

# STELLENBOSCH VISIO

## Nederburg Auction continues its pursuit of perfection



Wine enthusiasts from around the world descended on Nederburg in Paarl for the 43<sup>rd</sup> Nederburg Auction on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September. A change in format, an increase in private wine enthusiasts and record red wine prices made for a positive and well-received Auction. It all began on Friday, which was dedicated to the Auction tasting of all but the rarest wines as a prelude to auction day on Saturday.

Just short of 8,800 litres went under the hammer of David Elswood, renowned Christie's auctioneer raising over R6 million and leaving no lots unsold. The "belle of the ball" was the Meerlust Bordeaux Blend 1978 which achieved a Nederburg Auction record price per litre at a touch over R21,300. The last three known bottles of the Meerlust Bordeaux Blend, which were sold on Auction, will be making their way to their new home in Angola after being snapped up by an Angolan buyer.

South Africans too, didn't shy away from ensuring our local vinous treasures don't all leave our shores by successfully bidding on 70% of all wine sold. The biggest share of foreign buyers came from Taiwan at 6.5% of total sales. Domestically,

buyers from the Western Cape dominated with 60% of overall sales, a direct result of the increase in wine collectors adding to their private portfolios.



Cabernet Sauvignon was the most successful variety achieving an increase of 10.3% over 2016 and led by 21% in terms of all wines sold. Merlot followed with an increase of 8.5%, achieving R873 per litre. The highest rand per litre for the reds was for the outstanding Cabernet Franc's at R1,286.50. Higgs Jacobs, chairman of the Sommelier Association of South Africa said: "the wine selection was the best we've had on Auction, a tribute to the selection panel, which consisted of 5 Masters of Wine and 3 global wine experts."

This year's buyers were willing to pay top dollar for great quality and iconic brands. A great example was Ken Forrester, also known as the King of Chenin, who was certainly overjoyed with the results of The FMC 2009 which went under the hammer for R11,000 for 6 750ml bottles.



The oldest vintage on auction, a 1957 Chateau Libertas, received a huge round of applause when the hammer eventually fell at R55,00 for 6 bottles. The bidding frenzy was palpable when the Lanzerac Cabernet 1970 started at R3,000 and kept going until it was knocked down for R37,000. The 1980 Meerlust Cabernet was another outstanding performer going for R35,000. These high prices are a true testament to how well South African wines are aging and being appreciated by wine collectors around the world.

The Old Vine Project, which seeks to preserve old vines and create awareness of South Africa's winemaking heritage and is a collaboration between Alheit, Boekenhoutskloof and The Sadie Family Wines, contributed five cases each consisting of 2 wines from each producer, fetching an average price of R1,600 per bottle.



Francois Rautenbach of Singita was impressed by the new auction format, which he described as being more business like and focuses continuously on quality wine. He noted the sustained buying over a lengthy period of time, which resulted in a very active bidding hall. He also lauded producers who have built their brands over the years and were rewarded with good prices.



Michael Fridjhon, an internationally renowned wine critic and judge, who delivered the Keynote address, praised the rigorous selection of wines at this year's Nederburg Auction. His insightful address highlighted the need to ensure long-term sustainability of the wine industry. More importantly he challenged the industry to increase their efforts towards alleviating the plight of the communities who work and live around the farms by giving them knowledge to become more active players in the wine value chain.



David Elswold displayed a remarkable performance. His energy, wit and knowledge permeated through the Auction hall. He kept the bidding going for 6 straight hours, a clear indication of experience obtained over more than three decades of being in control of the auction gavel.



As is tradition, the main Nederburg Auction was followed by the Charity Auction. Roland Peens, known for his relentless enthusiasm in raising funds for underdeveloped communities was once again the director of this year's Charity Auction. He lived up to his reputation of persuading bidders to dig deep into their pockets and raised R505,000 for this year's Charity Auction beneficiary, sp(i)eel. For its part, Distell matched the contribution resulting in a total of R1.010m raised for charity. Distell MD, Richard Rushton said these funds will go a long way towards uplifting the communities in the greater Cape winelands.



The 43<sup>rd</sup> Nederburg Auction is a tribute to all the people who over the years, have made it a great success. The Nederburg Auction will continue to evolve to ensure it remains relevant to producers, who use it as a platform to elevate their brands, and forever more sophisticated buyers looking for exclusivity. This is an industry effort in pursuit of perfection and inspiring tomorrow's legacy today.