

THE INVESTEC TROPHY WINE SHOW JUDGES' FEEDBACK SESSION

GRANDE ROCHE HOTEL PAARL, 11h00 – 12h30, 14 May 2026

CHAIRMAN OF JUDGES: Michael Fridjhon

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES: Heidi Mäkinen MW, Oz Clarke OBE and Kenichi Ohashi MW

SOUTH AFRICAN JUDGES: Cathy van Zyl MW, Christian Eedes, JD Pretorius, Kyle Davids, Mandla Patson Mathonsi, Heidi Duminy CWM, JD Pretorius and Malu Lambert

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Good morning and welcome to the 25th feedback session from the 25th Investec Trophy Wine Show. Thank you all for being here. It has been a show of note, aided and abetted, I suspect, by the weather, which kept everyone indoors and made everyone work that much harder. And that worked fine for me because we really had a sumptuous line-up of results, and I have been trying to unpack that, because, including museum classes, there are fifty gold medals. That is, I mean, we keep talking about the average over 25 years of between 2 and 3%, and here we are at 8 or 9. So I have to ask myself, have we lost the plot, or has something happened that has really changed things? And every year, when people say, "But the industry is getting better and better, and therefore in theory we should be seeing more and more gold medals", we also say "Yes, but every year we raise the bar. So if you raise the bar and the tide is rising, etcetera, how can we suddenly go from 30 or 35 to 50?" I think there are several answers to that.

Firstly, there is a huge breadth of entries. So instead of a few people putting in lots of wines in the off-chance that they can sneak them past the judges, people have been very thoughtful in what they put in. Secondly, with the exception, I have to say, with some embarrassment of Merlot, which sort of flashed briefly a few years ago, it is the one big class that we would really like to have seen a gold in, and we did not. So that is the only class, pretty much, that did not perform. And a lot of these golds are in niche white, niche red, small, little categories where adventurous producers have been working for some time and really know what they are doing with those varieties. So, a percentage of those extra golds are coming from small, very carefully defined segments, which add huge value to the industry. Thirdly, just as I looked at the table today as we looked at the trophy line up, for I think the first time, we had pretty much half and half white and red wine. Traditionally, we have always had strong white wine classes, not a lot going on in red. There were fabulously pure Cabernets; they are very good Shiraz. We know the punters do not believe in the Shiraz nearly as much as the judges do. They were really good Shiraz. There was, take a deep breath everybody, a museum class Pinot Noir and a current entry Pinot Noir, both in gold. I do not think we have had a Pinot gold in 15-years. And they were both really profoundly good wines. Wines that we could certainly trot out anywhere, but most importantly, we could trot out in Burgundy. So, all of these little bits and pieces came together, together with the fact that the 2025 vintage, which is obviously on the

tasting benches for many of the whites, was a splendid vintage. And I think all of these factors helped to explain how we got to where we are.

Before I start, and we are on the timetable because Heidi does have to catch her plane, there are so many people I want to thank, and if we do not thank them at the beginning, they do not get the credit they deserve. So, there is a long list of people who are invisible to the judges most of the time, but without whose assistance and help, this thing simply would not come together. So, it is a list. It is Monica who drives the whole thing. She is the scariest person in the Out Sorceress office, and for good reason, and we all obey her because it works very well. Michael Crossley has probably vanished in a moment of modesty. But — oh, there he is at the back of the room. He really is; he is the kind of eyes and ears and wisdom behind the scenes because that is what the show requires. There are a whole bunch of people, Matthew, Darienne, Mandy, and Janice. We have got Itumeleng, we have got Ashley. These are names if you have been coming to this feedback session that you know have been here. Imran, Andrea, and Patricia are not here in the room now. We used to do a kind of call pass, but they are still helping to sort the wines. There is Ray, Clever, Andy, and Sancho. This is the part no one sees, and at a show of this kind, where everything is checked and double-checked, what you really do not want are the stewards coming in and pouring the wrong wine into the wrong glass. It does not happen here because everyone is aware of what that means when it goes wrong. So, we are really grateful to the unsung heroes because without them, actually, there would be no heroes at all. It is as simple as that. I am going to fast forward because of the timetable, pass the mic straight away to Heidi Mäkinen, who judged here in 2017. So back for the first time in nine years. To say I think, because maybe somebody needs to make an overall *what has happened in a decade*, would you like to talk about what your impressions were this year, and where that leaves you relative to how you thought about South African wine ten years ago?

HEIDI MÄKINEN: Absolutely. So, hello everybody, and thank you, Michael. It is very exciting to be back after nine years. We had a fantastic dinner the other night, and there I was raving about how my favourite wine country is Spain because I think that country just does a lot of really exciting things with autochthonous varieties, new generation winemakers, and providing great value. And here I am thinking maybe I should change that topic to saying South Africa is that country. I have not been as exposed to South African vineyards and wineries yet. I have been exposed to the wines not just here but also in my professional career of twenty years in wine. And I do think that this country has gone miles forward since the last time I was here, but also after 1994 and perhaps before as well. There is a lot of kind of that belief in what you do uniquely in this country and less of the comparisons to the Burgundies and Bordeaux in the wine world. And I think that is something that really excites me in the world of wine, that you start to believe in what you have instead of doing those comparisons. Doing those comparisons first will get you somewhere. It will push you forward and forward. But after a while, you just have to have that inherent belief in what you do. And I think that today, we are really seeing that in this country. Whether it is the so-called international varieties,

Chardonnays, Cabernet Sauvignons, Shiraz, or the more, perhaps, not really only South African but more autochthonous varieties such as Cinsault and those kinds of things, Chenin Blancs that this country does so, so well. So, it has been a delight to be back, and I think there is a really good way forward. And I think that South Africa has gained that presence already in the premium wine markets with the wine. So be proud of yourself. I know a lot of people here are quite critical still, and that is a good thing because that pushes you forward. You never come and sit on your laurels. You have to always push forward. But I think there is a huge potential in this country, and I do think that a lot of the international wine markets are already seeing that. So thank you for having me again after nine years.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, Heidi. And before you go, I do want to ask you about the wines you saw today for the first time. So not the classes that you judged and obviously took to pieces very carefully over several hours. There were wines today that were not in the classes you judged. If you had to make one call about either niche whites, niche reds, if you did not do Chenin, then Chenin, where do you think we have strengths, and where would you like to highlight weaknesses?

