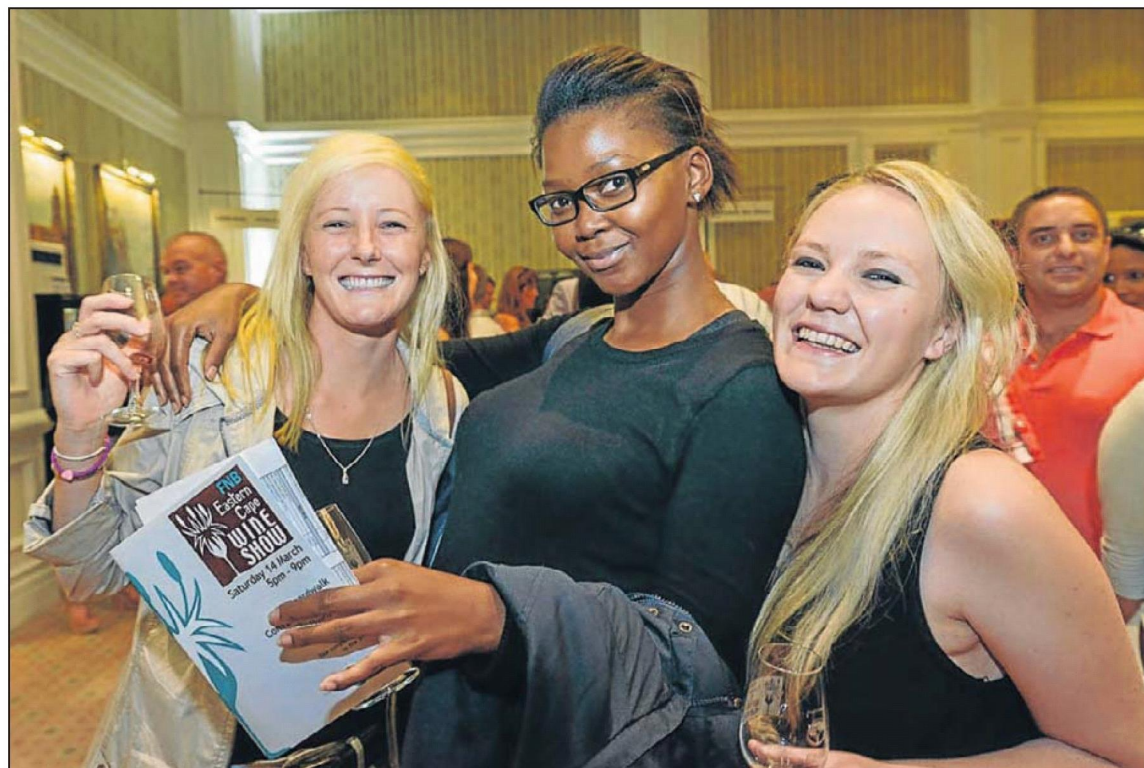




Wine shows hit the spot

■ Bay, East London events may be extended next year thanks to discerning visitors



WINING AND DINING: Kate Arnold, left, Bomi Zeka and Toozi Yoirke at the FNB Eastern Cape Wine Show

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THE inaugural FNB Eastern Cape Wine Show was so successful that organisers are looking at extending the event to separate two-day shows next year.

With 40 exhibitors and 1 500 visitors swilling and sniffing their way through The Venue at Hemingways Mall on March 12 and the Boardwalk Convention Centre last Saturday, sales of R80 000 for both nights, excluding producers' direct sales, were seen.

Show director Michael Fridjhon said Eastern Cape wine aficionados were enthusiastic, making the show one which was "well ahead of Cape Town".

He said: "Eastern Cape consumers are clearly very happy to have such a direct relationship with the wine producers and the wine industry."

With more than 185 wines available for tasting, the show

saw established brands like Zonnebloem, Haute Cabrière and Robertson exhibiting alongside developing wine brands including Libby's Pride, M'hudi, Ses'fikile, Seven Sisters, Thembi & Co and Women in Wine.

Enthusiasing about the visitors to the show, Fridjhon said the overall vibe was "fun and informative with responsible tasting".

He said in East London an enthusiastic and wine-interested crowd were noted, while in Port Elizabeth a number of wine lovers showed, "overwhelming support for a new show in town".

Fridjhon said the show would most definitely be returning to both the Bay and East London next year.

"From the enthusiastic response in both cities, we are aiming for a two-day event in each," he said.

Exhibitor Paul van Dooren, national sales and marketing manager for La Vierge Wines, said the estate would definitely

exhibit again as they had received "a lot of interest from the right customer profile".

The two Eastern Cape shows saw people attending for the right reasons, he said.

Many at the bigger shows like the one in Johannesburg came to drink as much as possible rather than sample the wines and learn about the growing processes.

"People were really tasting as they should and asking questions about the estate and our growing processes."

"They weren't there to drink as much as possible."

"At the bigger shows we often see lots of inebriated people at the end of the evening but this was not the case in PE."

Van Dooren added that he could definitely see a two-day event working, particularly in Port Elizabeth.

"Port Elizabeth could definitely take a two-day event. We were very busy and I barely took a breath from 5pm to 9pm with all the interest we had," he said.