

Indian wine company to begin retail sale in UK

Press Trust of India | London February 07, 2014 Last Updated at 19:09 IST

An Indian wine company based here is set to begin retail sales of wines, produced in India's biggest wine district, Nashik Valley, across the UK this year.

Soul Tree, a company founded by two Indian-origin entrepreneurs in 2009 to market wines from the Nashik Valley region globally, has been available at select Indian restaurants and bars and boutique hotels in Britain so far.

"Soul Tree, as the only Indian wine to actually be headquartered in the UK, is focussed primarily on the UK and global markets," said co-founder Alok Mathur.

"Early research showed that all but a very tiny number of British consumers had never heard of Indian wines, let alone tried them. This is now changing rapidly but in the early days marketing Indian wines has simply been about availability and awareness - less strategy, more hard work, grit and determination," he added.

Former Tata Motors executive Mathur met co-founder Melvin D'Souza during their MBA programme at University of Oxford's Said Business School and embarked on this project of bringing wines from Maharashtra's viticulture region to the international market.

Besides the UK, they now have distribution in France and are in talks with Canada as well.

"We spotted a niche during a dinner out that was just begging to be plugged. Everyone was drinking Indian beers with their Indian meals, but there was not a single Indian wine in sight. What got us into this from those initial thoughts was a love to achieve something that had not truly been done before, an ambition to establish a new global consumer brand, and a desire to see a new Indian industry make it big across the world," Mathur explained.

The duo feels that the Indian Grape Processing Board is a good start to bring the nascent Indian wine industry together but more needs to be done to encourage healthy competition.

"There is a very long way to go before Indian wines can truly be said to have made it globally. History tells us the regions that have made it big in the last few decades have not only done so because of collective quality, but because the industry came together as one entity, with full governmental support," Mathur said.

Soul Tree has around 15 distributors, ranging from wine specialist distributors to food and drink distributors, and is hoping to hit supermarket shelves in Britain from this year.