HEIDI MÄKINEN: So this year, I did not get to judge Sauvignon Blanc nor Chardonnay apart from today's trophies or potential trophies. And I do think one of my favourites today was a Chardonnay. It was a world-class wine without making any comparisons to any other amazing regions in the world where Chardonnay is made. I think the one that we really had on the table today, and I think it is going to end up being one of the best wines of the international judges. That was really a world-class wine that I would happily put in my cellar and keep it there for twenty years and enjoy over the years. So that was fantastic. During the evening programmes that we have had in local restaurants, I really enjoyed trying some of the Syrah wines that I did not get to judge this year. And I think Syrah as a variety is definitely something that you make a unique style of, and I would really cherish that style further on. And I really look forward to what Syrah can be coming from the Cape.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you very much indeed. Oz Clarke, on my right, very bravely accepted the invitation to judge the very first Trophy Wine Show in 2002. There was this idea, the idea percolated. We decided we needed a competition, smaller panels, discussion between the judges. All sorts of things that, even then, but certainly now are self-evident, were not things that the industry did. And we needed that competition to launch with credibility in terms of international judges who could bring their palates and their judgment and their commentary to the industry. And Oz accepted the invitation on fairly short notice, and then very kindly, I have to say, with slightly more pressure this time around, accepted the invitation to bookend 25 years of South African wine.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: So Oz, would you like to just give an overview? You have obviously been here in between; you were back in 2013. You have seen the world of wine evolve unbelievably in that quarter of a century, not just in South Africa but pretty much everywhere. And 25 or 30-years ago, it was a world dominated by Old World appellations, Old World styles,

Old World producers. And anything, the term “New World” was almost apologetic as if to say this will be simple, this will not be classical, this will probably lack complexity. That is all changed. But would you like to talk about what those 25 years have done in the context of Cape Wine?

OZ CLARKE: Hi, everybody. Yes, gosh, I remember that coming down in 2002. But of course, I was also down here in 1995, Michael, when we judged the South African (Airways) Shield, which was either an attempt to put South Africa on the map against Australia, who were the big beast at that time, or an attempt to show that South Africa was not ready. It all depends on how you view the motives of my friend Michael and his friend John (Platter). But what was shown at that time, at the end of the 90s, was that although there was immense goodwill towards South Africa in the rest of the world, with the new South Africa taking shape before everyone's eyes, the wine world was largely complacent and thought that they knew how to do things and they were making world-class wines. And so now was the time when the rest of the world would suddenly say, oh, these are fantastic. Let us buy as many of them as we can. And they were quite shocked when we were saying, "Hey, but Australia is doing it better. New Zealand is doing it better. You think these are French style? They are not French style. California is miles ahead of you." And there was a wonderful moment when I spoke to one of the leading old-timers. And I said, "Well, where do you think South African wines stand in the world?" And he looked at me absolutely in the eyes and said, "We make the best South African wines in the world." And that was the view. And it was a view which Michael absolutely took it upon himself to break apart. And the first time we came down in 2002, there was a small coterie of radicals who had been radical for 10 or 15 years, people like Vriesenhof, people like Thelema, people like Hamilton-Russell, people trying to break the mould. But it was still a very small group of people saying, "We can change. We must change. We have got something really special here." And I think that what Michael began in 2002 was that sense of, "we want to be a world power in wine." And this whole idea of New World, Old World; of course, South Africa was very unwilling to be called a New World. It said, "Hey, we have been at it since 1659. We are Old World." But at the end of the last century, at the beginning of this century, the New World was becoming an exciting place to be. Australia's New World approach, California's New World approach, and, more recently, Chile, Argentina, and New Zealand, the New World approach meant we make wines to please the consumer. We do not look back to traditions and say, "We do not care what you think of our wines because we have been making them for 600-years. And if you do not like them, that is not a problem for us. That is the German view, anyway." I am sorry. What accent? Am I getting my accents wrong? Yes. But even to this day, you find a certain amount of that around Europe. The New World was an absolute fundamental force for change, which South Africa was left behind in. I do not think we should underestimate the importance of what Australia did. Australia absolutely transformed the world of wine and how we looked at it. Partly by saying, "We are going to make exceptionally good wine." And secondly, by saying, "We love the fact that you are a consumer. We want to make it easy for you. We want to actually say, come on, you and us, we have a relationship. We will label our wines simply. We will tell you what is in them. We will tell you what we are doing. We

will tell you what our name is, and we are going to charge you a fair price for them.” And that was an enormous sweeping change.

Certainly, I do a lot of television work and do a lot of stuff with members of the public rather than wine buffs. And without the New World, we could not have done it. I could not do my television without the New World approach of democratising wine, making it simple, making it high quality, making it affordable. Now, all of those things South Africa is doing as a world leader. And it was not 25 years ago. It was somebody just desperately trying to find its feet with a few brave people standing up against the behemoths, or behemoth, of course, if you are a Reservoir Dogs fan, is it the *behemoth* or the *behemoth*? I will say *Behemoth*, although they say *Behemoth* in Reservoir Dogs. They say a lot of things in Reservoir Dogs that I do not want to repeat in public. But I am so delighted now that not only have you come across a new style of Syrah, which France was not making, which Australia was not making, which South Africa and California were not making, but also the kind of Syrah that you come up with now, I wish the consumers would get more excited about it. But talk to the New Zealanders. They have the same problem. Talk to the Californians. They have the same problem, making wonderful Syrahs that the members of the public do not quite go for. We will keep at them. The Syrah thing is a new move, but the Rhone varieties are an old move. It is back to the future. And the lovely thing is that you have not ripped up all of your old vines. And God bless Dr. (Rosa) Kruger for all her work, because I think the work that she has done in the old vine movement is absolutely thrilling and crucial. And it means that she has created this thing with a deep emotional embedding of what South African history can mean. And I think it is a fantastic job she has done. And it means that those junk grapes, the Cinsault, the Carignans, the Grenaches, the Grenache Blanc, the Roussanne, the Marsanne, the Picpoul, the Palominos, the Clarets, are all really precious. And in a world that is full of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet, and all the rest, you have these precious grapes. And as Heidi was saying, places like Spain are now getting the message as well and holding on to those precious old grapes. But at the same time, that means that you have got a *Back to the Future* movement, which is thrilling. But the way that you have actually interpreted Chardonnay in the last 20, 25 years is absolutely fascinating. The way you have interpreted Sauvignon Blanc around your coastal areas, commercially or at the high end, the Constantias, the Durbanvilles, up to Olifants River, and all these other sorts of places. Saying, "Look at this Benguela Current. Let us make use of it. Let us make use of these fantastic cold winds, sunshine up there, cold wind in my face. Sauvignon Blanc dies for those kinds of conditions, and you have them. Of course, Pinot Noir as well. It is not easy to get Pinot Noir right. And I think that a lot of the work that you have done in places like Hemel-en-Aarde has created a new style of Pinot Noir. It is not like the French. It is not like the Californians. It is not like the New Zealanders. It is yours. And so the whole thing that I get coming down this year, 25-years on, is that you have managed to catch hold of the good parts of your history before they were thrown away and pulled out and rubbished, and you have created an entirely new narrative at the same time, which may have been based initially on what France does and what Australia did, but is now your own.

