

## **Bright future ahead for enthusiastic wine entrepreneurs**

“We are building a legacy - not just selling wine.”

These are the words of Malcolm Green, who together with his son, Ricardo, owns La RicMal Wines. The business greatly benefits from its partnership with the Shoprite Group, which sees it supplying to the Group’s supermarkets across Africa.

The Greens started their wine business in 2007 and currently trade under the labels Lerato Wine and La RicMal Supreme. The blended Lerato and single cultivar La RicMal Supreme Wines are available in all Shoprite and Shoprite LiquorShops in South Africa and beyond.

“We’re a family-owned wine producing, marketing and promoting company and through our partnership with Shoprite our wines are available in eleven African countries, apart from South Africa,” says Green.

He credits Shoprite and specifically its senior liquor buyer Johan Lochner with being the first to take his business seriously. “Johan had a vision. He wanted to offer consumers something new on the wine shelves and he set about achieving this goal by giving small suppliers like La RicMal shelf space alongside the big players.”

Green started out in the recycling business where he bought used wine bottles, cleaned them and resold them to wine producers. His son, Ricardo, wanted to walk a different business path, which initially his father was not that enthusiastic about it.

“I owned four factories in the Western Cape and two in Gauteng. My company had won numerous awards for, amongst others, job creation, so I was very happy with my achievements. Ricardo was relentless and eventually convinced me to join him in this new venture, so here I am today not able to imagine myself doing anything else.”

Since becoming a Shoprite supplier, their business has grown significantly. They were first introduced in Shoprite supermarkets outside of South Africa followed by a national rollout in South Africa. Shoprite constitutes 30% of their overall business and some 10% of their export business.

Apart from the growth La RicMal has experienced since working with the retailer, the greatest benefit to the business has been the internal capacity building necessitated by their alignment with Shoprite’s IT systems and procedures. “You have to be on top of your game at all times. Many small business owners do not realise that [alignment with a corporate’s systems and processes] is crucial and failure to align is the greatest barrier to [market] entry for small enterprises,” explains Green.

Their wines are produced from predominantly bush vines growing in the Darling area, but they successfully applied for land, which the Department of Land Reform and Agriculture awarded to them in 2016. Their farm is off the Bottelary Road and they hope to sell wine from their own farm by 2021. “One can apply to government for land if you have your own

brand and a market. Since Shoprite helped us grow markets and volumes, government was willing to assist us, so these days Ricardo spends a lot of time on the farm and we look forward to producing and bottling our own wine in the near future.”

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