience and an empathetic understanding of the broader team behind every vintage. His work exemplifies a vibrant, forward-looking South African wine industry.

From Benoni to Arusha, from boarding school in KwaZulu-Natal to harvest hands-on in Stellenbosch vineyards, Aucamp's path has been anything but linear. It is precisely that breadth of experience – including sports science, international work experience, and academic cellar sciences – that informs his approach.

Now, as the winner of the 2025 Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year award, he enters a chapter where expectation meets opportunity. The Credo Chenin Blanc 2024 provides a platform, the win offers validation, and the future will demand evolution.

For wine lovers keen to follow a rising star, keep an eye on Aucamp's next vintages – and on Stellenbosch Vineyards' Credo label. It's a story of craft, of place, and of a winemaker who knows that wine is at once personal, communal, and deeply rooted in terroir. 🍷