I think one of the things that we forget, actually, often, and we have not really mentioned it, is Stellenbosch and Cabernet. Stellenbosch, as the rest of the world tries to overdo Cabernet, tries to over-extract it, tries to try and force it into activities that it does not want to be forced into, Napa Valley, for instance, modern Bordeaux, a lot of what is happening in Australia as well, you think Cabernet is not supposed to do this. It is a maritime grape. It makes savoury wines. It makes beautifully balanced wines, which are meant to make your mouth water and say, where is that steak? I need it now. Stellenbosch is making almost the most classical Cabernets in the whole world. Much more classical. The best Stellenbosch Cabernets are more classical than most of the wines coming out of Bordeaux. So, I think you have got a really good mix in the nation at the moment, and I am absolutely delighted to be invited back by my old friend Michael to come and see you again.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Oz, thank you very much indeed. Thank you for that review. That was very complete. We can just go out and eat and drink now. Christian, I am going to come to you and ask you a question around this dichotomy we have been talking about, around New World, Old World styles versus, if you like, South African style. And maybe because you judge a lot, you judge a lot beyond the space of the show, you judge a lot in category classes at Winemag. Is there a sense that there is a kind of discernible South African style and that the old dichotomy of New World and Old World is meaningless in the context of that? Do you have a microphone there?

CHRISTIAN EEDES: Yes, I do. Good morning, everyone. Is it still morning? Yes, by 20 minutes. So I am compelled, given my academic degree in philosophy, I have always thought that the New World, Old World distinction is deeply contentious. In a way, it is a binary opposite to start with, which, if you are philosophically inclined, is straightaway problematic. These things are never black and white. And I think there was always an inherent privileging of the Old World and an implication that the New World was somehow inferior. And, of course, there would not be a New World without colonialism, and that starts posing a whole bunch of questions. I think that if you go back to the mid-'90s, South Africa as a wine industry, we were a bit deluded about how good we were. As the famous taste-off of 1995 demonstrated. But that was also because we were so isolated, and for good reason. I mean, we were the world's pariah. And with the political transformation came a re-entry into the world, and all our winemakers started travelling, gathering information, and learning. And the improvements were rapid and ongoing. So, to Michael's question, is there such a thing as a definitive South African style? I am not quite sure.

CHRISTIAN EEDES: I think what has happened is we are no longer second-tier or mediocre. I think we are certainly at the top end, global players. At the bottom end, the economics of the global wine industry come into play. At the entry level, does any producing country have a national style? But at the top end, I think, now, we do not have to apologise. We certainly are not overreaching ourselves. There is a quiet confidence. I think Heidi spoke to this, but it's always about wanting to raise the bar. But also an increasing sense of conviction that actually,

we do not need to apologise. Our wines can hold their own against the best in the world. And in the most basic terms, we have unique growing conditions, and that is reflected in the wine. So as Oz mentioned, the Benguela Current. But we have got these maritime sites. We have got these ancient soils and a huge diversity of soils. And we have got vineyards at altitude, be they Ceres or Sutherland. And so I think it is a bit of a sweeping statement or a bit glib to ask, "Is there a South African style? Or insist that there is such a thing." I think it is rather that we are no longer also rans or a second tier. We can proudly take our place amongst the best in the world.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, Christian. I am actually going to ask you to pass the microphone to JD. Precisely because the next thought that comes to mind is Sauvignon Blanc. In many ways, it is a variety that is believed to have certain national styles. The Kiwi style is an example. Twelve years ago, Oz said there is no South African style. There is a range of styles that we do very well. And that observation in a class that produced four gold medals in current release wine, two in museum class, which is a real message about the ageability of Sauvignon Blanc, and the majority of them were wooded, is a question to pass then to the panel chairman and talk about Sauvignon Blanc. Where it is, where it comes from, what you think we do well, what you think we need to pay attention to.

JD PRETORIUS: Thank you, Michael. Morning everyone. I think the biggest kind of takeaway, if you do this over a ten-year period, is how the amount of wooded Sauvignon Blancs has grown. It used to be kind of 80/20 unwooded to wooded. And it was very close to half-half in terms of entries. And the wooded style, I think, is something that is really refined. It is something that the winemakers handle exceptionally well from a range of stylistics. But just the texture that comes out of the wine. And they move beyond Sauvignon Blanc. They move beyond being a very singular-focused wine. They become great white wines rather than just Sauvignon. And I think that is something that we really have to take very seriously. And we do.

JD PRETORIUS: The unwooded, there is a vast spread of style. There is a very classic kind of old pyrazine-driven wines. And it is like anything, we had the discussion. If it is complex and it is green, then it is good. It cannot just be pyrazine and nothing else. If there is texture and weight and acidity and brightness in the wine, and it is in a green spectrum, by all means give it a gold. And the same into a thiol tropical spectrum. So we are looking for that kind of detail within the stylistic. And I think the two unwoodeds we had on the table this morning show that kind of breadth and completely different stylistic wines. But they are both equally good in a completely different way. But yes, depending on what side of what mountain you are, you can make a very unique style of Sauvignon. And that in a very short 200 kilometre radius. It is a very unique position to be in. And I do feel we do not longer chase a very kind of New Zealand as an example or Bordeaux and so forth. And you are taking elements of those wines and making great white wines that happen to be made out of Sauvignon Blanc.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, JD. I am going to ask Kenichi, whom I have known now for 17, 18, 19 years — we judged the wine challenge together in 07 — to talk about two things: to pick up on the Sauvignon Blanc question, because you were on that panel; and then to lead into what will be the next question, which is Cap Classique. Because you were on that panel too. So, your views on both Sauvignon Blanc and Cap Classique?

KENICHI OHASHI: Okay, to start with, I am Ken Ohashi. I am based in Tokyo, and my English ability is so bad. Please allow me. For the first question, Sauvignon Blanc. It is a very popular variety in Japan. And because the Japanese palate really loves salad. Fresh salad, rather than cooked salad. And grilled salad. We always look for the touch of the very beautifully handled pyrazine and herbal contents in order to consider our Japanese palate. We also put our importance, in terms of the tasting, on assessing the quality level. And on the water. I commonly talk about this sensation. The common ingredient for our cuisine is steamed rice, which has a lot of water. Sashimi and raw fish are also mostly water. Salad is mostly water. So, because of that, I always look for the very pure water-like taste. Not watery though. Sauvignon Blanc is a perfect kind of variety for me. Rather than a very rich Chardonnay, or a rich Chenin style. What's also important is a very beautiful harvest. This time, I learned a lot about tasting with a lot of Sauvignon Blanc. In Japan, the French and New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs are very famous. And of course, they are very great. But today, and I recognise, the variation or the diversity of the Sauvignon Blanc style in South Africa and most of New World, (where the selection as a clone is very limited). But here, I do not know, and the various clones are there. But style diverges widely. Absolutely widely. JD also talked about the Sauvignon Blanc diversity. Oak also plays a factor, of course. Sometimes thiolic. But in thiolic compounds, for example, when picked late, we get a very ripe gooseberry, or a very ripe passion fruit. But if picked earlier, we can get the other citrusy thiolic compounds. South African Sauvignon Blanc shows a lot of dimension and the thiolic compounds, rather than the other New World producers. So, wow, this is a very interesting thing to let us select properly to pair with our cuisine style. It is a very good thing for our market. Because nowadays, Japan's market, in terms of South African wine, and the cheaper, entry-level consumption of South African wine, is decreasing. But quality South African wine has a very good increase. So, this time I tasted a lot, of course, Sauvignon Blanc, and fizz. And I'm absolutely hopeful for the increase of South African wine in our market.

