

INTERVIEW: RIKUS NEETHLING OF BIZOE AND CROYDON

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by [Christian](#)
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Rikus Neethling (centre) with Chantel Dartnall and Germain Lehodey of Restaurant Mosaic.

From the October issue of Business Day WANTED: Winemaker Rikus Neethling, who founded his own label Bizoe in 2008, moved to Croydon Vineyard Estate between Stellenbosch and Somerset West in 2011. There are some 8ha of vineyard on the property and all 194 home owners are also shareholders in the associated wine company. Earlier in 2015, Neethling took charge of making the Croydon wines. Married to Estalét, they have twin sons André and Retief, who turned two in October.

Your own label Bizoe is pretty well established. Why did you decide to tackle winemaking for Croydon?

Actually, I'm still in the process of developing the Bizoe range. The Henriëtta white blend is named after my mom and Estalét Syrah named after my wife and I am planning to do something for the boys in the near future.

As for Croydon, I want to make sure we build a wine brand that will be an asset for me and the other home owners in the future. There is nothing more rewarding than to sit at the Estate clubhouse on a Friday evening and see all the homeowners enjoying their wines and proud to be part of the company.

Favourite international wine region and why?

A while back I worked a harvest in the Picpoul de Pinet appellation of France. We weren't far away from the Rhône valley and tasting and travelling in that part of the world is where the love for Syrah started which remains to this day. That is the reason why I am doing a Syrah in the Bizoe range.

Most memorable wine experience?

I've drunk and presented Bizoe in all four corners of the world and had wonderful experiences. One of the proudest moment was walking into the Ritz Carlton on Central Park NY and seeing the Bizoe Henriëtta and Estalét on the winelist !

Your own label Bizoe is derived from the French Bisous meaning "little kiss". How did you come up with the name?

When working in France, you pick up some of the language. "Bisous" is one of the early words a young man working in France learns – when a good-looking lady walks into the room, you try your luck and ask for a "Bisous". We have changed the writing of the word "Bisous" to Bizoe because local customers tended to ask for a bottle "Bi-sous".

You're planning to run the Cape Town marathon. What other races have you done? What's the appeal of running?

I started running about a year ago and don't know why I didn't start earlier in my life. I have had some of the most amazing runs on my travels. You feel free and relaxed and get the opportunity to think over some of the decisions of the day. You also get to experience amazing views. I've done about eight half marathons during the year so far. The 2 Oceans was special but I must say the Milkwood in Cape Point nature reserve) and Elgin Half Marathons both have amazing scenery!

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What was the last golf course you played and how was your round?

We recently played our annual North vs South Match. It is in Ryder Cup format where a few local winemakers take on friends from Pretoria. We played this year at Stellenbosch Golf Club, De Zalze and Paarl Golf Club. All I think I need to say about the results is that the boys from the South need to travel up North to go and fetch the cup next year.

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