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# DISTINGUISHING DECADES

Marketing is all about launching new ideas and selling the brand and South African wine is up against ever-increasing global competition. The Nederburg Auction is recognised by aficionados the world over with its aim to auction rare and mature wines. The event attracts international buyers resulting in the promotion of South African wines worldwide.

rose petal, citrus and with a syrupy consistency on the tongue and aftertaste as legendary as its success. It has received global accolades yet this style at the time was not recognised and was rejected by the local wine board.

This spectacular product was handcrafted in the Nederburg cellars by German national, Günter Brözel: a man with an Italian passion for life and wine. He oozed enthusiasm, his eyes glistened with good ideas and he inspired many he shared his wine with. In his tastings, he described his wines as a romantic poetry rich in colour, flavour, potential and virtues. With this approach he shook the industry and inspired a generation of Cape winemakers.

Like many successful projects, the auction came about because of a real need to showcase a new and novel wine style. The wine was the 1968 Nederburg Auction Edelkeur, a noble late harvest wine, golden in colour, with nuances of honey,



Four decades later the auction has grown from five to over 100 producers. It continues to knock down beautifully crafted mature vintages no longer available in the market place and each wine carries the Auction's gold seal of approval. This wine forum is an incentive to buy superb quality and continues to promote winemaking excellence around the globe. Tickets to the exclusive vitrine into the industry have always been in demand and attended by the most talented and experienced wine fraternity, journalists and leading hotel and restaurant trade.

The early days were splendour and glamour aimed at seducing the 800-guest list into bidding furiously in the auction room. Patrons were greeted with flutes of bubbles and lavishly entertained. This was the event in the wine industry to which men donned suits and ladies accessorised layers of colourful crimpoline with jewellery and hats.

My early memories were of very long hours of eating and drinking! A long





Cape picture. Over the years this gracious homestead has housed displays of antiques, brand-name luggage, artworks and jewellery to entertain celebrity guests.

Only three auctioneers have graced the podium: The legendary Patrick Grubb MW, 1975-2005, who described wines like poetry; the celebrated SA auctioneer, Stephan Welz 2006 - 2009 and currently Anthony Barne MW from Bonham's in London.

As a tribute to the first winery to sell Pinotage internationally in 1975, the first and last lots were traditionally those from Lanzerac. Bidding was fast and furious spurred on by the late Benny Goldberg and his wife, often hidden beneath a large feathered hat. They owned Benny Goldberg's, the largest discounted retail store in Johannesburg.

This was the "sought after" event in the annual wine calendar and as journalists we were spoilt with many nights in leading hotels, dinners with ever increasing bottles of wine and gifts.

The heat of the valley, excesses of fine dining and the Nederburg cellar took its toll shortly after lunch and couples relaxed under trees or in the media centre for a relaxing snooze.

After 40 years of great wine bidding this superb day is still filled with a who's who of a wine industry that continues to grow in stature and wisdom. The elegance and complexity of the wines on offer reflects the talent of the Cape cellar masters. Prices always mirror the scarcity of these coveted bottles bearing their "sold at the Nederburg Auction" stickers.

This year a record average price per litre of R597.36 was reached, a 68.5% increase on 2013. "This is indicative of strong demand for premium South African wine, underpinned by a record average price per litre achieved and no unsold lots," says Auction Manager Dalene Steyn. Despite challenging local market conditions, bidding showed a desire for rare quality wines, as shown by the record price per litre achieved for both the red and white categories, and record prices for a Chenin and Noble Late Harvest. The latter sold at R6,444 for 12 x 375ml bottles of Nederburg Edelkeur 1979. This sale took

the Nederburg Auction to a total of just over R7 million as the last wine in the line-up to be auctioned over the two days.

There is also a charity sale which raised R209 000 for Hope Through Action and the Breytenbach Centre, with charity auctioneer Ken Forrester knocking down 12 x 750ml bottles of Nederburg Vintage Cabernet 1975 for R47 500 and the Van Ryn's Charentaise Collection of 10-year-old potstill brandy for R25 000, in addition to other items.

Winemaking doesn't grow pennies in the bank, yet wine lives in your heart. This community lives their dream and lived life with their enjoyment of wine. Their wines may be remembered long after empire builders and the joy they have given wine lovers may be greater than those who can reflect upon successes in the stocks and shares.



room filled with round tables decked with linen, flowers and finery while chef in white coats and soufflé hats, were handpicked to create the luncheon.

Oysters were shucked on arrival and giant prawns clinging onto a tin foiled pyramid in the centre of the table, were followed by a generous portions of steak and an elegant bouquet of string beans tied with a leek knot. For years, the signature dish was a chocolate sculpture crafted as Fabergé might; his unique eggs designed for the Russian Royal Family.

Billy Gallagher, a name synonymous with culinary prowess and perfection, oversaw the buying and design of the world-class luncheon. I was always amazed by the vast number of chefs that would walk through the hall to take a bow of recognition after the lunch.

The guest speaker seemed to drone on for hours in the hall, and paddles and

numbers sounded like the frenetic hum of the stock exchange exacting in frequency as temperatures soared beyond 40 degrees. When the orator drew breath there was an exodus to the marquee to book seats for the eagerly awaited fashion show.

A grand marquee was erected to stage the fashion show, which welcomed scantily clad models on an extensive red carpet. Guests flocked to this spectacle and winemakers feared the auction of their wines would clash with the leggy dames when the sale room would be virtually vacated.

The historic Cape Dutch manor house, with its thatch and bees wax furniture polish, textured décor, copper pots, and statuesque flower displays was a welcome refuge from the heat of the April sun. Ideally suited beneath the tall trees with the vineyards and Paarl mountain presenting a glorious backdrop, it painted a the perfect