One more thing is to consider the ageing ability for Sauvignon Blanc in the global market. I have experience in Napa Valley wines, and have tasted a lot of Napa Valley aged Sauvignon Blancs. But commonly, nobody says that. But in South Africa, so many people, Cathy as well — she showed me, like aged Sauvignon Blanc. It is a very beautiful thing together with old vines, and nowadays, old vine heritage is super, super important for me, personally, and for the Japanese. Because cutting off the younger vines, and once decreasing in the yield. In the Japanese wine market and the wine industry, for over 30-years, vines, there have been no younger vines. It is a little selfish, because of the ethical thing, because vines want to live much longer. But once productivity is decreasing, to cut off is not ethical for me. So, we respect

the old vines' behaviour carefully. It is a very beautiful thing to let our wine industry be much healthier, a much more ethical thing.

KENICHI OHASHI On fizz: Japan is one of the biggest consumption countries for sparkling wine, especially high-end sparkling wine. For champagne, of course, the U.S. and Canada are also very big markets. But Japan especially likes high-quality, very expensive sparkling wine. But to look at our market, Champagne, Prosecco, Cava, we seriously lack diversity in the sparkling wine market. Once somebody is serving a lot of fizz by the glass, the restaurant will skyrocket in sales. But for our industry, it is a little bit risky to broaden the fizz. A lot of diversity, but also a lot of bottles at risk of not being consumed.. So our market is absolutely very good for the quality fizz to diversify our palate and our consumption diversity. This year, I also learned a lot from my neighbour Heidi. I asked her a lot of questions. Even for the professionals who live in Japan, there is a lack of understanding. But we know, and Cap Classique, and the regulation, and style, it's probably Chardonnay, and possibly Chenin Blanc.

To summarise the entire fizz section, it is absolutely approachable. More approachable and suited to a broader palate than the tightly wound, acidic profile of Champagne. And the price is down to half, or even less than half. But today's first and second fizzes are very beautiful and modestly present, no 'malo', and very authentic in depth. Because of global warming, we need freshness, real freshness with delicacy, transparency, purity, crystalline palate. And I will regard the Cap Classique's future as absolutely big in Japan. And thank you very much. Michael, thank you very much for inviting me. There are so many great people here. It is a serendipity for me. And Cathy, my sister, was my mentor at the Institute of Master of Wine; therefore, I have to give back to South Africa from our Japanese market. Thank you very much.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, Kenichi. And the microphone has been handed to you, Heidi, to carry on talking about the fizz.

HEIDI DUMINY: Oh, what a pleasure it was to judge with you. It is so lovely when somebody is not jaded and familiar. And just the whole kind of excitement, and the, literally, the fizz starts to rise. But Michael, I was very disappointed.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: 32?

HEIDI DUMINY: There were only 32. Yes. What a tiny little glimpse into such a wonderful category. But what I will say is that, quite coincidentally, if you look at the last five years of fizz, of Cap Classique, it has been five years since we made the minimum time on the lees 12 months. And that is starting to show very clearly. The benefit is really starting to show up in the glass. And the reason for that is now you do not have, like, these very pure and pretty little sparkling Chardonnays, or Chenins, and now you are really getting a very, a solid kind of lees core. And then, the fruit can be more pristine. And we have also seen the use of dosage getting lower and lower and lower. I know it is an international trend. But in South Africa, it is really starting to work, where there is confidence. I think it really, it starts in the vineyard, in the management, and the base wines, and the confidence and understanding of balancing our

fruit expression, phenolic ripeness, and acidity, in order to be more transparent. So, one of the biggest takeaways I had this time is that it is always very difficult to sense terroir in a bottle fermented wine. But that is definitely starting to become tangible now. You are getting a sense of place and identity, which is just so exciting. It makes the whole category more interesting.

HEIDI DUMINY: And instead of relying on fruit weight or dosage, it is now becoming more a case of really refinement. You do not need those sorts of crutches to make a wine that is of beautiful balance. So, I totally get what Kenichi was saying. Some of the ones that missed the mark were a little bit scrawny. But mostly, you get this linearity, and this elegance, and this edginess, and a nervy excitement, and raciness. But still, our South African identity shows. So, exciting class. It was great, this is traditionally the first formal panel of Cap Classique every year. And the 2020s are looking very good. But, I really do believe that this, you know, the things that we are doing, we are doing everything right. So, it's been a great year for bubbles.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: I am going to ask you to pass the microphone to Patson, because fizz is his territory, too. I want to pick up on a point that Heidi made. We looked down the dosage levels after the judging. We get a full set of tech crib sheets. I think there were two wines over six grammes. Almost everything was under six. Much of it was somewhere between three and five. I was with the Chef de cave of Moët a couple of weeks ago. He says, in the last 20 years, the standard British Imperial has halved from 12 grammes to six grammes of sugar. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon at Roederer says, in an era of climate change, where your acid levels are necessarily lower, your balancing effect of sugar has to be much less. We are, in a sense, at that cutting edge, because we are warmer, and because there is less limestone in the vineyards, contributing to the base wine. And we have pivoted as an industry, because I had expected that we would be in the five to eight grammes of sugar, just because you lag a bit on this. We are ahead of everyone. We have got warmth, and we understand it. Patson, you have been doing fizz for long enough as well. In fact, you are probably in as much trouble as Heidi. What was your impression of that class relative to the past few years of fizz judging?

