



A WHOLE LOT OF ROSE

by: EUGENE YIGA

WHEN ONE WALKS INTO THE MUNRO BOUTIQUE HOTEL, IT'S HARD NOT TO FEEL A SENSE OF EXCLUSIVITY. WITH ITS THREE-STOREY VICTORIAN CONSERVATORY AND PANORAMIC VIEWS OF JOHANNESBURG FOR THE GUESTS LUCKY ENOUGH TO STAY IN ONE OF THE FIVE SUMPTUOUS SUITES, THE HOUGHTON MANSION WAS THE PERFECT SETTING FOR AN EXCLUSIVE LUNCH IN CELEBRATION OF WORLD COGNAC DAY.

"I'm happy to celebrate this special day with you in South Africa," said Denis Lahourate, who has been

Maître de Chai (Cellar Master) since the Distell Group bought Bisquit Cognac in 2009. "And I was thinking that for such a special event, it's more interesting to discover and taste an exceptional product. So I chose a limited edition that we have in the company: a selection from only the best barrels of our X.O."

Lahouratate was referring to the limited edition X.O Rose Gold. There are only 1819 decanters available worldwide (each bottle retails for approximately R7 000), which coincides with the year 20-year-old Alexandre Bisquit created the brand. And the first two bottles in South Africa were at the lunch, making us the first in the country to taste it.

“The potstills are always made in copper and sometimes, depending on the temperature of the potstill, you can have this exact rose gold colour,” Lahouratate said as he held up the striking bottle. “But the potstill is

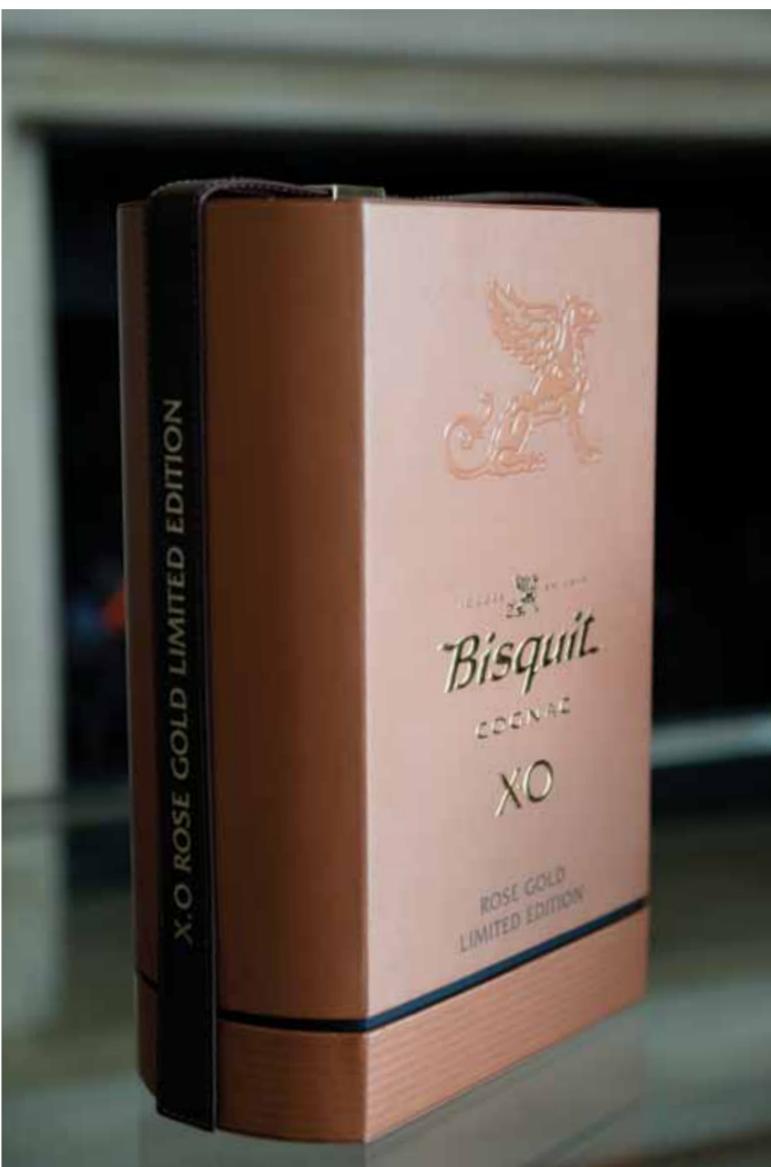
interesting because it’s not the same colour at every place. The temperature changes the colour.”

Each of the Rose Gold decanters was painted and decorated by hand to make it a unique piece. Every bottle was also individually numbered by hand to mark its place in the limited edition range. Finally, each decanter was filled by hand and each bottle was cork-sealed and carefully placed in its own box – again, by hand – to guarantee its origin.

