



South Africa Wine Cellar Assistants' Programme 2026

Cellar Assistants Exploring Blended Wines

The 2025 feedback from cellars highlights the need to strengthen both the practical and general winemaking knowledge of cellar assistants. Addressing this need is essential to improving operational efficiency, maintaining product quality, and ensuring the industry's long-term sustainability.

The South Africa Wine Cellar Assistants' Programme, endorsed by key industry organisations, continues to play a vital role in facilitating effective knowledge transfer to cellar assistants. Winemakers consistently stress that cellar assistants should not only understand *how* to perform their tasks, but also *why* each step in the production process is important. This deeper understanding enables cellar assistants to see how their daily actions directly affect cellar operations and overall financial performance.

Experience from the programme's workshops demonstrates that advanced knowledge transfer plays a significant role in strengthening participants' personal growth and confidence. As a result, cellar assistants are more inclined to report errors, take ownership of their responsibilities, and proactively reduce mistakes in the cellar. Beyond improving day-to-day performance, knowledge transfer also plays a crucial role in long-term career development. Providing relevant winemaking knowledge fosters reliability, confidence, and accountability; qualities that lead to greater accuracy, improved problem reporting, and more consistent performance under pressure. In the fast-paced and demanding cellar environment, accountability for tasks and work quality is essential. Therefore, participation in the South Africa Wine Cellar Assistants' Programme is regarded not only as an effective platform for knowledge transfer, but also as a strategic investment by cellars in their employees.

Although cellar assistants are familiar with the wines produced at their own cellars, they often have limited exposure to wines from other cellars and wine-producing regions. This can restrict their broader industry and their practical and general winemaking knowledge. To address this gap, a qualified winemaker, Elzette Du Preez, will present the Cellar Assistants Programme workshops in June and August, focusing on blended wines in the participating areas. Participants will explore the main reasons for blending wines, different blending styles, and why blending is often considered an art. A guided tasting of various blends will further enhance participants' practical understanding.

These workshops aim to strengthen participants' general industry insight and practical winemaking knowledge. In addition, an independent, registered social worker, Greta Grobler, will discuss the importance of accountability and responsibility in the workplace.

Programme Content

- The South African Wine Industry – What is new? Elzette Du Preez.
- Wine of Origin Scheme. Elzette du Preez.
- An in-depth discussion of white and red blended wines. Why do we blend wines, and what makes these wines unique in terms of wine styles? Elzette du Preez.
- A tasting of white and red blended wines. Elzette Du Preez.
- Accountability in the Cellar – Why is it Important? Greta Grobler.

Participating Districts: Dates

Stellenbosch

Date: 4 June **OR** 6 August

Time: 9:00 – 13:00

Wellington

Date: 11 June **OR** 13 August

Time: 9:00 – 13:00

Worcester/Breedekloof

Date: 18 June

Time: 9:00 – 13:00

Robertson

Date: 20 August

Time: 9:00 – 13:00

Bot River

Date: 27 August

Time 9:00 – 13:00

The following applies to the 2026 Cellar Assistants Workshops:

- **All** cellar assistants are welcome to participate.
- Participation is free of charge.
- The workshops will be conducted in Afrikaans and English. Participants must be bilingual.
- Enrolments will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Prior booking is essential.
- Confirmation of ID numbers, gender, race, and citizenship will be required.
- Notes will be available electronically in English.
- Attendance registers will be available electronically.
- A letter confirming the financial value per participant of the workshop will be available towards the end of 2026.

For more information, please contact Santi Basson at santib@mweb.co.za

or tel. nr. 072 298 8186