

Idiom unveils its new mountain-top Helderberg winelands destination - Cape Business News

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A Sensory Experience

Toasting ten vintages of award-winning Idiom wines, the Bottega family is embarking on a new sensory adventure with the unveiling of an inspiring venue located at the top of their mountain vineyards on the outskirts of Somerset West near Sir Lowry's Pass.

The new Idiom Restaurant & Wine Tasting Centre flaunts unique, panoramic views of the majestic Helderberg basin and the full expanse of the Cape Peninsula, from Table Mountain to Cape Point, with False Bay glistening in the foreground.

Cementing the family's decade of Idiom wine excellence, this new attraction invites the visitor to experience the true home of Idiom wines, where majestic granite mountains, rolling hills covered in fynbos, the proximity of the cool Atlantic Ocean and windswept, low-yielding vineyards all combine to define the terroir. All the grapes used in the Idiom range are grown on this unique property.

The building, masterfully designed by architect Thomas Leach in close partnership with Idiom owner Alberto Bottega and his son, Roberto, mirrors South Africa's unique positioning in the world of wine; a composition of New World modernism on a base of Old World support.

"It fuses Old World, classically-styled Roman arches and stone porticos with a New World timber

pavilion and concrete wine tasting cube to impart a contemporary yet timeless feel,” explains Thomas.

Roberto expresses his vision: “The concept at Idiom was to achieve a dialogue between the modern and traditional, bringing together our family’s South African and Italian heritage. The arched porticos and stone viewing tower offer subtle reminders of our Italian heritage while

the concrete, glass and timber structure reflect our South African roots. The fusion of styles means that the building constantly surprises and looks different from every angle.”

The dramatic structure bears witness to the character of Idiom Wines and brings multiple aspects of the terroir into the space. It is a modern metaphor that salutes the outdoors with 360 degree views and the various natural aspects of the rolling vineyards and mountains blend into the space like art or a great wine.

The self-supporting arches, made from local stone quarried on the farm, and the signature solid wooden posts and beams, which have been masterfully cut from selected alien Eucalyptus Cladycalyx (Bluegum) trees, preserve a harmony with nature and the immediate environment. The building co-exists within the natural fynbos biosphere, with a consistent colour palette that reflects the mountain setting with rich, earthy tones of stone and wood.

The combination of grey concrete slabs and granite rocks, showcase the positive synergy arising from the technical precision of man and the warm hand of nature in the structure built by Giuricich Construction, a firm of local builders also originally hailing from the North-Eastern Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, where Alberto Bottega spent his childhood years before coming to South Africa.

The venue, which opens its doors in June 2016, will offer fusion dishes of South African and Italian cuisine with a modern twist, all tuned to pair with the extensive Idiom wine offering.

Guests will be able to embark on virtual degustation tours of the great wine regions of the world, all cleverly expressed in a Cape Idiom, while taking in the arresting architecture and views. The exclusive 60-seater dining space is linked to Idiom’s concrete wine tasting ‘cube’ where wine lovers can sample and purchase the flagship Idiom blends, the signature Idiom Italian varietal wines and apply for an allocation of the Limited Release Idiom 900 Series. A luxury goods space featuring Idiom’s rare wine-inspired perfumes, exotic leather handbags and other must-have accessories will also be incorporated into the space.

The restaurant will offer a seasonal a la carte menu and one of the features will be the multi-course degustation menus which will be available only by prior booking. Walk-in wine tasters will be able to choose from the lighter canapé and wine pairing selections. For larger tasting groups, a booking is also recommended.

The venue also has a more casual, terraced outdoor seating area perfect for family-friendly weekend gatherings. A Deli menu featuring prosciutto platters, salumi and other charcuterie as well as gourmet pizzas, pastas and salads will soon be added to the offering.

In the warmer summer months, guests will be able to order a picnic basket from the Deli to enjoy under the thatch-covered 'lapas' on the pine-covered 'koppie' adjoining the venue, where an unspoilt backdrop of indigenous fynbos, rolling vineyards and ocean vistas will have an immediate calming effect for those needing to escape the rigours of city life.

