

Nederburg Auction welcomes Pinotage pioneer Bellevue Estate

An der Nederburg Auktion 2009 wird Bellevue Estate mit dem Morkel label die Pinotage Sektion ergänzen. Die Familie Morkel hat im Jahr 1953 zusammen mit der Kriege Familie von Kanonkop und der Starke Familie von Meerendal die ersten Pinotage Reben gepflanzt. Im Jahre 1959, also genau vor 50 Jahren, hat der Bellevue-Morkel Pinotage die Trophäe für den besten Wein aus ganz Südafrika an der „Young wine show“ gewonnen. Auch heute gehören die Morkel Weine und vor allem die Pinotage Weine zu den besten Weinen aus Südafrika.



With South Africa celebrating 350 years of winemaking excellence this year, it is fitting that Bellevue Wine Estate - the cradle of Pinotage, makes its debut at the Nederburg Auction with this varietal. Owned by the Morkel family since 1861, it was Pieter Krige Morkel (fondly known as P.K.) who took the bold step in 1953, along with Paul Sauer of Kanonkop and Kosie Starke from Meerendal, to plant Pinotage - then an unknown variety - on his Stellenbosch farm. P.K.'s intrepidity bore fruit when, in 1959 (exactly 50 years ago), his wine from this almost unknown variety took the General Smuts trophy for the overall best wine on the Cape Young Wine Show. Current owner and viticulturist at Bellevue, Dirkie Morkel, P.K.'s nephew, says of his uncle; "We salute him for making Bellevue an integral part of the Pinotage history of South Africa. We hope that we can honour his memory by using the God-given factors and all the human ability and knowledge we have, to produce the best possible Pinotage for the public to enjoy".

This promise rings true. Bellevue became one of the first commercial producers of Pinotage and has been bottling under its own brand since 2000. The estate currently cultivates approximately 192 hectares of vineyards, and produces more than half a million litres of high-quality wine annually. The estate also supplies quality grapes to chosen clients in the South African Wine industry.



On offer at this year's auction are just 35 x 6-bottle cases of the 2003 PK Morkel Pinotage vintage, with a reserve price of R900 per case. Winemaker Wilhelm Kritzinger describes it as a bold, intense, beautifully balanced wine, with concentrated blackberry, plum, chocolate and vanilla flavours on the nose that follow



through to a palate "packed with abundant fruit, well-integrated oak flavours, a supple mouthfeel and silky tannin structure".

Additionally, as part of the commemoration of 50 years of Pinotage from this family estate, Dirkie Morkel has produced a three-litre bottle of the 2006 Pinotage specially for the charity auction, which takes place at the close of the Nederburg Auction to raise funds for the Hospice Palliative Care Association of South Africa, Mothers to Mothers and the Organ Donor Foundation. Only one bottle of this size has been bottled and will be signed by PK Morkel's 96 year-old sister, Gerda van Niekerk, and Dirkie Morkel.

Full details of all wines on auction will appear in the catalogue, available in July. The auction takes place on September 11 and 12 at Nederburg in Paarl.



Nederburg is all set to showcase the very best of its traditions and innovations in Paarl on September 11 and 12, as it marks the 35th anniversary of the Nederburg Auction and 350 years of winemaking at the Cape. The spring auction line-up spans close to 45 years at Nederburg, starting with the rich and Madeira-like 1964 Port, made entirely from Shiraz, and continues across the decades with several recent vintages, contemporary styled single-vineyard Sauvignon Blancs, so clearly expressive of place. Many of these wines are international and local award-winners.

"We tried to make the collection of wines we submitted for the panel's consideration, as representative of Nederburg's history as possible," says marketing manager Rudolph du Toit. "There are some wines three to four decades old, obviously in very small quantities, but at the same time, we wanted to include wines in sufficient quantities to be accessible to connoisseurs. While they are all made exclusively for the Nederburg Auction and are thus specialist offerings, there is no reason why they should be the sole preserve of the elite. Our intention is for Nederburg to be enjoyed by people who love wine and want the privilege of something special that is still within their means. By focusing on both micro-cuvées, as well as other gourmet wines intended for wider distribution to retail and restaurant chains, we are aiming to make luxury more affordable."

Lots will vary in size from just 14 cases of 12 bottles to over 200 cases, to address a variety of markets. They include a generous selection of noble late harvests, a category in which current cellar master at Nederburg, Razvan Macici, has shown himself to be a worthy successor to Günter Brözel. Brözel's maiden 1969 Edelkeur was the catalyst for the first auction, providing the platform to sell a botrytised wine that would otherwise not have been permitted under the legislation of the day.

Both winemakers have earned international and local acclaim for their wines made from grapes affected by noble rot (*botrytis cinerea*).



Says Macici: "Being an important anniversary for the country and the auction, we submitted some of Günter's wines for the selectors to consider. In addition to the lovely 1964 Port, there are the very fine 1975 Vintage Cabernet Sauvignon and the 1979 Edelkeur. Despite its 30 years, this dessert wine is power-packed with fragrance and an intensity of flavours, a vibrant acidity and long, sustained finish that belies its age. It is a wine such as this that I take as my inspiration."

Edelkeur will be represented across the 1979, 1996, 2002 (which won a gold on the International Wine & Spirit Competition) and 2004 vintages and Eminence, across the 1991, 2003 (Macici's personal favourite and twice a winner of a Grand d'Or on the Michelangelo International Wine Awards) and 2004 vintages. Other noble late harvest wines include the graceful but luscious Private Bin S316 Weisser Riesling, made in 2001 during Macici's first vintage at Nederburg, and the equally attractive 2002 vintage of the same wine. The Sauterne-like 2001 Semillon Noble Late Harvest has been praised by the selectors for its "bright, spicy nose of quince, pear and mango, massive mouth and super creamy character".

The selection of the more unusual varietal wines to come from Nederburg includes the 2001 Petit Verdot (a Veritas double gold medallist), and Cabernet Franc, and the 2002 and 2003 Malbec, all showing rounded and complete flavours but with many years in them yet.

The savoury Private Bin R163 Cabernet Sauvignon of 1999 shows traces of olive and bacon overlaid by berries, chocolate and sweet spice, while the Private Bin R115 of the same year is a blend of Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon and combines savoury, smoky, fruit and spice flavours.

These are made in the more traditionalist style, whereas the R163 Cabernet Sauvignon from the 2004 vintage exhibits more assertive black fruit, with layers of lavender and vanilla.

There will be only one Nederburg Shiraz to come under the hammer, the 2002 R121 Private Bin, which proved so popular last year. The panel lauded its "grand display of floral notes, chocolate and cherry characters and velvet flow", calling it "possibly the most elegant Shiraz yet to come from Nederburg".

Macici's 2004 R172 Pinotage is a tribute to the indigenous South African grape. "It's lively and juicy with ripe black fruit but retains the refinement you associate with Pinot Noir," he says.

Under his direction, Sauvignon Blanc has become an important feature of Nederburg's repertoire. He and colleague Tariro Masayiti have shown themselves particularly adept at closely reflecting the origin of these wines. The 2007 Private Bin D234, which was awarded last year's Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show's cup for best unwooded Sauvignon Blanc, remains lively, zesty and youthful with traces of nettle, fresh-cut grass, gooseberry and tropical fruits.



Macici believes the 2009 selection of Nederburg shows the winery at its best. "You have enduring wines of remarkable longevity that transcend fashion and more than hold their own against contemporary cuvées. These are rare treasures of remarkable vitality. The new generation wines are definitely more modern in style, made with newer clones and exhibiting a purer fruit expression but they have also been made to last."

