

## **Wine and Wellness: Being Agents of Change – Carolyn Martin (née Finlayson)**

Born and raised in the Cape Winelands, I had the privilege of living close to the soil and the people on four wine estates. I know about the struggle and effort it takes to raise a vineyard and all the hands and hearts that go into it. I never underestimate the wonderful feeling of wellbeing when tasting the fruits of a successful vintage, nor do I underestimate the tenacity it takes to cope with weather, water shortages, fire, political interference and viruses in the vineyard.

Wine has a beautiful way of evoking memories of sharing, loving and caring, but, as I have learned, true wellbeing is more than a warm, fuzzy feeling. It is about embracing sustainability. And that needs to be shared with and by all stakeholders.

### **Wings to our Team**

A healthy team is a happy and motivated team. It would be a cliché except that here, at Creation, the point has been thoroughly proven: an intensified focus on our team members' physical and mental wellbeing has led to virtually zero absenteeism and increased productivity.

Attention to nutrition, exercise, emotional and social wellbeing all contribute to a safer, more inclusive workplace. At Creation, we work with medical doctors, naturopaths, nutritionists, psychiatrists, psychologists and occupational therapists.

It's not just talking up a good game. After a series of team workshops conducted by Dr Lorin Boynton, Nutritionist and Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Washington, included her 'five domains of health'. Dr Boynton commented: "The workshops and focus groups that I have done with them have been inspiring as I have witnessed each team member strive towards improved personal health and support others with their goals. The camaraderie is evidence of their efforts to build and sustain their community. What a joy to be a small part of their wellbeing journey!"

Sustainability requires innovation, but it is often minding the basics that makes all the difference. Upskilling and multiskilling have long been part of our team's experience. Safety protocols are high on our agenda, as are training opportunities, ranging from personal development programmes to internationally recognised qualifications such as WSET.

It also calls for us to interrogate wellness from every angle. On a matter as simple as transport, I would like to quote Dr Cathy van Zyl (MW): "For the worker bees, the time they spend travelling to and from work means there's no time to tai chi, for that facial or manicure or meditation. Employers, like Creation, who build 'me-time' into their employees' working days, are to be applauded. Perhaps Wellness in communities means providing a minibus to transport moms to work so that they can spend half an hour in meditation before travelling to work instead of an hour and a half catching public transport?" Not only does Creation provide transport to and from the workplace, but we offer free access to healthcare and a balanced diet. And yes, there is time for yoga and tai chi classes, which all become the building blocks of a stable, productive, and stress-free team.

### **The Ripple Effect**

It would be counterintuitive not to extend sustainability measures to our surrounding community, which in turn spreads valuable knowledge.

One of the challenges of the South African wine industry is how to enrich the lives of families in our agricultural communities. To me, education and food security are priorities. Creation's involvement in the Hemel-en-Aarde Pebbles Education Project of which we are a founder member, dates back to 2017. The success of the initiative relies on local and international donations, both monetary and in-kind, and the project currently supports 120 children aged 1 to 13.

In terms of food security, it is vital to encourage the community's buy-in. The Franklin Ohana Sustainability Garden in the nearby town of Hawston is an inspiring example. Envisioned as an all-inclusive, self-sustaining garden, it offers participating households

the chance to grow their own food. The Creation team is involved in the development of the Pebbles Hemel-en-Aarde vegetable garden, established to provide fresh seasonal produce to the Pebbles families and other community members.

Wellness, of course, means different things to different people, which brings me to sustainable wine tourism, a buzz concept of many dimensions. Embracing the principle of 'what grows together, goes together' reduces our carbon footprint as well as supporting local enterprise. Clearing foreign vegetation to encourage the growth of indigenous fynbos and creating walking trails through our part of the Cape Floral Kingdom, enhance the visitors experience.

At Creation, we see our Tasting Room as a communication hub, with our team actively listening to and learning from our guests every day. This sets up a cycle of innovative and sustainable solutions. Our latest seasonal menu, developed together with Dr Julienne Fenwick (MBChB), is a case in point. Titled 'Back to Nature', it is inspired by Ayurveda and based on the belief that our health relies on our harmony and balance with the elements.

"Nature, by its very essence, heals us," says Dr Fenwick, adding that there has been a paradigm shift in the approach to wine consumption: "People are starting to explore the impact of sharing good wine with good people for the *medicine* it is. By mindfully connecting over the art of wine, we can optimise our wellness." Creation is hosting a series of wellness workshops for our clients on this subject, conducted by Dr Fenwick and other wellness practitioners.

On the matter of balance, I would like to conclude with words of wisdom from Pauline Vicard, Director of ARENI Global: "When it comes to wine and wellness, it is, to me, about balance. I don't like the expression 'drink responsibly', I think a more appropriate term should be 'drink respectfully', and that includes being respectful to your own self, and not degrading your body, nor mind, with wine."