Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge Features Largest South African WineList in United States

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — More than 65 of South Africa’s boutique wineries are showcasing their vintages at Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge at Walt Disney World Resort, with the largest offering of South African wines anywhere in the United States.

The hotel restaurants have chosen the finest small wineries that emphasize quality, breaking ground in this country for some of the vintners. For instance, they acquired Rust en Vrede Estate Wine 1996, a blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and shariz from the Stellenbosch region, voted in the “Top 100 Wines of 2000? by *Wine Spectator.* And the search continues for more top-caliber wines, looking at small wineries to bring their best to Disney’s Animal Kingdom Lodge.

The French first made wine in South Africa 300 years ago, and that tradition carries forward today with superb whites, rich reds and sparkling wines and ports.

The winelands of South Africa are among the most beautiful in the world, with vines planted on rolling hills with a background of soaring mountains. Disney focused on three growing areas — Stellenbosch, Paarl and Costantia — to select its boutique wines.

And they’re already prepared for the inevitable diner who requests a California, French or other vintage.

“We’re educating the restaurant staff so that when someone comes in and asks for a favorite from California or France, we’ll suggest similar wines from South Africa,” said sommelier Vicki Cawein. “And we also have the opportunity to show great values.”

“It really is an education in South African wines,” she continued. “For every classic style of wine, there’s a comparable South African varietal, from whites — chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, semillon or chenin blanc to reds — cabernet sauvignon, shiraz, pinot noir or merlot.”

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