MANDLA PATSON MATHONSI: Okay. Good day. Right on the dot, 12:00. Thank you so much, Michael, and thank you so much, Heidi. Look, I think it was quite a very interesting class. I want to agree with Heidi. Very disappointing. Only 32 entries. But those 32 entries were really amazing. We are starting to see better colour in Cap Classique as well. And also, we realised that some of the Rosés that were in the class, you would expect most of those Rosés to be more on the sweeter side. But actually, they had nice fruit intensity. Much drier. Very forthcoming as well. And also, the sweetness. I want to agree with Heidi. There is less and less sweetness in our Cap Classiques. As much as right at the end, we did get a bit of the nectar. But those nectars, I think, some of those nectars, two out of five of those nectars, were really well balanced with that nice acidity coming through. But again, I think what we need to look at and what we really need to be proud of is that Cap Classique is starting to stand out on its own. Suppose you put it in a lineup of fizz in general. Even if you put it next to a Cap Classique, next to Champagne, or you put it next to a Prosecco, Cap Classique stands out on

its own. And I think there is a huge opportunity as well, and out of 32, we managed to pull four golds in Cap Classique, which is really commendable because out of 94, when we did Fortified and Niche Reds, we only managed to pull about three or four golds. But out of 32, we managed to pull four golds in Cap Classique and all different styles. I was very impressed.

There was one that was like a 2017 vintage. But, when you look at the colour, it is so pure, still very clean, and on the nose, lots of freshness, very well-rounded, with that nice creaminess on the mid-palate. So, there is a lot of balance in our Cap Classique and less and less sugar, which is really amazing. I am repeating this again and again because I think we need that in South Africa. We are headed in the right direction as well on Cap Classique, and we have got the sunshine. So, why don't we use what we have because we really can do a lot more out there in the world? So, thank you very much, Michael. I think that is it for me.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, Patson. I am going to pass the microphone to Malu, who has kindly agreed to come back from judging South Africa at Decanter last week. And it is a really interesting question. So, you have a bunch of classes. You judge as a senior judge. You judge roughly one-third of the wines available. You see everything at the end. I am not sure how many South African entries there were at Decanter, and also, without being or wishing to sound overly competitive about other wine competitions, not sure why South Africans are trying to grandstand in the UK when the market that really is home for them is where they should be showing their wines and doing their best. But I am curious to know, what are your feelings about what you saw over the last three days, and how does that compare to what you saw in London?

MALU LAMBERT: Hi, everyone. So, firstly, I am currently at the best wine competition in the world. So, it is difficult to compare the two because at Decanter there are a lot of international palettes roaming around, who are actually not as invested in South African wine like Oz and Kenichi are. So, they are just kind of roving around tables, and they are tasting the wines almost verbatim. So, I kind of found that not quite the same. You have got to come in with the intention. We are tasting South Africa, and you have got to know what that means. So, over the last couple of days, I mentioned some highlights, obviously, this wonderful panel and the signature red blends. So, I did not taste Bordeaux, but I did taste a couple of the Bordeaux wines, and they are lovely wines. But I tasted the signature red blends, and what I found there is that there is really something magical going on. So, these used to be wines that were a bit of an afterthought. Okay, we have got a bit of Malbec, we have got a bit of Carignan, let us just put some Merlot in there and hope for the best.

MALU LAMBERT: But these wines are now presenting as real, thoughtful wines, and we found incredible, seamless, elegant wines that are completely unique to South Africa. And I do not know why we are always apologising about Merlot and always apologising about Bordeaux blends when we have nothing to apologise for, our uniquely South African red blends. So, there is something quite exciting there. And the other thing, of course, that really stood out was the stickies and fortifieds. Guys, please, man, can we just drink them on the

weekend? This is up to us. We need to keep the category alive because these wines are like, I walk into the room, and it is just the most beautiful array of colours on the table, and you go, wow, look at this history; history in every single one of those glasses, and the wines are delicious, but they are vanishing, and it is your fault. So, drink them. That would be my beseech. Thank you.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, Malu. I think that is a real point. In the entry of Port-style wine, Botrytis wine has probably the highest gold medal count, and we resist the gold medal. You know that when you walk into a mouth full of really delicious textural sugar, alcohol, your tendency is to score high, and those panels are brief. They are not seduced by sugar alone. They get there because they get there truly on their merit, and it is a category we do very well, and the value in terms of a consumer opportunity, obviously in Port style, obviously with what remains of a once-booming Hanepoot, Jerepigo industry, and a once-booming Botrytis industry that no one takes seriously. Cathy, I have not left you last for no reason at all. The excitement of a panel that pulled out one, two, three, four Chardonnay gold medals, none in the museum class. We are talking about current releases, super fine Chardonnays, and a couple of Pinot Noirs, and it is a class you have come back to over and over the years. There is a tide change, isn't there?

CATHY VAN ZYL: There is a complete style change that we have seen coming on or tide change, and what is that old saying? A rising tide lifts all boats. So, congratulations to those of you who submitted Chardonnays. It was an absolutely wonderful category to judge. I did mention, or there is the suggestion that there has been a style change over the years, and we all do know what we are referring to, the over-oaked buttery, very highly glycerol-affected wines, and there has been a tendency also for people to be following the more reductive Margaret River flintier styles of wines as well. But in our judging I was not forced but I remembered a question I had asked Oz Clarke at a competition I have judged with for many years in London when I was judging Rioja category and I remember going up to Oz and saying Oz please take a sniff at my glass, I know this is Rioja but heavens it is far too oxidative and it is far too oaky for me. And Oz looked at me and he said Cathy my dear you do have to remember that there is a wide church of Rioja and there are people who go to the very woody very oxidative style and there are people who tend to be following the let us use French oak style of Rioja as well and he said please do not ever forget that every style has its relevance and there is a place for every style in this world with every consumer. And thank heavens for that, because it gives us a lot more diversity and things to enjoy. So we kind of approached that as a Chardonnay style, Chardonnay panel. We were a little bit scared that we would find too much reduction, too much of that fruitiness, but we did not. We found that the producers had really paid back the use of the fruity reduction styles, and we also found a few examples that did have a lot of oak influence on them. But the oak was not overdone either; there were one or two really steely fruity styles. So it was a joy to judge.

I think that wine making has improved vastly from, Michael worked it out, when was it, when was the first Trophy Wine Show I judged? 2003? So then you could literally walk into a room and just know the wines and say oh no, that is faulty, that is tutti-frutti, etcetera. Our job has gotten harder and harder with every year as winemaking improves in this country.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Great, thank you. Just before, obviously, people have come to ask questions about a stat that always gets recycled every year, but it is really interesting. Closures: At the trophy judging today, we called back one wine because one of the tasters felt another bottle was worthy of calling back, and in fact, I think the second one was well called back. Not corky, just not as bright, but actually very low overall cork taint running through the room. Of the closures, 62% were cork closed alone; 19 were one form or another of technical cork. 19 under screw cap, and the really important thing is that the overall quality of cork is much better, and if in doubt, people have moved back from Stelvin or screw cap and moved towards technical cork as a closure, I have somewhere, and if not, I will drag the figure out weight of bottles; the important Jancis (Robinson) question that gets asked every year since she was here, we have seen there has been a reduction in bottle weight. I am hoping these figures are there. In 750ml including contents of bottle, so these are weighed before closing the cork, the heaviest bottle was 1.775. So that is just over a kilo of glass out there doing the work. The lightest bottle was 1.1 so that means that the glass weight was under 300 grammes lightweight bottle and an average weight so just top to bottom of 1.388 so 600 grammes appears to be the average bottle weight that is certainly down and it will continue to go down partly because there is pressure in all markets for weight reduction partly because it simply makes sense; partly I think because if you are confident enough about your wine you do not have to make the packaging, do the job for you. I am going to throw this open now to the floor. You have heard everyone's reviews. You have not covered all classes, but we really would like questions. And a roving microphone is available. So let us start with questions. Yes, Emile?

