

Bull's eye for Strand beach restaurant

IT WAS A case of bull's eye first time for Strand restaurant Ben's on the Beach last week when the regional winners of the 2009 Diners Club Winelist Awards were announced.

Not all restaurants that enter their menu winelists to be judged in the annual national competition get a mention, but Ben's on the Beach not only achieved Platinum status the first time it entered, but was also named national Best New Entry.

Together with other local Platinum winner Rust en Vrede, a top venue off the R44 between Stellenbosch and Somerset West, the pair collected their awards at the Vineyard Hotel and Spa in Cape Town with 25 other Western Cape winners in the category.

Highly regarded for two decades by both the restaurant and wine industries, the Diners Club Winelist Awards aim to inspire and reward food and wine-serving establishments to consistent-

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ly improve the winelists presented to their patrons.

"It took us six months to put our new winelist together," says Shirley Oosthuizen, who co-owns Ben's on the Beach with husband Ben, a veteran of the local restaurant industry.

While the venue has been situated on the beachfront for five years, this was the first time it entered the Diners Club competition.

"We thought we'd give it a shot," says Shirley.

And what a shot it was.

The couple consider their entry, like the restaurant's new website, as a useful marketing tool.

"Increasingly people are going onto the internet - whether it be wine estates marketing their produce or diners looking for a new restaurant to try out."

Shirley says the award is a coup for the Strand, which has for many years traded in the shadow of restaurants in Stellenbosch and Paarl.