

RICHARD REVEALS

Your ideal evening? Dinner at Le Quartier Francaise in Franschoek enjoyed with a bottle of my parents Morena brut rose MCC. I'm constantly inspired by the beautiful places I get to visit through my travel for both work and pleasure.

STORY MEGHAN SPILSBURY
PHOTOS ANGIE LAZARO

From barrel to board

Brothers Richard and Oliver Davies recycle old wine barrels into boutique quality cheese and baguette boards. The siblings have become synonymous with pristine quality and original design

Richard, how did your innovative business get started? We noticed a surplus of old wine barrels in the winelands – they only have a three-year life-cycle in the wine-making industry. Our dad had many years of experience in the furniture manufacturing industry and helped us set up our first production line. The rest, as they say, is history. Benguela Trading started in 2008 as a wholesale business, servicing many of the decor retailers around SA. We used an old shed on our parent's farm on the slopes of the Franschoek Pass as our first premises. My brother Oliver had just finished studying at UCT and was keen to start his own business, and I had been working for a corporate and was keen to join him. Our main products are Boutique Vineyards Trudeau cheese and baguette boards made from recycled wine barrels. We also manufacture and source other decor-related items such as ceramics, glassware, wine and olive oil decanters as well as some exclusive furniture pieces.

What sets Benguela Trading apart? Thanks to the network of manufacturers and suppliers we work with we are often the first company to bring a product to the market. We make a lot of our products inhouse, which also allows us to be price competitive by cutting out the middleman.

What are your most popular products? Our most popular cheese boards are the large round boards which are actually the lid of a wine barrel which we have refurbished. Other popular boards are our medium baguette, rectangle, heart and double iron handle shapes. We have just launched a range of miniature champagne riddling racks which are selling well. Our Trudeau furniture range which is a cafe style folding chair and table have been very popular too, especially for the restaurant and hotel trade.

What inspires you in your work? My brother and I draw a lot of inspiration from our parents. My dad, who was involved in the furniture and decor industry for 30 years, is instrumental in helping us develop new products as well as in defining the style of our ranges and our concept stores. We also always run new ideas past our mother as she is constantly on the lookout for competing products to our ranges. I also attend some of the big trade shows like the New York gift fair, Ambiente and Maison et Objet to keep in touch with what trends are developing worldwide.

What do you love most about what you do? Interacting with our clients and providing them with product that helps them achieve their sales targets for their respective businesses has been challenging but also rewarding. Running our own business and often having to be a jack of all trades has been exciting and has put us on a huge learning curve.

How do you work as a team? Oliver is very hands-on and prefers not to travel too far out of Cape Town's CBD! He runs our manufacturing and distribution from our Salt River factory and looks after all the sales in the Western Cape as well as our biggest US client, Anthropologie. I look after sales in the rest of SA, USA, Europe and Australia. I did a business degree at Stellenbosch so I also run all of our company's finance, IT and legal aspects.

Where can people find your products? Our first concept stall, Vendange, will be launched soon in Joburg in the 44 Stanley development on 1 July (44stanley.co.za). Our entire range plus some exclusive products can be found there. Other retail partners include Karrin Hatfield in Durban, Tokara deli in Stellenbosch, Plush Bazaar in Cape Town or any Poetry or Melissa's store country wide. We also supply Anthropologie and William Sonoma in the US and Flamant stores across Europe. **Tb**

Benguela Trading benguelatrading.com, vendange.co.za

Richard (left) and Oliver Davies



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Memorable childhood item? My first pair of Timberland moccasins. Favourite holiday spots? A house boat on Lake Kariba in Zimbabwe. Lombok Island east of Bali in Indonesia. Guilty food pleasure? Smoked salmon! Or fillet paired with a good bottle of red like Paulina's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2008 from Rickety Bridge.