

# No Wijn during lockdown



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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#LockdownLessons explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses, how they prepared for lockdown and its impacts on operations and employees, as well as lessons, learned that we can take into the post-Covid-19 era.



Sarette van den Heever, co-founder of Wijn, continues to work from home during lockdown.

[Wijn](#) is a new concept wine bar that opened up in Paarl's old jail just months ago. However, the rapid change in the trading environment, as a result of the national lockdown, has left the food and beverage industry reeling with uncertainty, much like sitting in a prison cell.

Wijn's goal is to offer wine lovers the opportunity to discover, connect and engage with unique and proudly South African wines and their makers, delivering a truly unbeatable, interactive wine experience, but all this needs to be put on ice...for now.

Sarette van den Heever, one of the founders, shares how the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown has impacted the business...

### ■ ***How has Covid-19 impacted your business?***

Covid-19 has impacted our business very negatively. We already saw a sharp decrease in sales during March when social distancing was implemented and we are unable to trade during the lockdown. We are rethinking our entire business model to survive and grow post-Covid-19.

### ■ ***How did you prepare for the lockdown?***

The timeframe we had to prepare was extremely short, so our main focus was to push as many sales before lockdown to try and build up a cash reserve to enable us to cover our staff salaries during the lockdown.



### ■ ***What's the biggest challenge you are facing during this pandemic?***

The biggest challenge is definitely the uncertainty of how long the current situation will continue and also what the long-term effect will be on our industry. In our view, our business would have to be a different business post-Covid.

### ■ ***What sort of assistance will you need going forward?***

We will require all of our business partners and suppliers to collaborate closely with us, and all in our industry, in order to ensure that small and micro-businesses like ours survive.

### ■ ***If you are able to operate, What steps are you taking to continue operating?***

Unfortunately, we can't operate at all during the lockdown and we anticipate that there will be restrictions on the sale of alcohol even after the lockdown.

### ■ ***What measures have you put in place for your employees?***

Our employees are our top priority and we are rather negotiating with other suppliers and landlords to bring down our expenses, in order to continue paying our employees their full salaries.

### ▣ **Are you communicating with your customers? If so, how?**

Yes, we continue to use our social media channels and newsletters to our database of customers.

### ▣ **What do you predict the next 6 months will be like?**

It is going to be very tough in our industry due to consumers being under severe financial pressure and the economy contracting significantly. We don't foresee that bars and restaurants will be allowed to return to their normal operating hours for quite some time and we also don't believe that the general public will feel comfortable to return soon as they will continue to practice social distancing.



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As far as wine sales go, we believe that consumers will look for a good price, quality wines as they will be price sensitive and they will buy online. If they do go to social gatherings, it will most probably be with a small group of close friends and it will be at home.

“ *The next six months will be about adapting to new consumer behaviour and finding a way to meet new customer needs as a result of this.* ”

### ▣ **Now is the time to innovate and experiment. What is Wijn doing?**

We are reinventing our business model completely. Before Covid, we were focused on delivering a unique experience in person at Wijn. Post-Covid we need to be able to take this experience to where our customer is, not try and get them to come to us.

### ▣ **What has been your biggest lesson from all this?**

Life being unpredictable is not a cliché. Make the most of every day.

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