

The Nederburg Auction is as old as the modern South African wine industry - not necessarily a claim to fame at a time when anything which predates the smartphone era is clumped together with cave art, the Pyramids at Giza and the Leaning Tower of Pisa as proof of a world before Steve Jobs. It's impossible to play to a house which sets these at the entry criteria: the cars we drive are still (largely) powered by internal combustion engines and are controlled by (admittedly flawed) humans. The Singularity (when the sum total of artificial intelligence exceeds the sum total of human intelligence - the Presidency excepted) may still be a decade or two away, but this doesn't mean that we should trash everything which pre-dates last week Tuesday.

This pretty much sums up the dilemma of the Nederburg offering: there are some fabulous wines, but they're not necessarily cutting edge. However, you're not being asked to choose a Regency listed building over a hi-tech glass and chrome palace: you are expected to suspend your take on current release reds and whites in order to savour what the passage of the years has done to some of the Cape's best MODERN examples.

It's useful to begin with the reds: there is a truly fabulous 2009 Nederburg Auction Cabernet R163. This is a wine which would rival many of the Medocs from the same (extraordinary) vintage. It has intensity, finesse, just the right balance between austerity and delicacy, it's ripe but has that savoury green-edged whiff of great claret, it is not New World but it's not old fashioned either. It's the kind of wine which would appeal to those who still believe that Kanonkop, Vergelegen, Morgenster and Neil Ellis have a place on the South African pantheon. This means consumers who have not succumbed completely to the rock-star/garagiste propaganda of those who trade the fruit of dry-land, bush-vine viticulture from the now fashionable sites north and west of Malmesbury. In short, it is of an era, but it is not dated, not a museum piece, not an anachronism.

The Tamboerskloof Syrah 2009 shares much in common with it: it has the classical peppery notes you would expect from the Northern Rhone, but also enough richness to appeal to those whose tastes have been formed by the New World. Unlike the Nederburg, it's already at its peak, on the plateau but not yet tumbling down. It is further advanced than the older, yet classically-styled 1998 Zonnebloem Pinotage - fresh, earthy, modern enough to seem almost fashionably Mediterranean, but still with a whiff of the tell-tale red and black fruit spice that long ago was spoken of as *duco*.

The whites - especially the younger ones - seem more at home in the Google era. The 2014 Nederburg Two Centuries Sauvignon Blanc is simply sumptuous - and is as good a sauvignon from that vintage as we've seen in the market. The Constantia Glen 2 - a traditional white Bordeaux blend - is the white wine equivalent of the Nederburg R163: perfectly balanced, harmonious, fresh and restrained, not flamboyant, not austere - refined in the best sense of the word.

There's a neat line-up of Chardonnays, from the Kershaw 2012 Clonal selection (Elgin fruit) via a fabulous Domaine de Dieux 2010 through to the Nederburg D270 2009. The Kershaw is a new era wine, with more focus on the source materials but still with the oak evident (perhaps a little too much). The Domaine de Dieux is as fresh (but more intricate) while the D270 now has a real bottle-aged character. Among the dessert wines, the 2009 Edelkeur is simply extraordinary, and is a reason in itself for placing an absentee bid at the sale.

In short, the 2016 Nederburg Auction offers mainly ready-to-drink Cape wines, carefully

selected. These are not wines which are easily sourced - or even easily replaced with what is currently in the market. That's the sale's USP and serious wine drinkers should take advantage of it.

*For more info go to [nederburgauction.co.za](http://nederburgauction.co.za)*