



## *Touch Warwick Wine*

# UNDENIABLE SYNERGY

*One of the newest collaborations in the prestigious global arena of wine has produced a promising vintage of South African cabernet sauvignon. In 2016, the first bottle of Touch Warwick wine raised a remarkable R1.3 million for charity when it was sold at the Cape Wine Auction.*

Founders of Touch Warwick Wine, legendary winemaker and long-time CEO of Warwick Wine Estate and co-founder of Vilafonté,

Mike Ratcliffe, and entrepreneur, radio broadcaster and entertainer, Thabo 'Tbo Touch' Molefe, hail from very different backgrounds. Their commonality lies in their passion, obsession for quality, and the desire to challenge the status quo. The establishment of Touch Warwick wine is a wonderful story of two families coming together, celebrating and embracing their differences and merging their cultures over a shared love of wine, and the passionate pursuit of cabernet sauvignon excellence.

Photos: © Courtesy of Touch Warwick Wine

### A SERENDIPITOUS MEETING

Though they are both proudly South African, Mike and Touch have spent extensive time living and studying abroad. Mike was part of the first graduating class in Wine Marketing at Adelaide University in Australia. At 15 years old, Touch moved from the township of Sharpeville to attend Bishop Grimes High School, a private Catholic school in Syracuse New York, after which he returned to South Africa to complete his final year at Bond University. It was their love of South Africa and her diverse culture that brought them both home, wanting to make a positive contribution in their respective fields. In 2013, Touch and Mike were by chance, introduced to each other by a sommelier who travelled regularly between Johannesburg and Cape Town. When Touch heard the story of Norma Ratcliffe (Mike's mother and Warwick Wine's head-winemaker since the 1970s) and how she was a pioneering force in the wine industry, he was deeply inspired. Norma was the first female winemaker in South Africa, the first female member of the esteemed Cape Winemakers Guild, and was the only woman to date to serve as its Chairperson. Touch wanted to share Norma's remarkable journey with the listeners on his drive-time Metro FM radio show and invited Mike and his mother on air. Mike joined Touch in studio and Norma joined via telephone. There was an undeniable synergy in Mike and Touch's approach to life and business, and a friendship grew based on mutual respect, a common belief in excellence and originality and the importance of preserving South



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African heritage and culture. "Touch Warwick wine is an expression of the South African culture from a far more diverse, futuristic and refined view", Touch explained.

#### CREATING A REMARKABLE WINE

Touch Warwick Cabernet Sauvignon is blended predominantly from a 17-year-old vineyard, perched high on the slopes of Warwick, which has always been known, somewhat simply, as Block 9. Here, the Oak leaf soils; beautifully red and yellow in colour, well drained and made from decomposed granite, produce grapes which bear a natural balance of freshness, energy and power. The unique traits that this vineyard consistently produces are the necessary building blocks of a wine with stature, elegance and longevity. For the 2014 vintage, the winemakers allowed a two to three week lag on previous seasons, allowing the grapes to mature and ripen even more slowly and evenly with finesse and elegance. This block of Cabernet is always the last to be harvested on the Estate, and was harvested, by hand, in the week after Easter 2014. Touch and Mike were both there to hand-harvest the fruit in the cool early morning, and select the best rows and vines to find the upper levels of quality to produce the highest level of satisfaction.

The juice was fermented according to the centuries old traditional French method, in open-topped tanks until it turned into the perfect elixir. The wine was then transferred into 225 litre barrels to continue its

long journey towards greatness. High quality imported tight-grained French oak barrels from the Allier and Vosges forests in France were selected, and the wine was allowed to rest and mature for 22 months – encompassing two long and peaceful winters.

The naturally dark colour derived from the vineyard is deep and alluring with shades of violet and blackberry. The nose, which has an inviting subtlety,

has rum and maple, vanilla soufflé and dried fig notes which are carried through to black pepper, bramble berry, marjoram and thyme.

The palate is defined by a sophisticated savoury note with vibrant freshness, which is interwoven with a fleshy and dense mid-palate of classic Cabernet Sauvignon, with a chalky linear effect. The finish is decidedly juicy with fine-grained tannins that leave you with the distinct impression of individuality and help you to understand the enigmatic personality of this wine.

Although this wine is ready to be enjoyed now, further aging will reveal its true pedigree. The winemakers recommend patience, as greatness should never be rushed.

#### A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH

Touch Warwick's Cabernet was launched at the highly popular Rand Merchant Bank WineX held at the Sandton Convention Centre in

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October 2016, and was well received by both the public, the trade and their specially invited guests. Mike and Touch enjoyed the opportunity to discuss their new release on a more personal level with their audience. Exclusive tastings were also held for South Africa's top sommeliers at The Butcher Shop & Grill and at the Saxon Hotel & Spa where the guests could experience the Touch Warwick

Cabernet 2014, paired with a delicious meal.

The wine was well received, and built excitement for the vintages to come. For Mike and Touch, the collaboration has been a wonderful journey, "It has been a privilege to be involved in conceptualising and creating a project based on the common vision of two families. Great wine is timeless, as are great relationships," said Mike.

Touch Warwick wine will be available at just a few select fine-dining establishments, premium hotels and golf estates in South Africa, and members of the "Touch Warwick Inner Circle" abroad and locally have already received their personal allotments. With 1,200 bottles of the 2014 vintage produced, all eyes are on the 2015 vintage to follow.

The Touch Warwick partnership is not only an outstanding contribution to the wine industry, but also an example of the wonderful potential that can organically emerge from the rich soil of diversity. ■ Nandi Ganda

[touch.warwickwine.com](http://touch.warwickwine.com)