

Tsogo Sun tops the lists at two wine auctions

"Wine is bottled poetry." Robert Louis Stevenson

Tsogo Sun spent just under R3,2 million at two wine auctions this year – the Nederburg and Cape Winemakers Guild auctions – firmly nailing its colours to the mast in respect of its commitment to offering guests an exceptional experience in food and beverage. The group took top spot at both auctions for total wine sales by a single bidder – the first time that a hotel group topped the list at the Nederburg auction.

Tsogo Sun spent R723 900 at the Nederburg auction, representing 10.3% of the wines on auction and 1 014 bottles of wine, and R2,47 million at the Cape Winemakers Guild auction, representing 3036 bottles.

The Tsogo Sun delegation of five of the group's wine aficionados included Garry Reed, General Manager of Southern Sun The Cullinan in Cape Town; Norman Wallace and John van Rooyen, both Operations Directors; Georgio Meletiou, Western Cape Regional Sommelier; and Miguel Chan, Group Sommelier. The team's brief was to buy an outstanding selection of wines at the best possible prices in order for Tsogo Sun to create great experiences for its guests.

Reed explains that the foundation of the team's preparations for the auction was an understanding of their guests' needs and preferences. "As a starting point, we looked at which wines our guests historically enjoy. Understanding the intrinsic qualities of each wine was also crucial as they come at a premium and it was imperative that the wines we purchased are food friendly and can be enjoyed over the next 12 months."

Both wine auctions had record-breaking events this year, with Nederburg achieving a record average price per litre of R597.36, 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, who adds that bidding showed a desire for rare quality wines, with record prices per litre achieved for both the red and white categories.

The 30th Nedbank Cape Winemakers Guild Auction broke all records with the biggest sales ever recorded, exceeding R11,9 million and no less than three wines fetching the highest price ever achieved of R8 600 for a case of six bottles. The auction also attracted a record

number of 178 buyers this year, with sales 42% up on the 2013 turnover.

Reed agrees that the competition was intense at both auctions. “They were two of the most exciting auctions I’ve ever attended, driven largely by the fact that the lots were significantly smaller this year and the interest, coupled with a weaker Rand, made the bidding dynamic, especially from international buyers. We were consistently bidding against other buyers for a wine that we simply had to have – and the fact that prices were so much higher this year compared to last year gives a good indication of how intense the bidding was.”

Coincidentally, the most expensive wine purchased by Tsogo Sun at both auctions was the Kanonkop Paul Sauer, which fetched R7 500 for six bottles at the Nederburg auction and R8 600 at the Cape Winemakers Guild auction. The team purchased predominantly red wines, along with a “stunning aged Port”. Most of the wines bought are structured and aged, being more than five years old. “These are wines that need food to express their best, reflecting our emphasis on food and beverage as a core component of our business.”

The wines will be available on the wine lists of Tsogo Sun hotels with a strong existing base of wine-lovers. In Gauteng, this includes Southern Sun Hyde Park Sandton, 54 on Bath, Sandton Sun, Riffs at Garden Court Sandton City, InterContinental Sandton Towers, Intercontinental OR Tambo Airport, Southern Sun OR Tambo Airport, and at five Montecasino outlets, namely The Palazzo, Southern Sun Montecasino and Aarya at SunSquare Montecasino, along with two new restaurants that will be launching soon, Jenda and Café Cru. In the Western Cape, the wines will be available at Southern Sun The Cullinan, Southern Sun Waterfront and Southern Sun Cape Sun, and in Durban at the Beverly Hills, Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani and The Grill Jichana.