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Michelangelo
International
Wine & Spirits Awards



Blomendahl Craft Vodka is among the best in the world

Blomendahl, an artisanal distillery and winery in Elgin, snatched up Best Vodka Trophy at the prestigious 2019 Michelangelo Awards. The Blomendahl father and son team attributes much of their success to the perfect handshake between the first class produce of the Cape and the German distilling tradition

Edited by **Anne Schaffer**

Photographs by **Blomendahl Vineyards**

Blomendahl – and the farm, Basco – is the home of Franz and Benedikt Blomendahl, a family with a deep European farming heritage which goes back to the 1200s. In 2003, Franz came out to South Africa, and founded Blomendahl Vineyards in the coolness of Elgin in the Cape. The farm, Basco, is the smallest wine farm in South Africa, named after their late Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Success was no surprise really, because Franz had begun his distilling career as a young child in Europe, watching his grandfather honing the craft.

Franz's son Benedikt, too, was raised in a similar fashion: "The cellar and distillery was my favourite playground, and at age three, I was helping with production by putting the screw caps on bottles."

When master distiller and wine maker Franz began Blomendahl Vineyards, he focussed on producing excellent wine, and achieved just that. By age 6, son Benedikt had his first foot stomping, a year later – together with his dad – made his own barrel of wine, and the following year, bottled his first bottle of wine: T-Rex.

Clearly like father like son.

Franz, a highly qualified wine engineer and distiller, has over 35 years of diverse experience in the international wine and spirit industry. He began selling wine when he was 18, and has trained sommeliers around Europe. There are very few corners of this industry into which he hasn't delved and experimented, and after five years





of producing wine in the Cape, Franz added a 1000L still and began making Grappa and Brandy. Benedikt wasn't far behind him, learning and experimenting with his own wines, spirits and flavours. In 2017 Benedikt produced 3 barrels of Shiraz and in early 2018, he completed a two-year development of the Blomendahl Apple Liqueur, produced and bottled it, and received a Michelangelo Silver Award for it. He also created and distilled various Gin recipes since 2017 and received multiple awards including the 2019 Michelangelo Platinum Award for his Botanical Gin. Benedikt also distilled many other spirits including Brandy, Whisky, Grappa and Rum.

Blomendahl differentiates itself from other distillers in that they make their own spirits from scratch: "We're one of the few distilleries globally, which uses grapes as the base for our spirits," says Benedikt. Franz and Benedikt are determined to produce the highest quality Gin, Vodka and other spirits from their wines by triple distilling them to make the base neutral spirit. They use this base spirit to handcraft the various products.

The farm Basco has a wonderful asset in its natural spring, and clean, fresh mineral water is part and parcel of every one of the spirits produced by Blomendahl.

The distillery is fitted with a custom Kothe copper pot still to ensure the distillate for the spirits is of a very high quality. The shape of the pot still causes a continuous heating and a low rate of foam.

Whether it's ingredients, methods or tools, father and son won't compromise – everything is absolutely first rate.

Having made his own wine and distilled his own spirits at the age of 18, Benedikt Blomendahl is the youngest distiller and winemaker not only in South Africa, but globally.

He's certainly the youngest ever to receive a Michelangelo Trophy.

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Visits to the distillery and tastings can be arranged by appointment.