EMILE JOUBERT: Michael, Oz's message about the Cabernet was really excellent because last year we had another Oz, a guy from Australia, Bruce or Mic or Mac or whatever who kakked us all out because our Cabernets were, you can get the translation from Michael but he was not very complimentary about Cabernet, saying they were weedy and green and the winemakers were not having a go, if I remember correctly. Somebody tasted the Cabernet this year and wants to validate what Oz had said and give some reasons behind that as to—

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: JD, you did Cab and Cab Franc, did you not? Please pass the microphone to JD. Thanks for that question, it is a nice one. We were a little bit shocked by Tom Carson's bluntness last year. I mean, Cabernet has battled a bit as a class, but I did not see any of that this year in the top wines. Maybe elsewhere. JD?

JD PRETORIUS: Yes, thanks, Emile. It is always interesting that the international judges bring a completely different and unique element to this competition. I know there are others locally as well. But because you have got three senior judges and an associate, and if you have got

a strong international voice, that plays a big part. And he had a very technical view, it was as clinical over the Chardonnay. So you have got one senior judge who is going to sway the kind of panel in a direction. So it was quite challenging. Christian and I tasted with him last year, and it was not easy. He has a strong opinion, obviously super educated. But there was a very kind of like, this is a line that he saw as the truth. So we had a far more open discussion this year. Heidi tasted it with us yesterday. She has unfortunately left. But there was much more kind of willingness to discuss and much more openness in the discussion. And if somebody pulled out a different style or a Napa versus a kind of old school, more kind of leafy one, then there was a proper discussion and it was not just like a no. So I think the vintages, we obviously see the vintages afterwards. And then you see its majority 22, 23, or 23, 24. And I think that does play a role. Cabernet, we had challenging vintages in 22, 23, 24 for various reasons. And if you have got a lot of 23s on the bench, it is not going to look great as a group. And that has nothing, I think, to do with the winemaking or the intent. If it is a wet vintage, Cabernet is always going to show up as a challenge.

EMILE JOUBERT: And the big thing is always the virus. Is that still evident? Do you see some kind of improvement there?

JD PRETORIUS: It is still evident, but far less. There were a few questions where Heidi asked, "Is this a virus?", and when the wines had a kind of leafy, stressy character, that is not just herbal. It's a kind of more wet compost character rather than a kind of leafy kind of floral element. But probably, I would say, 10%, not 30 or 40 or 50%. And I think that is, I mean, I think in all competitions, people are entering less. Hopefully, it is the bottom end that is not entering, and the top end is still entering. So hopefully, by default, we are seeing better examples across all classes. Thanks.

CATHY VAN ZYL: Can I add something?

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Yes, please do, Cathy, yes.

CATHY VAN ZYL: I just wanted to add something to that, Emile. I have also spent a few weeks lecturing in the UK and judging there. And just to say that with the people with whom I came into contact, there is a greater tolerance for that little bit of spicy lift or herbaceous tones on the Cabernet varieties by all of those people I came into contact with. I think in an era of climate change, they are recognising that the fruit is going to ... there is a danger of the fruit becoming too ripe, and then it really presents as "*bedompig*" (damp/musty) if you do not have a little bit of that herbal lift to it. But yes, I must have, every time we ... we did see quite a number of Stellenbosch Cabernets, and they did not have nearly as much greenness or lift to them as a number of other origins from the rest of the world.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: I just want to say that I, as show chairman, get into the room and unless there is real controversy, I tend to see the stuff that has been sifted above the no medal level. And Cab this year, for me, what struck me is that the fruit was very bright, and that the alcohols are quite well managed. No one is pretending that you are getting ripe leaf, unleafy

Cab at 13,5%, that is not happening. But certainly in the early 14s, very good bright fruit without that alcoholic weight to them. Who chaired the Bordeaux class? Christian, will you pass the microphone down to Christian? Just to pick up on that question, and if there are questions around Bordeaux, we will take it as well now, because the Bordeaux class, in a way, is dependent on Cabernet. You do not have good Cabernet, you are not going to have a good Bordeaux blend. So if anybody wanted to put a question around Bordeaux blend to Christian, he will answer that together with a comment on Cab.

NATALIE OPSTAELE: So my question is about Merlot, like no gold medal, why? What do we change? What are we looking for? I would love to discuss that.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Okay, we will get to the Merlot panel then. That is a very good question. And the answer may be that the best Merlots went into the Bordeaux blends, because it was a nice class. Christian, do you want to go?

CHRISTIAN EEDES: Well, a lot to unpack. We spent a good long while on Cap Classique, and no disrespect to Cap Classique. I think now we get to sort of one of our most important categories in the industry. So, where to begin? In defence of Tom Carson, I do not think he was too disparaging. I think Tom, as I recall, his point was he was looking for true varietal character, and I took it on board, and I found it quite useful in terms of developing my own thinking on the subject. And he certainly does not want to reward underdone Cabernet where the fruit is too much towards the red side of the spectrum. But similarly, he was very anti-overripe and over-extracted. And on day two of this year, we encountered maybe 60 to 70 Cabernet- ag Bordeaux style blends, and I was really quite shocked. In my day-to-day job, I sort of go from the Paul Sauer launch to the Vilafonté launch to the Columella launch, and you think, wow, we are really making progress, and these wines can stand their ground against anything in the world. Now we are not, by no means, is Trophy Wine Show ... are the entries at the bottom end. They are just one tier below the very best in the country, and boy, there is work to be done. Is there a virus out there? Most definitely, as far as I am concerned. And then I think what happens in the cellar is they are trying to overcompensate for compromised fruit, and so then it is over-extracted and over-oaked or clumsily oaked, and so the two Cabernets that were up for potential trophies today were very smart. I overheard JD, and maybe JD can speak to this. The issue with Merlot is I do not ... we get sugar ripeness before phenolic ripeness, and is our best Merlot going into our blends? That is a moot point. Perhaps it is simply not suited to South African growing conditions, and to pick up on what Malu was saying about the non-Bordeaux blends, there is a commercial reality. The market wants Bordeaux style versus a signature style where anything goes. We have to concede that. But it does strike me that in a time of climate change, where we are not legislatively bound to only use the Bordeaux varieties, we really should consider what varieties combine best under South African circumstances. And we have, you know, Columella out of the Swartland, Rust en Vrede, where Shiraz is added to Cab and Merlot; it is a sense of adventure and a sense of experimentation

that has served us very well over the last 25 years. And we really should continue to think outside the box, is what I would say.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Just to give you some numbers there, we had four non-Bordeaux blended reds, okay? So Rhone style, Cape Blend as in Pinotage style, and two others versus three Bordeaux style red blends in gold. So yes, it's a much bigger category once you look at all of those. But there are not that many entries in each class. So, probably equally matched, and the reds outside of Bordeaux came forward. The Merlot panel was chaired by JD. Yes, it was hard work. Talk about it.