The Deli section is expected to open this spring along with an Italian Wine Experience area that will showcase the family's Vinotria.co.za imported Italian wine project in addition to their locally produced Idiom Collection of wines and will be aimed at increasing the local public's awareness of Italian varieties and wines.

A setting that saturates all senses

For ardent explorers and those seeking hidden gems in the Helderberg winelands, Da Capo Vineyards, the home of Idiom Wines, located in the southernmost part of the Stellenbosch wine region, near Sir Lowry's Pass, offers dramatic height and vistas.

The vineyards were first laid down by the Bottega Family in 1999. The slopes vary in height from 200 to 350 metres above sea level and have aspects which face north, west and south. This results in several micro-terroirs and well drained lean soils which add intensity, complexity and character to the wines. The soils contain decomposed granite, which is relatively shallow and stony in patches, with a clay base.

The 150 hectare Da Capo Vineyards property now has 40 hectares under vine and includes a selection of Italian varieties, including Sangiovese, Barbera, Nebbiolo and Primitivo that reflect the Bottega Family heritage. Current plantings total 17 different grape varieties. Recent additions of Spanish varieties make Idiom a unique venue and opportunity to compare the Cape versions of the grand wines of France, Italy and Spain in a single location.

Ten years of memorable experiences

Alberto Bottega, patriarch of the Bottega Family Wine Portfolio, recalls some of the more memorable moments of the last ten years.

"When we first started, we didn't know too many people in the industry and were looking for a consultant to guide us. We were hoping that a certain world famous winemaker would give us a hand. Initially he was not that keen, but a tasting of our maiden release of Sangiovese gave him goosebumps and since then he's always been available.

A year or two later, a client made a beeline for us at a wine show in Johannesburg to tell us how a tasting of our Idiom Viognier had caused him to have 'a near religious experience' which left us without words, and we have heard many 'wow's when customers experience our explosive Zinfandel for the first time.

Numerous comments like these and international and top local awards such Decanter UK's Regional Trophy for our Idiom Bordeaux Blend as well as a recent Top 5 SA ranking for our Idiom Cape Blend from the Pinotage Association have made it impossible not to provide a tasting venue for our clients

which mirrors both the quality of the wines and the beauty of the local terroir.”

A 5 star team to head up idiom wines' new venue

The GM;

Idiom has at its helm a 5 star team who have joined from various luxury properties.

Hamish Hofmeyr, working closely with the owner Alberto Bottega, son Roberto and daughter Silvana, leads the new venue as General Manager after an eight year stint as GM of The Marine in Hermanus, where he managed two restaurants and the Relais & Châteaux boutique hotel.

“In a way, the opportunity to work at Idiom was a chance to be part of a dynamic new team and return to my passion for nature at this idyllic setting, where we aspire to coax and challenge the senses and provide guests with a 5 star experience in the Winelands”, shares Hamish.

The chef

Irwin de Vries joined Idiom from 5 star properties with fine dining pedigree in Morukuru’s AtholPlace in Johannesburg and Sir Richard Branson’s Ulusaba Private Game Reserve in the Sabi Sand Reserve.

He was selected to work closely with Silvana to realise a clear vision for the Idiom sensory and visual dining experience they wish to create with each plate.

“My passion for deconstructing the elements of scent and flavour in wine for guests not only sparked the development of a wine perfume and inspired me to pursue studies in perfume, but it also helped to cement my choice in the chef who would be taking forward my vision of the sensory and visual experience that personifies the expressive nature of Idiom,” explains Silvana.

Irwin is a culinary artist who uses the plate as his canvas and has been tasked with creating food that in true Idiom style is creatively expressive; pairs well with wine, and equally challenges the senses.

The Idiom Wine Tasting Centre

- Open from 10am to 5pm daily.
- The Idiom Restaurant
- Open from 10am to 5pm (Wednesday to Sunday)