

Record sales at the 3rd Auction of Le Vin de François on October 22nd

At a glittering black tie by-invitation-only event at Lanzerac Hotel in Stellenbosch, 190 cases of 12 bottles plus magnums, 3 litre and 5 litre sizes were auctioned to local and international bidders, to realize sales of R870 000, a 21% increase on the previous year.

Top bidder was a well-known Johannesburg businessman who has attended every auction to date, and a close second, buying the most cases of wine, was Mr Koen Roose from Belgium. Fully 35% of the sales went to foreign buyers from France, The Netherlands, Czech Republic, the UK and Belgium.

The pampered guests were transported to and from the auction/dinner in a range of Lexus cars, drank Soutiran Champagne on arrival, and were treated to a gourmet three-course meal matched to the wines, while listening to band Bottomless Coffee in the flower-bedecked, candle-lit room. The auction, conducted by experienced Henri Hablutzel, took place between courses.

An innovation this year was the inclusion of the 7 winning works of an art competition run in conjunction with the University of Stellenbosch's Department of Visual Arts. Students were invited to create a piece of art in any medium, inspired by one of the seven contributing wineries for the 2009 blend. The 30 submissions were displayed at a Gallery in Stellenbosch, where a panel chose the work best representing each estate. The Freedom Hill submission featuring Nelson Mandela, was auctioned with 2 cases of wine and fetched a record price of R45 600. A collector's item case of 4 bottles each of the 2007, 2008 and 2009 vintages of Le Vin de François went for R11 600, the highest price paid for a single case on the evening. A substantial portion, R11 500, of the artwork sales are being donated to the Pebbles Project.

A creation of well-known winemaker Francois Naudé, Le Vin de François is a blend of the best Pinotages in the country and is only sold on auction.

Francois' dream of creating the ultimate Pinotage was born in 2007 when he approached some of the cellars where he consulted, with the idea of selecting barrels of their wine in order to create a blend that showcased the best of the variety.

That there was total agreement says volumes about Francois' standing in the wine industry and his acknowledged expertise with Pinotage. That includes, while he was winemaker at L'Avenir, winning the Perold Trophy 3 times for best Pinotage at the International Wine and Spirit Competition and being placed in the ABSA Top Ten Competition 7 times.

Wines selected for the 2009 vintage include ones used in previous blends, namely Delheim, Kanonkop, Lanzerac, Simonsig and L'Avenir. The two additions were Beyerskloof and Freedom Hill, bringing the number of producers to 7, supplying 10 barrels of wine.

Supporting the concept of the pinnacle of wine, the packaging is exclusive. The bottle is a reproduction of the original Bordeaux bottle used in 1855. The closures are specially selected Amorim corks, the same as used by first growths Chateaux Latour and d'Yquem. The twelve bottle wooden cases are custom made, stackable and sturdy, and the label a unique work of art from well-known design studio Haumann Smal.

Le Vin de François is a family project, from Chateau Naudé Wine Creations, so it is fitting that the icon used on the label is a wing nut, symbolising the clasp together of family ideals, with the different wines from a variety of terroirs that created this unique wine. Francois also jokingly added that the wing nuts look a little bit like his ears!

A small portion of the wine was kept back for an online charity auction, to run until the end of November. For more information please visit www.levindefrancois.com

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