



A Winter Wonderland

SLOWING DOWN IN THE CEDERBERG



An Exciting New Chapter

NEW WINEMAKER, MIKA ENGELBRECHT

And boom! Just like that a bundle of fresh energy arrived to join the cellar team in the compact form of Mika Engelbrecht, who officially became part of the Cederberg Wines team as winemaker in mid-May. She's already settling in well and making her presence felt in the cellar. Recognised as one of South Africa's most exciting young winemaking talents, Mika was named Diners Club Young Winemaker of the Year in 2024, cementing her reputation as one of the industry's rising stars. She brings with her an impressive combination of technical expertise, international harvest experience, innovation, and a deep passion for terroir-driven wines.

A Stellenbosch University graduate with a BScAgric in Viticulture and Oenology, Mika began her career with internships and harvests at respected producers, including Rupert & Rothschild Vignerons, Benguela Cove, Domaine Wachau in Austria, and Mas Belles Eaux in France. She later joined Neethlingshof Estate, where she progressed from assistant winemaker to winemaker, earning international recognition for producing award-winning wines.

Known for her enthusiasm for sustainability, and expressing a strong sense of place through wine, Mika's philosophy aligns naturally with the Cederberg approach to winemaking. In a 2024 profile, she described terroir as "a fingerprint" that shapes wines unique to their origin, and spoke passionately about the future of sustainable and precision-driven viticulture.

"I am absolutely thrilled by this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and incredibly privileged to begin a new chapter at the Cederberg cellar. It is an unbelievable opportunity to live out my passion, and I am tremendously excited to explore the new terroirs and cultivars of this unique wine region. I look forward to the growth and adventure that lies ahead." - Mika Engelbrecht

Entering the challenging US wine market

Despite the implementation of tariffs, Cederberg Wines is experiencing strong growth in the US market through its partnership with HB Wine Merchants. For David Nieuwoudt, the challenges of entering such a competitive market became an opportunity — driven by his trademark optimism and determination.

HB Wine Merchants, owned by Mike Riego, is an independent US importer and distributor representing more than 60 international winemakers, with a strong focus on family-owned vineyards and quality-driven producers. Reflecting on their first meeting, David recalls an immediate connection. “When I met Mike Riego from HB Wine Merchants, I flew up to go see him, and he drove two hours to come meet me. Within half an hour we clicked incredibly well,” he says.



Mike quickly recognised the potential of the partnership and asked David: “Can I represent Cederberg Wines across the whole of the US?” What followed confirmed David’s confidence in the relationship. “What’s really great about him is that he took seven days out of his time, as the owner of HB Wines, to travel with me. And he doesn’t take no for an answer,” David explains. “He’s passionate about selling wine — he’s a real wine guy, someone who understands family and understands quality. He doesn’t just sell wine; he really understands the essence of wine.”

David also deeply admires Mike’s relentless work ethic. “What I really, really enjoy is that he’s an even harder operator than I am. I thought I knew about travelling until I met Mike Riego. Now I understand — he doesn’t take rest days.” Securing distribution in the US market is no small achievement, particularly at a time when many South African wineries are struggling to maintain representation. “It’s quite difficult at the moment to secure distribution in a market where many South African wineries are almost being dropped. So, to get into — for example — a California distributor now is actually very impressive and exciting,” says David.

Rather than pursuing rapid expansion, Cederberg Wines has adopted a focused, relationship-driven strategy. “You shouldn’t try to sell everywhere. Only sell in places where you know you can visit all your distributors once a year. Everyone goes to America and wants to be everywhere, but rather choose a few good states, good restaurants, and maintain a strong wine focus.”

This measured approach is already delivering results. Together with HB Wine Merchants, Cederberg Wines has successfully secured new distribution in California, Arizona and Michigan.

“So, that’s our strategy, and at the moment it’s going very well,” David concludes. “Working with HB Wine Merchants is a huge privilege for our team!”

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Meet Sandy Harper.

The taste buds behind our tasting notes and food pairings.

Behind the tasting notes and carefully curated food pairings for Cederberg Wines and Ghost Corner is respected Cape Wine Master, international wine judge, educator, and wine communicator Sandy Harper. Few wine regions in South Africa capture a sense of rugged authenticity quite like the Cederberg, and for Sandy, her relationship with Cederberg Wines has become one of the most enduring and rewarding chapters of her wine journey.

“Over many years, I have had the privilege of watching this remarkable estate evolve while remaining steadfastly true to its mountain identity, pioneering spirit, and commitment to quality,” says Sandy. Having tasted wines from many of the world’s great wine regions, Sandy believes there is something unmistakably distinctive about Cederberg Wines. “There is an energy, a clarity, purity, and sense of place that speaks directly of mountain air, ancient soils, and extreme growing conditions,” she explains.

“What began as a simple request from David to taste a few wines and share feedback has since evolved into a regular



feature where I write the tasting and food pairing notes for Cederberg and Ghost Corner wines,” says Sandy. “This unique opportunity affords me an independent voice to share my thoughts on the wines and also point out stylistic changes, interesting seasonal influences, and delicious food pairing options which may be of interest to Cederberg consumers.”

Sandy says what she admires most about Cederberg Wines is the continuity of vision carried by the Nieuwoudt family across generations and the unmistakable spirit of place found in the wines. “For many of us who have followed its journey closely, Cederberg represents a benchmark of consistency, independence, and quiet excellence — a true South African original.”



Winter in the Vineyards

While Dwarsrivier, home to Cederberg Wines, is blessed with an abundance of clean air and pure water, the farm relies on winter snow for water for the rest of the year. All of the farm’s water, except that used for Sanddrif Holiday Resort’s irrigation system, comes from free-running springs that feed the Dwars River. The area is exceptionally unpolluted, and this pure environment results in healthy grapes with a disease and virus-free status. “We have used no herbicides or

pesticides for the past six years,” says viticulturist Dirk de Bruyn proudly. “We are farming with nature within the Cederberg specifically, not fighting against it.” This is evident in their use of biological pest management and the reintroduction of fynbos corridors to the vineyards.

Cederberg Wines boasts a cool continental climate driven by its high-altitude situation at 1,036m (with peaks up to 2,026m nearby). These vineyards, among the highest in the Western Cape, benefit from cooler air, with dramatic diurnal temperature shifts. In winter, vineyards benefit from day temperatures of between 10 – 12°C that more often than not drop below -5°C at night. Winters are cold and wet, often with snow-capped mountains and occasionally even snow in the highest lying vineyards, allowing for vines to become fully dormant. This climatic advantage allows for slow ripening, high natural acidity, and concentrated, virus-free grapes, resulting in premium wines. White wines develop vibrant fruit with crisp acids, while red wines display a unique elegance and spice, particularly on the Shiraz.