

Winners of second SA Brandy Innovation Challenge announced

Hospitality entrepreneur Gary Knoetze, 'artist' Mondli Kunene and distiller Ronaldo Fourie were named the triumphant brand pioneers in the second [South African Brandy Innovation Challenge](#). They each win R50,000 and the opportunity for mentorship from industry specialists.



Winners Gary Knoetze and Ronaldo Fourie with Christelle Reade-Jahn, director of the South African Brandy Foundation. Source: Supplied

Organised by the South African Brandy Foundation and Winetech (Wine Industry Network of Expertise and Technology), the annual South African Brandy Innovation Challenge calls on innovative thinkers to submit game-changing brandy business ideas.

The concepts that caught the judges' attention addressed the 2022 Innovation Challenge from diverse perspectives. Knoetze took a top spot with his brandy sour ready mix cocktail, while Kunene merged South African brandy with fine art, and Fourie created a Private Barrel Club concept that could be used by distilleries as a promotional tool, and individuals or groups of friends keen on making their own brandy.

"We were really excited to see bold entries that pushed the envelope. Considering the members of the judges panel, the ideas made for much lively discussion before the winners were decided," says South African Brandy Foundation director Christelle Reade-Jahn.



'Artist' winner Mondli Kunene. Source: Supplied

2022 event changes

A new judge co-opted this year was Simone Musgrave, a known disruptor and spirits industry strategist. Another tweak to the 2022 event required the panel to consider not only new brand and product ideas, but also innovative ways to market brandy to a new consumer.

“So, part of the competition was about innovation within intrinsics or packaging, and part is thinking out-the-barrel about how brandy shows up, so to speak; how brandy can be presented in fresh ways,” says Reade-Jahn.



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The winners of the inaugural competition last year were Tinashe Nyamudoka and his Kumusha Potstill XO Brandy presentation, in the category of new market development; Coetzer Hanekom and Die Mas Kalahari Fynetjie Rosegold brandy in the category of new intrinsic; and, Michelle Coates for the Blend-Your-Own-Brandy kit in the category for consumer insights.

Since their triumph at the innovation challenge, Kalahari Fynetjie was launched and appeared on Minki van der Westhuizen's popular TV show with a cocktail called the Minki Pinki, Coates's Blend-Your-Own-Brandy kit launches this season, and Kumusha Brandy is set for distribution in 2023.

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