



Youngest Master Distiller in the World

Youngest Master Distiller at age 25, Benedikt Blomendahl of Blomendahl Distillery is now managing the family business in both South Africa and Germany.

edited by Anne Schaffer | photographs supplied

Last year, 25-year-old Benedikt Blomendahl of Blomendahl Distillery achieved the distinction of being the youngest Master Distiller ever to pass through the doors of the esteemed Chartered Institute of Brewing and Distilling (CIBD) in the UK. Two years earlier, he had emerged as the top student for the Diploma in Distilling, CIBD being one of the most accredited and established institutions of its kind worldwide.

For Benedikt, “distilling has been what I love and always dreamed of doing. As soon as I could walk, I was walking around my dad’s distillery, helping him put caps on the bottles. When we moved to South Africa in 2003, I was foot-stomping grapes in my dad’s cellar.” Spending his formative years in the distillery with his father, Franz, was not only where Benedikt learned a great deal but also where he built up the confidence to take bold steps in their multinational business.

In 2009, the Blomendahls set up a 1,000L pot still in Cape Town, South Africa. As soon as Benedikt completed his matric, he began developing new brands and launched the Blomendahl Spirit Range: “My dad, a qualified Wine Engineer and Master Distiller who has been distilling since 1982, was my biggest inspiration and role model, and I always had the most fun when I was around him in the cellar.” Once he turned 18, Benedikt could finally distil his own gin, whisky, brandy, rum and other spirits. In 2019, a few of his gin recipes received double gold awards, and one even a platinum award, at the Michelangelo International Wine and Spirits Awards.

Benedikt completed his initial distilling certificate in 2020 in South Africa, but he wasn’t going to stop there. “It was always important to cover both aspects - the distilling and the business side - so in February 2025, I wrote my final exam for the Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) through CIMA.” Benedikt also studied for his Bachelor of Commerce part-time: “I did this alongside all my studies thereafter so I could still focus on the distillery and get practical experience.”

Today, as his dad passes the baton to him to manage the German and South African distilleries — with ongoing advice whenever needed — Benedikt oversees everything from production, distilling and distribution to finance and accounting. “My current role is very broad, as is generally



the case in a small to medium family-run business. In essence, we help people start their own brands of spirits and also set up distilleries,” he explains. “My goal is to build up our various spirit brands into recognisable, well-established names, and to help others looking to set up their own distillery by offering training and equipment to fulfil their dream.”

One of his most satisfying projects last year? “We sold a full distillery setup to an entrepreneur in Ghana, which I subsequently set up by myself there. I offered training to the client so they’d be able to operate it and distil good-quality local vodka and gin.” Benedikt designed the still components, had them manufactured, assembled them in South Africa to ensure everything was perfect, and then travelled to Ghana to complete the installation. He laughs, “I also developed a few gin recipes for them which integrate local botanicals and fruit.”

For Benedikt, now Director and Distiller at Blomendahl, the journey is deeply rooted in family: “My dad Franz is my biggest inspiration and role model. If I need advice, he’s always there, and I consider myself enormously fortunate to have his support and depth of skills always at my side.”

And the benefits of his Master Distiller qualification? “For one thing, it’s helped expand the business by acquiring new customers who want and value a qualified producer.”