

# **RECORD PRICES AT FIFTH ANNUAL AUCTION CONFIRM THE STATUS OF LE VIN DE FRANÇOIS**

Arguably S.A.'s most unusual top Pinotage sets private buyers on fire.

It's a wine that few get to lay their hands on - which means that even an invitation to the annual private auction is a ticket to treasure. This year was no exception, and the fifth annual auction of the sought-after Le Vin de François on October 20 set the fans alight, producing record prices. Yet again!

For the first time, total sales exceeded R1 million for more or less a similar release as last year (195 cases), representing an increase of 17 percent on the previous auction. This equates to more than R5 200 for a case of 12, confirming the iconic status of Le Vin de François.

In what must truly be a remarkable strategy in the Cape's wine business and culture – and a very successful one at that - Pinotage master François Naudé and his family release a limited edition of a high-end, blended Pinotage every year. This happens at a carefully choreographed social event, which in itself has become an enticement among punters and wine collectors.

This year, 140 guests were, as has become traditional, transported to a 'secret destination' and magnificently entertained. An elegant, picnic-style lunch was laid on at Bon Esperance, on the hills outside Stellenbosch. The artistry of chef Piet Marais was displayed in a number of haute cuisine food stations, while patrons sipped Soutiran champagne and other wines from the Chateau Naudé cellar.

The informal, yet stylish setting, allowed for a more playful auction throughout the leisurely afternoon, which also included cool, live music. Auctioneer Richard Gore not only drew bidders' enthusiasm, but turned out to be quite an entertaining performer himself.

As has become custom, art works (this year Charles Russel's engaging photographs) and various bottle sizes (even one 9 litre!) came up for auction. Most were well paid for. One, accompanied by a case of wine was sold for R17 700, bought by Mr Steven Lack of the International Wine Company in Johannesburg. He was also the largest single buyer, spending R108 000.

Another buyer paid R13 680 for a collector's case which included all previous vintages of Le Vin de François. Buyers from France, Belgium, Denmark, the UK and the Czech Republic were present.

The proceeds of the art works sold, a total of R28 700, will again be donated to the Make a Difference Foundation. This out-reach aspect of the project is typical of the Naudé family's strategy of generosity as investment.

The concept of Le Vin de François, born five years ago, is that of a top wine, blended from various well-known cellars where Naudé, a multi-awarded Pinotage champion, consults or has personal ties. The wine just released, the Le Vin de François 2011, was blended from top barrels selected at Delheim, Lanzerac, L’Avenir, Beyerskloof, Kanonkop and Simonsig.

Given its status, the wine is smartly packaged, and the wooden cases are sturdy for a long haul in the connoisseur’s private cellar. Although delicious now in its youth – as guests discovered at the glamorous launch lunch – it will age well.

François Naudé is excited by the wine. “The colour is typical dark ruby-red. A bold and attractive nose of ripe berries, plum pudding and black cherry has whiffs of chocolate and spicy oak. The palate is complex, rich and juicy with fruit conserve, sweet spice and ripe plums. The combination of sweet fruit and ample soft tannins makes this wine drinkable when young, yet it has great maturation potential.”

What is sure, is that Le Vin de François is now firmly established as one of the country’s wines-to-be-noted.

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