



{spirits} Sugarbird Craft Spirits introduces XO Brandy

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ABOUT ME



I'm Amilinda – a Cape-Town based self-confessed lover of all things hedonistic in life. An aspiring wine writer, adventurous traveler, amateur photographer, keen food stylist and enthusiastic home cook, my unadulterated passion for South African food and wine simply spills out the seams and onto my blog. [Read More](#)

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impressive line-up.

Introduction

As much as I enjoy drinking wine, I'm also an incredibly keen craft spirit aficionado. With a palate that particularly appreciates gins, rums and brandies, I'm always on the look-out for something local; something authentic; something proudly made in our midst.

A very suave black box arrived at my doorstep a few months ago and when I lifted the lid, I could hardly contain my excitement. Beautifully contrasted against the black box, lay a bottle of pure liquid gold. **With no indulgence spared, the branding was an aesthetical festival of the signature Sugarbird presence we know and love, with that hovering little sugarbird proudly displayed in all its shimmering glory front and center of the bottle.**

I particularly relished the curves and shape of the bottle, with a wrap-around label simply oozing with pure elegance and sophistication. **I wasn't quite sure how I was going to serve it yet, but one thing was undoubtedly a fact; it would be with as little interference as possible.**

Fun fact: did you know the XO in brandy stands for "extra old?"

Background

Best known for its quality fynbos gin, Sugarbird has negotiated access to aged barrels of potstill brandy from one of the world's finest, award-winning distilleries – right here in South Africa.

Sugarbird's MD, Matt Bresler, says:

*"Our initial focus was on creating a gin, **differentiated by its locally-sourced ingredients.** We feel we have done this to popular acclaim – recently winning **Best South African gin in the 2021 Luxury Lifestyle Awards.** As a result, we decided to try our hand at brandy: a product with a rich South African heritage. The Cape Floral Kingdom is on our doorstep – it is by far the smallest, but richest of the world's six floral kingdoms, in terms of plant and flower diversity. It has given us a wealth of flavour profiles, first used in our gin, where it found harmony between floral and citrus notes, and **now, in our potstill brandy.**"*

Sugarbird XO Brandy

Chenin Blanc and Colombard grapes, grown in the Breedekloof region, provide the distillate that is carefully aged in small French Oak barrels, for 14 years. **Ultimately, once the ageing process has completed, this delicate liquid is trickle-filtered through honeybush and other fynbos botanicals by Sugarbird's Artisan Blender, Edmund Paulsen.** Finally, a little squeeze of fynbos honey gives it a natural smooth nuttiness.

With a nose of sweet prune, dark chocolate and vanilla that follows through on the palate, the Sugarbird XO 14 Year Old is a great choice for sipping around the fire, either neat, or with a block of ice.

With this XO Brandy, Sugarbird hopes to pay tribute to our unique South African distilling traditions, whilst proudly celebrating our vibrant and diverse country.

The first taste

Call me somewhat of a purist, but I believe a quality craft spirit should be sipped and tasted neat on first introduction. We are so quick to add mixers and garnishes to drinks that the craftsmanship behind the spirit often dilutes and vaporises with all the fancy additions.

I feel there's an age-old general misperception that you need to add "things" to spirits to make it more palatable; yet I'm advocating for exactly the opposite. **When expertly made with taste, flavour and aroma in mind, a craft spirit doesn't need the frills or fandom of garnish.** The beauty lies in its carefully engineered simplicity; something that takes years of practice and refining to perfect.

Sugarbird XO Brandy is no different. **As I warmed my first sip in a voluptuously round cognac glass, snugly fitted into the palm of my hand, I could already smell the warm summer scent of fynbos rising from the glass.** Without swirling it, like one would with wine, I gently lifted it to my nose to introduce the second layer of aroma – one that was slightly sweeter, earthier, almost like sticky caramel, with little wisps of vanilla.

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Serving suggestion

I know not everyone enjoys their spirits neat, so I poured a second round. **I added two fresh ingredients, not to overwhelm the flavour profile of the brandy, but to harmonise with it and complement the already existing bouquet of fynbos fragrance.**

With citrus season in full swing, I fell back on my darling clementine. A humble little fruit, packed with flavour and colour punches, its one of my winter kitchen staples.

A roll of clementine peel, a squeeze of juice and a twist of zest, mixed with a twig of garden-fresh thyme for a little bit of herby earthiness. Nothing more, nothing less. Every bit as beautiful as it tasted.

In conclusion

A massive congratulations to the *Sugarbird* team for this gorgeously Cape Townian artisanal spirit. The perfect gift for a brandy appreciator, or an admirable addition to your personal collection, the Sugarbird XO 14 year old potstill brandy overdelivers on pretty much everything. **Cheers to keeping it local and very lekker!**

***Sugarbird* XO available from Takealot, Smous Online and selected independent liquor stores at a recommended retail price of R499.95**

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