JD PRETORIUS: Yes, and I think Oz was on that panel as well. So I would like him to chime in on this as well. But there is, similar to Cabernet, and a wet vintage Merlot, and a hot and dry vintage showed stress. And the fruit and the tannin just did not match up. And then there seems to be an overcorrection with oak, and then you just end up with a very bitter, harsh tannin. And that was the kind of overarching, across 25 wines, it was bitter and tannic, as a kind of common theme. So Oz, if you would like to add to that on Merlot.

OZ CLARKE: Yes, I think Merlot has had an easy ride of it over the last 20- or 30-years. And it has probably been a very important category in drawing in all kinds of people who were not necessarily wine drinkers into the world of wine. And it has been good in allowing people who did not think they liked red wine to say, oh, I think red wine is actually more fun than I expected. But those kinds of Merlots have got residual sugar, they are high-yield, they are soft, they are big brand numbers. And they have been led into oblivion by some of the cheap Californian blends and some of the cheap Australian blends. Because when you start trying to make Merlot nowadays in a warming world, in a serious way, I think its shortcomings are very easily exposed. And I am not surprised that in places like Bolgheri and the Maremma in Italy, they are not replanting Merlot. They are pulling Merlot out, saying, "We cannot do it." In Italy, it gets to 16% alcohol, and the tannins still are not right. They are not replanting Merlot in a lot of Saint-Émilion in France, because exactly as JD was saying, it is a cool-climate grape.

OZ CLARKE: In a hot world like we are increasingly living in, it is a cool-climate grape. It should not be in a lot of these vineyards. And if it were not easy to pronounce and easy for brand owners to actually make money out of, we probably would not have planted a damn thing. It is a grape that just occasionally has a great beauty about it, but it is very rare. Pomerol still seems to manage to do it. And it may be something to do with the clay soil, something to do with the gravels, something to do with that funny little few square kilometres in Bordeaux. Right next door to it, Saint-Émilion is increasingly struggling. And I must say that I thought that the standard of the Cabernets, rather than the Bordeaux blends, was what has excited me over the last number of years about Stellenbosch, partly because they are not trying too hard. I know Tom Carson well, and I know that he is a gentleman of strong opinions. And I do not think he makes Cabernet, does he? I think he makes Pinot and Chardonnay. And the trouble is with people who make Pinot and Chardonnay, they get terribly up themselves about Cabernet and say, oh, the world of Cabernet is a horrible, clunky Old World. What on earth

are you doing? What about the delicacy of Pinot? What about the delicacy of Chardonnay? Well, I have got a good friend who is an influencer, and I introduced her to some wines recently, and she likes wine. And she thought the Shiraz and the Cabernet styles were really good. I gave her a really good Pinot Noir, and she looked at it and said, well, where is the rest of it? And Pinot Noir is, at the moment, having its day in the sun because all the wine buffs are obsessed with it, and people are suffering from an almost terminal case of Pinophilia. Pinot can hardly do any wrong. And poor old Cabernet is regarded as a clunky old thing from another era.

OZ CLARKE: Well, what I like about what is happening mostly in Stellenbosch in the last five or 10 years, particularly since vintages like 17, is that they are not trying too hard. They are not trying to make great, thick, old things. They are not trying to do the Californian job of making a wodge of fruit, seamless fruit, and you think, I do not know, I am about to fall over, but I cannot remember what I have tasted, and I cannot feel it anywhere in my mouth. And some of the Australian Cabernets now, you think, fellas, this is supposed to be a maritime grape. It is supposed to be influenced by coolness, influenced by salinity, influenced by that little hint of pyrazines on it, to say it is used to having the sea winds blowing at it. It is not supposed to be sitting there, exposed to the sun, exhausted and shrivelled by the hot sun. That is not what Cabernet is supposed to do. And I think Stellenbosch, I know that there is still a virus problem around, or massively, massively improved from what it was 10- or 20-years ago, but I think Stellenbosch is actually doing a really good job with a lot of Cabernet because it is not trying too hard. And it is not: if you want to say what it is doing, it is actually making a Cabernet more like they used to make in Bordeaux 20- or 30-years ago, and they hardly ever make it in Bordeaux nowadays.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you very much. I am going to take another question, just apropos of Merlot, Édouard Moueix (proprietor of Ch La Fleur Petrus) who makes more fine Merlot than anyone else I know, said to me in the middle of the vintage in 2019, actually in the vineyard, he said, everyone says that Pinot Noir is the heartbreak grape, it is just they do not really know Merlot is the heartbreak grape. Another question. Yes, Adam?

ADAM MASON: Thank you, Michael. So, it is very interesting sitting here. I have come to a number of these feedback sessions over the years, and I imagine for you, after having run this competition for 25-years, you have seen a lot of changes in the wines. So my question really is, sitting here now, today, are you able to say that we have a slightly clearer identity as a wine-growing country? If you were to ask someone like Oz, Kenichi, Cathy, who educates people, and yourself, has this moved the dial to crystallising the identity of South African wine over the last 25 years? What would your response be, in terms of styles, and giving us a calling card as a nation of winemakers?

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Okay, so I am going to open that to whoever is brave enough to want to take the question. I will, by way of giving you a few moments to decide if you want to step in the trap or not, I remember doing a tasting in London in 1995 with some new, so-called new

styles South African wines, of which one was the Plaisir de Merle that Paul Pontallier (Ch. Margaux) had really overseen in the early 90s. And one of the journalists at the tasting said to me, it no longer tastes South African. And I said what do you mean by that. She said it is too ... it has got soft tannins. It is too international. I said, "So what does South Africa taste like?" and she said, "You know — a bit green, a bit hard. And it was five years later that we were dealing with burnt rubber. I think there really was a sense that you could tell us by our defects. So now, whoever is going to pick up this question, can you tell us about our virtues? Who wants to answer that?"

