



# HEY, BIG SPENDER

Record sales at this year's Cape Winemakers Guild Auction were underpinned by aggressive buying by The Butcher Shop & Grill's Alan Pick. Joanne Simon reports.

**F**ine wine translates into fine prices, or so the 36 members of the Cape Winemakers Guild (CWG) were hoping at the 20th annual Nedbank CWG Auction, held a few weeks ago at Spier near Stellenbosch.

"This year's auction promises to be better than ever," said CWG chairman Gary Jordan in the run-up to what is widely recognised as South Africa's only public auction of rare and fine Cape wines – wines that are produced exclusively for the auction and are not available anywhere else (unless when re-sold by auction buyers). And he appears to have been proved right – the equivalent of 2 828 six-bottle cases came under the hammer of Henré

Hablutzel of Hofmeyr Mills, amounting to R3 558 100 excluding VAT, an increase of 20% on the 2004 figure of R2,96 million (which works out at R1 258 a case or R210 per bottle).

Star of the show was Francois Naudé's L'Avenir Pinotage Reserve 2004, which achieved the highest price ever paid for a six-bottle case of wine at the CWG Auction – R4 000 (a high of R666,67 per bottle). There's no doubt that sentiment played a large role as international buyers bid up the price as a farewell to Oom Francois, who is retiring from the CWG at the end of the year. The two-case lot was finally knocked down to Fergal Tynan from Boutinot Wines in the UK, with foreign buyers accounting for 24% of total purchases, up from 21% last year.

Interesting to note that Teddy Hall's Rudera Chenin Blanc noble late harvest Auction Reserve 2005 also hit a high of R4 000 a case, although his 375ml bottles of liquid gold averaged just one cent less than L'Avenir's at R666,66 a bottle!

The day's biggest spender was Alan Pick, representing his two restaurants on Sandton's Nelson Mandela Square, The Butcher

Shop & Grill and newly opened Lekgotla, as well as his off-licence, Vintages. He bought wine for R1,19 million, almost doubling his 2004 Auction purchases. "I have virtually doubled my purchases every year over the past three Auctions because the demand is there," he commented. "My customers now see the Cape Winemakers Guild as a brand in its own right and have no hesitation in paying high prices for these wines because the quality is invariably of the highest standard."

So, what are the reasons for this "guarantee" of quality? For starters, winemakers are only invited to join the CWG if they have a reputation for making outstanding wines that dates back a minimum of five years, and if their nomination has been approved by a two-thirds majority at the CWG's annual general meeting. Even then, their wine will only appear on the auction if approved by members in a blind tasting – and the selection criteria are nothing if not stringent. This year, for example, there were 69 wines up for selection for the 2005 auction, but only 39 wines from 24 winemakers were eventually deemed good enough. As Jordan put it: "The CWG



1) A delighted Francois Naudé whose L'Avenir Pinotage Reserve 2004 received the top price of R667 per 750 ml bottle. 2) Gauteng Premier Mbhazima Shilowa with Alan Pick of The Butcher Shop & Grill, top buyer for the fourth year. 3) The CWG Charity Auction of three exclusive CWG items raised R51 000, comprising a 12-litre bottle of 2003 CWG Food for Thought (whose label was designed by the children of Bottelary Primary); a collection of past and present auction wines signed by CWG members; and a 12-litre bottle of 2003 Philanthropy (whose label was produced by the children of Vlotenburg Primary). Gary Jordan and Danie Steytler flank Dion Poggenpoel of Brown's Restaurant.

label is an authentic assurance of quality.'

The highest average case price was R2 960, paid by – you guessed it – Alan Pick, who held his paddle aloft until he'd secured all 80 cases of the Boekenhoutskloof Auction Reserve Syrah 2003 on offer: "And if you've got 100 more at the farm, I'll take them too," he was overheard saying to winemaker Marc Kent, who in turn was uncharacteristically lost for words. Second highest average case price was paid for Norma Ratcliffe's Warwick Femme Bleue 2001 at R2 220.

For whites, highest case price of the day was paid for André van Rensburg's Vergelegen "The White" 2004 at R1 500 (average R1 056) followed by Gary Jordan's Jordan Chardonnay Reserve 2004

at R1 300 (average R1 206). Top case price for a fortified wine went to Carel Nel's Boplaas Vintage Reserve Port 2002. "I believe the price levels were realistic as most of the successful bidders have been buying at the auction for years and they clearly know their wines and markets," commented Jordan.

There is also a strong fundraising element to the auction in the form of a "silent auction" of specially packaged rare wines from each of the CWG's 36 members (which raised a record R101 550, to which the auction's sponsor of 10 years, Nedbank, will add a further R100 000), and a charity auction, comprising three exclusive CWG items: a 12-litre bottle of 2003 CWG Food for Thought – a Bordeaux-style blend of wines from 18 members of the CWG (bought by Dion Poggenpoel of Brown's Restaurant in Rivonia for R11 000); a collection of past and present auction wines signed by CWG members (bought by Clive Davidson of Champany Inn in Scotland for R20 000); and 12-litre bottle of 2003 Philanthropy – a blend of Pinotage, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and individual blends by 18 members of the

CWG (bought by Mark Lindhorst of Lindhorst Wines in Paarl for R20 000).

Proceeds will go to the Nedbank Cape Winemakers Guild Trust, which supports wine industry workers and their families.

**2005 AUCTION AT A GLANCE**

**Total Value of 2005 Auction Sales**

(excl.VAT): R3 558 100 (130 buyers)

**Highest Price Raised per Case**

(6 x 750ml or equivalent): R4 000 for L'Avenir Pinotage Reserve 2004 (Boutinot Wines, UK)

**Highest Average Case Price**

(6 x 750ml or equivalent): R2 960 for Boekenhoutskloof Auction Reserve Syrah 2003 (The Butcher Shop & Grill)

**Top Five 2005 Local Auction Buyers:**

The Butcher Shop and Grill (R1 192 900), Joachim Steinhoevel (top private buyer at R91 800), Makro (R86 200), Singita (R85 300), Brand Engineering (R79 000).

**Top Five 2005 Overseas Auction Buyers:**

Tedeum Vin (Denmark, R225 300), Boutinot Wines (UK, R149 700), Well International (Japan, R81 500), Crown Wine Cellar (Hong Kong, R66 300), Great Grapes (Holland, R64 600).

TOP 10 PRICES PAID OVERALL	MAX (R/CASE)	AVERAGE (R/CASE)	MAX (R/BOTTLE)
L'Avenir Pinotage Reserve 2004	R4000	R1972	R666,67
Rudera Chenin Blanc NLH Auction Reserve 2005 (6 x 375ml)	R4000	R2294,74	R666,66
Boekenhoutskloof Auction Reserve Syrah 2003	R3400	R2960	R566,67
Warwick Femme Bleue 2001	R2400	R2220	R400
De Trafford Perspective 2003	R2300	R1910	R383,33
Hartenberg Gravel Hill Shiraz 2002	R2100	R1900	R350
Thelema Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2003	R2100	R1896	R350
Vergelegen Auction Reserve 2002	R2100	R1880	R350
Le Riche Auction Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2003	R2050	R1903	R341
Waterford Auction Reserve 2003	R2000	R1947	R333,33