Lahouratate believes that paying so much attention to detail and craftsmanship is what sets Bisquit apart from its competitors. Furthermore, as part of their desire to always improve the production of the barrels they use, Bisquit works with many different coopers and selects two or three new ones for a trial every year. It’s about working with a lot of people and taking their time in doing so.

“This X.O Rose Gold is the result of the selection of the best barrel for this kind of old cognac,” Lahouratate said, explaining that the legal minimum for the youngest component of an X.O is seven years. “One by one, I selected the barrels that were used for the production of X.O Rose Gold. It was a high level of selection – out of several thousand, only six barrels were selected – and I’m

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pleased that I can give you this round and soft product, which is the main characteristic of the cognac.”

The Rose Gold has a deep golden colour, which is characteristic of the X.O cognac. But the main difference is with the rich and generous bouquet of aromas on the nose: fruit, nuts, spice, and wood. (It reveals its maturity through generous fragrances of mahogany, sandalwood, tobacco, and cocoa.)

“You have a nice intensity on the nose,” Lahouratate said after taking a whiff of what some described as a ‘soft’ spirit. “And at the same time you have the impression that there is no alcohol. It’s not burning the nose because the balance between the wood, the spirit, and the way we use the barrel gave the cognac this high level of elegance.”

At last, it was time for a taste: first a drop and then a pause for the flavours to appear. Many detected notes of candied orange, apricot, prune, and spices on the palate. Words like “silky”, “sumptuous”, and “smooth” were used to describe the rich blend with its beautiful balance of flavours and lingering finish.

“After the nice balance on the nose, you have the same on the palate: soft and round with velvety tannins coming from the barrel,” Lahouratate said. “The taste – between vanilla and chocolate – is interesting and delicate. It gives a long finish to the cognac.”

Although cognac is typically enjoyed after a meal, Lahouratate believes that the best moment to appreciate the product is before you start eating, which is why he chose to serve it as an aperitif. But although the three-course lunch included three other products in the Bisquit range, the X.O Rose Gold was a highlight.

“For drinking neat, I prefer X.O Rose Gold because it’s richer and the balance is so smooth,” Lahouratate said when asked which product in the Bisquit range he liked most. “But it’s difficult. It’s like asking if you prefer your father or your mother. I cannot choose!

Then again, perhaps the beauty of such an exclusive experience is that one doesn’t have to choose at all. 🍷

Bisquit Range

Bisquit Cognac is an authentic French cognac and is the only major Cognac House to be awarded for its full range at the International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC) six years in a row. In 2014, the brand received the Master Award for its flagship Bisquit V.S.O.P Cognac and a Silver Award for its Bisquit V.S. Cognac at The Cognac Masters awards in London.

Bisquit Cognac provides a superb and complete range to suit those who seek quality and distinction. From time to time, Bisquit Cognac release limited edition variants that are made from a rare blend of cognacs that have been aged for different time periods.

The range consists of three variants:



The V.S (Very Special) Classique is defined by its softness and freshness, revealing a bouquet of fruity aromas (pear and plum) with deeper notes of vanilla, cinnamon, and oak. It is made primarily with eaux-de-vie from the Fins Bois area. At the lunch, it was paired with the starter: lobster vol-au-vent with orange cognac sauce (option 1) and deconstructed avocado prawn timbale (option 2). The recommended retail price starts from R299.



The V.S.O.P (Very Superior Old Pale) is smooth and mellow in character with a long finish. On the nose and in the palate, the V.S.O.P reveals a bouquet of full, ripe fruit (dried apricots) flavours. Drawn from the prestigious eaux-de-vie of Petite at Grande Champagne that enhances the longer distillation, the V.S.O.P is full of amber warmth and spice (cinnamon and clove). At the lunch, it was paired with the main course: Karoo lamb fillet with thyme jus, artichoke, organic vegetables and hazelnut puree (option 1) and porcini ravioli with sage and burnt-butter sauce (option 2). The recommended retail price starts from R499.



The maturity of X.O (Extra Old) is apparent when one looks at the deep, coppery amber colour and magnificent bouquet. It has distinctive, rich aromas with a full body and lingering smoothness. The X.O bouquet reveals strong hints of woody and smoky notes including tobacco and cocoa, with notes of sugar fruit and prune. The nose flavours are enriched with aromatic notes of plum, mocha, cedar wood and liquorice. At the lunch, it was paired with the dessert: white chocolate mousse cannelloni and strawberry minestrone (option 1) and naartjie and dark chocolate malva pudding with dates (option 2). The recommended retail price starts from R1 499.

Learn more at www.bisquit.co.za.