

1. Can you share a bit about your background and the key moments or lessons in your journey that shaped your vision for Crus & Amala?

I was born in Rwanda and moved to Canada with my father after the genocide, spending over twenty years there. Canada shaped me just as much as Rwanda did, and over the years I've also built a life across Europe and North America. I'm not always sure where "home" is anymore - these days, home is people. It's wherever I feel calm and safe, and those people now live across all three continents.

I spent 16 years in hospitality, with the last decade focused on fine dining and wine at a much deeper, more serious level. That's where everything really clicked for me - where wine shifted from something I served to something I studied, pursued, and eventually built a career around. Those years formed the foundation for Crus & Amala: the discipline of service, the curiosity of tasting rooms, the rigor of certifications, and the humanity you learn from working with people every single day.

And of course, the winemakers - the rigorous, values-driven producers whose wines have moved & inspired me. People who farm with integrity, respect their land, and create wines that feel alive with purpose. They shaped my palate, my philosophy, and ultimately, the vision for Crus & Amala.

Three years ago, I started building Crus & Amala, and we officially launched recently with distribution underway and an operations partner on board. Africa is ready - more than ready - and I want to be part of this moment. Returning has been a culture shock, but also a homecoming. Crus & Amala is my bridge between the places that formed me and the future I want to help shape.

2. What gap did you see in African hospitality, particularly in Kenya, that made you feel now was the right time to launch a biodynamic, terroir-driven wine company?

When I arrived in Kenya, I found a vibrant, modern hospitality scene - but the wine programs hadn't evolved at the same pace. There was plenty of commercial wine, but very little that spoke to place, philosophy, or farming practices. Almost no biodynamic or truly terroir-driven producers were represented. And yet the demand was unmistakable: Nairobi's expanding luxury hospitality sector, a growing urban middle class, and the rise of wine education and tastings all pointed to a market ready for more.

The real issue wasn't interest - it was access.

I spent the last three years studying menus, reaching out to people, talking to friends who had moved back home to East Africa. They were thriving; times were changing; people were paying attention. It made me realize that I wanted to contribute in some small way, in a field where I feel deeply comfortable. Research helped, but nothing compared to being here. This year alone, I traveled to East Africa four times, searching for strategic partners. I failed a few times, had to start again, and kept going.

Kenya is a strategic launch pad for the continent, and it's where I chose to establish our Africa headquarters. The world is paying attention to Africa. It took me a little longer to make my way back, but I believe in the timing of things.

Launching Crus & Amala now aligns perfectly with where the culture is already moving - and I'm committed to being part of that shift.

3. Why is it important for African markets to have access to thoughtfully sourced wines, and how do you see this shaping dining culture on the continent in the next decade?

Access shapes taste, and taste shapes culture. For years, many African markets only had commercial wines - not because that's what people preferred, but because that's what was available. Now incomes are rising, cities are expanding, and hospitality is becoming more ambitious. People want wines with intention, identity, and a story.

Africa's wine market reflects that shift. It was valued at about US\$7.7 billion in 2024 and is growing at double-digit rates. The premium imported segment - where Crus & Amala operates - is still small at 8–10%, but it's expected to double by 2030 as consumers move away from mass-market options toward thoughtfully sourced wines.

You can already feel this change in Nairobi: luxury hospitality is expanding, the urban middle class is growing, and wine education and tastings are on the rise. The curiosity is there.

Over the next decade, access to terroir-driven, biodynamic wines will elevate dining culture across the continent. It will push restaurants to build stronger wine programs, expand palates, and create a new appreciation for craftsmanship and storytelling.

Crus & Amala is stepping into that moment - helping shape a future where African consumers have the same access to thoughtful, world-class wines as anyone else.

4. You've described Kenya as your launch pad. How do markets like Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa fit into your long-term expansion strategy?

Kenya is my launch pad because it offers both opportunity and challenge. It's a fast-evolving market with a growing hospitality sector, but it's also a place where infrastructure, supply chains, and consumer access are still developing. In many ways, it feels like a blank canvas - full of potential but requiring patience, resilience, and constant problem-solving. Building here forces us to be agile, creative, and very intentional, which ultimately strengthens the business.

Markets like Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa fit into our long-term strategy in a different way. These are more mature wine markets with consumers who are already knowledgeable, engaged, and comfortable with premium and terroir-driven wines. They understand value, they recognize craft, and they're willing to invest in quality. From a business standpoint, these markets provide clearer pathways to scale, more established distribution networks, and a higher baseline of wine literacy.

Twofold strategy:

- **Kenya is where we build the brand, refine our model, and meet the challenges that will shape our operational strength.**
- **Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa are expansion markets that allow us to grow faster, plug into established consumer behaviors, and diversify our revenue streams.**
- **Each market plays a distinct role, and navigating their differences - Kenya's complexity and Côte d'Ivoire/South Africa's maturity - central to how Crus & Amala will scale across the continent**

5. Biodynamic and terroir-focused wines can be deeply misunderstood. How do you plan to educate consumers and hospitality teams across Africa about these styles?

