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## Rooibos revolution for Cape wine

BY BEKEZELA PHAKATHI, 26 FEBRUARY 2015, 05:50

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Workers load Rooibos onto a tractor. Audacia Wines in Stellenbosch has found a way to use indigenous Rooibos wood to produce a preservative-free wine. Picture: REUTERS//MIKE HUTCHINGS

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A WESTERN Cape winery aims to revolutionise the wine-making industry after patenting a new technique that uses Rooibos in the production of wines.

Audacia Wines in Stellenbosch has replaced traditional imported oak wood derivatives including staves, chips and powders normally used in the

winemaking process with indigenous Rooibos wood to produce a wine with no added sulphites, used to preserve wine, or preservatives.

The Rooibos wood derivatives, which are placed inside the large steel containers that are used to ferment wine, are produced along exactly the same lines as imported oak products usually used in wine making.

Recent research by the department of viticulture and oenology at Stellenbosch University and ARC Infruitec-Nietvoorbij found powerful antioxidants in Rooibos that may assist in preserving the wine naturally. This method has the potential to eliminate the need for sulphur dioxide and other synthetic materials as preservatives.

Trevor Strydom, a partner in Audacia, said on Wednesday the patent covered the making of all Rooibos wooded wines, beers and ciders by adding Rooibos wood during manufacturing.

The new production technique was a "significant development" for the industry, especially for organic wine makers, he said.

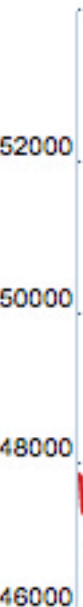
The process of extraction of the antioxidants from the Rooibos wood was done during fermentation and was relatively quick compared to the process that used oak, Mr Strydom said. "Feedback on products we have created... thus far has been overwhelmingly positive."

Audacia's first wine using Rooibos is a merlot from the 2013 harvest. It contains 3mg/l of natural sulphites, and the legal limit of sulphites for South African table wines is 150mg/l. A shiraz and cabernet sauvignon will be released soon.

Mr Strydom said the company was exporting small quantities to China and was supplying the local market through some Pick n Pay stores.

Wines of SA CEO Siobhan Thompson said overseas markets were looking for organic and sustainable wines and Audacia's production technique "is the answer for SA".

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