Education starts with access. For a long time, consumers across Africa haven't had consistent exposure to thoughtfully made wines, so part of my role is simply opening the door. I'm privileged to have strong connections and access in the wine world, and I want to use that to bring in wines that feel approachable, not intimidating.

Our portfolio is intentionally built with entry-level, well-made, terroir-respectful wines at accessible price points - because that's how you grow a market. From bright German whites to food-friendly Piemonte reds, high-altitude Alpine wines, Burgundy-inspired elegance, and even grower Champagne, there's something for everyone. The focus is on clarity, purity, and craftsmanship, not complexity for complexity's sake.

A small percentage of our portfolio leans into premium wines, but the real goal is to normalize quality - wines that are honest, transparent, and expressive without being out of reach.

For hospitality teams, the education will be hands-on: curated tastings, simplified training tools, and storytelling that connects farming practices to flavor. When people understand why a wine tastes the way it does, biodynamic and terroir-driven styles stop feeling niche and start feeling exciting.

My approach is simple:

Make great wine accessible, make education welcoming, and let curiosity do the rest.

6. Crus & Amala is currently raising funds to scale. What should potential supporters understand about the financial realities of building a wine import and distribution company on the continent?

Building a wine import and distribution company in Africa requires both vision and realism. The financial demands are significant. Taxes are high, and temperature-controlled containers are essential if you want to preserve the integrity of

the wines. Logistics can be unpredictable, and every shipment requires substantial upfront capital long before a bottle ever reaches a shelf or a wine list.

Beyond that, we're investing in the fundamentals:

Distribution infrastructure, portfolio launches, and a team on the ground to support markets like Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire, and eventually South Africa. These are heavy lifts, but they're necessary to build something sustainable rather than transactional.

I'll be honest - this is bigger than I expected when I started. I may have aimed high, but at this point I can't turn back, and I don't want to. The market signals are clear. Demand is growing, consumers are becoming more discerning, and there is a real gap for thoughtfully sourced, terroir-driven wines presented with cultural respect. Someone has to build the bridge, and I'm committed to doing that work.

What potential supporters should know is this:

Crus & Amala is not just a wine company. It's logistics, it's education, it's hospitality, and it's cultural storytelling - combined. The financial reality is intense, but the long-term opportunity is extraordinary.

The right partners will understand that we're building something meaningful and scalable, something that contributes to how Africa engages with wine for the next decade. And I trust that those partners will come in due time.

7. Can you walk us through the core goals of your fundraising campaign, not just what you're raising, but what new capabilities or market access those funds will unlock?

Our GalaBid campaign is about unlocking the infrastructure we need to scale Crus & Amala across Africa. The funds directly support five essential capabilities:

1. Temperature-controlled logistics.

To import and protect high-quality wine, we need reliable, climate-safe containers and storage. This is one of our biggest costs - and one of the most critical.

2. Expanded distribution.

The capital allows us to deepen our presence in Kenya and enter markets like Côte d'Ivoire with real traction and regulatory readiness.

3. A full portfolio launch.

From import duties to marketing and wine education, the funds let us introduce a diverse, terroir-driven portfolio at accessible price points.

4. A team on the ground.

We need local operations, sales support, and hospitality training to represent our producers properly and grow sustainably.

5. Early experiential programming.

This is the first step toward future Crus & Amala hubs - spaces for tastings, learning, and community.

In short, the campaign takes us from a promising concept to a fully operational, continent-ready import and distribution company. It gives us the tools, the reach, and the stability to meet the demand we already see across Africa.

8. Beyond capital, what kinds of partnerships, mentorship, or community support would make the biggest difference in helping you bring this vision to life across Africa's fast-growing hospitality landscape?

Beyond capital, what will truly move Crus & Amala forward are hospitality partners who want to elevate wine programs across the continent—groups committed to thoughtful sourcing, strong training, and building guest experiences that reflect Africa's rapidly evolving dining landscape. Mentorship around logistics, regulation, and distribution would also make a meaningful difference as we grow across multiple markets.

I was lucky enough to be welcomed into the village of Morey Saint-Denis by Jeremy Seysses, an experience that shaped how I understand hospitality, generosity, and terroir. This is where Crus & Amala truly began - a particularly difficult vintage and a challenging day in the winery that I will never forget. "Difficult" would be an understatement, but it changed my life.

I also want to acknowledge the work happening in the broader wine community - Jeremy & The Roots Fund, and Milena and the Hautes Côtes team, who continue to push for access, diversity, and real pathways for people of color in the wine world. Their mission inspires me and reflects the kind of progress I hope to champion through Crus & Amala.

And then there's the community that carried me - my Paris, Sancerre, Montreal, Arizona, and London family; the winemakers who opened their homes, cellars, and hearts; the friends, collaborators, mentors, early believers; and the close friends who invested in this journey when I needed it most. This has been a laborious labor of love, and I am genuinely the luckiest.

My call to action is simple:

If you're a hospitality group, a mentor, a distributor, or someone who believes in the future of Africa's wine culture - I'd love to build with you. This vision is bigger than me, and it will take a community to bring it to life.