CHRISTIAN EEDES: I will. So Adam, as I said earlier, I do not ... your question quickly stops being about wine and starts being philosophical for me. And we have not really talked about Chenin, our most widely planted grape, and I did chair that panel again. And I think Chenin is instructive because, for me, it is the diversity that the category shows that is extraordinary. And if you think about it, Stellenbosch produces great Chenin, Swartland produces great Chenin, and Reenen Borman (Boschkloof) makes a Chenin out in Montague, and Elgin makes interesting Chenin, even if it is not widely planted. And they are all stylistically different, and they are all valid. And I think, as with the rest of ... what makes South Africa so great is, and what, and sorry, my great Aussie mate, David Clark, always laughs because I always use a rugby analogy. If you look at what Rassie has done with the springboks, you have got guys out of the Eastern Cape townships playing together with guys that went to Bishops and Grey Bloem, and that, for me, is what South Africa is. There is not a sort of quintessential Bordeaux-ness about it or quintessential Burgundy about it. It is anything goes, and it is so colourful and so exciting and so invigorating that you do not have to drink the same thing twice. And everything is valid, and everything has its place. I do not know if that helps.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: I think it is a good answer, because it touches on Malu's. You can fight that one, if you like. The point about signature blends is that there is a character that is less dependent on a European mould. Does that answer your question?

CATHY VAN ZYL: I have got something to add, which I do not know if it's going to help or make things worse, but when I wrote my MW tasting exam and passed it in 2003, please, I do not remember how old I am, I remember being at one of the seminars, and the question was identify where these wines come from as closely as possible. They all come from the same country. And I remember it being the wines coming from Australia, three different regions in Australia, and I said to the person who was lecturing me there, oh, and do you expect us to also identify the different regions in South Africa? And I was told categorically in 2003 that no, do not worry about that. In South Africa, all you have to identify is that the wine comes from South Africa. You do not have to identify the regions. Now, maybe there is a philosophical debate to be had about whether we should market or commercialise our regions more, or we do not. However, over the last 20-years since that has happened, I have seen the dial move. I have seen greater interest from the Institute's point of view and from the people with whom I judge in the UK in the nuances that make up the South African character. They do

acknowledge the great differences in Chenin. The 2023 MW trip to South Africa had a few educators on it. They had also had a few examiners. I know the chief examiner came to me afterwards, and he said, Cathy, it is wonderful to have been here. I can really see the differences in the regions. I have got to understand the changes that have happened. And it has given me hope that one day in the not-too-distant future, somebody might put a question in the paper that says, "The wines come from the same country. Identify the country and regions as closely as possible, and it would be South Africa. So I think personally, in my experience, I have seen the dial move; it is from the polar opposite. And I can say categorically that they do recognise the South Africaness of our wine styles.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Thank you, that was a great response, thank you. More questions? I am not sure how much time we have on the clock. Five minutes? Good. Jono, you said you had a chance to have a quick look at some of those wines, ja.

JONO LE FLEUVRE: I thought it would be incomplete without touching on Pinotage.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: There you go, and you cannot frighten us. We had a few very nice ones.

JONO LE FLEUVRE: Yes. So it feels like a lot of the messaging in South Africa is about Pinotage that reflects its parents, and Pinot Noir, and yet, again and again, across multiple competitions, the ones that are winning the awards are riper, 14% or higher, and with that black fruit and a decent quantity of oak. What are the Pinotage Nouveau makers doing wrong? What are they missing out on? Or put differently, why are we not seeing lighter styles finish higher?

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: Pinotage, ah, that is right. Straight after fizz, you get Pinotage as a reward. I am just pre-emptively going to say two things, having both seen the outcome, and also the fact that Pinotage blend, a real Cape blend, first time maybe ever with a trophy. I do not think the class had that many of the new styles, but Heidi will say that. I do think that, for me, the most important difference is that the wines are now properly made, clean, not Bretty, not overdone. In other words, the old days in which you put overripe, out-of-condition grapes into not necessarily perfectly clean wood and let the high pH do the rest for you, I think is long gone. It does not answer the part of the question you are touching on, which is the range of potential styles.

HEIDI DUMINY: So, Pinotage, it was also not a huge range of them, but the ones that we did see, they were very little ... there were very few that were technically wrong. I totally fall for exactly that style, that sense of kind of whole berry vitality and vibrance. The trap that those fall into, sometimes they just do not have the gravitas to make it a serious wine. They are just lekker, and so drinkable. And in fact, many of those wines were eminently drinkable. You could sit down and drink them. They are definitely still the old school styles, but not as badly, kind of, a big slap of oak, but definitely far more nuanced to them, even with the fruit gumption. And also, the ageability is remarkable with Pinotage, so I think that is also something that we are

really getting right, and expressions that we are seeing that are giving the Pinotage category total credibility as a really good red wine. Kenichi, you like them?

KENICHI OHASHI: Yes, of course. And actually, I can share the real facts. I have already gotten three very great Pinotages to go back to Japan. Actually, in Japan, we have a Pinotage vineyard. And I shared that with Cathy, and how about the Japanese Pinotage?

CATHY VAN ZYL: It was very good.

KENICHI OHASHI: Thank you. Yes, but, absolutely, and the Chenin Blanc, and the Syrah, it is international varieties, but in the South Africa, South Africa, has a very good, very good capacity there on the varietal expression, and the location, and the topography, or terroir expression. But Pinotage is a very unique variety of its own, and your own situation is very important for us. And for example, Chile, and now, under their promotion board, pushes Chamonix, but under Chamonix, it's very hard to single varietal Chamonix in the global market, so that it works a lot in the global market. And the Pinotage is absolutely great, and today, we tasted probably two Pinotages? Yes, and both are completely different styles, but both are very great. But, I can assume that probably, so many winemakers in South Africa will target the refined style of Pinotage, and probably a little bit closer to the Pinot Noir, or Cinsaut, so I am afraid to be closer to the other varieties. And I really love a touch of the delicacy of rusticity of Pinotage, and it is a very suitable choice for the fermented ingredients in our market, and already Heidi talked to you, and Pinotage is one of the top-appealing varieties for us, and please manage to get the controlled rusticity on Pinotage. It is an absolutely great, unique selling point for your own wines in the global market. I really love Pinotage, thank you.

MANDLA PATSON MATHONSI: Yes, look, I think there is a bit of confusion at the moment with Pinotage. We are sort of like still confused with our own grape cultivar, and like you said, there is that Cinsaut style Pinotage, very easy drinking, and when you get that style, it becomes too very fruity, and lacks a bit of intensity on the finish, and when you get the big ones, the big ones, they lack a bit of freshness on the finish, so there is a bit of a confusion. We are very much confused about our own grape cultivar. There is no identity when it comes to Pinotage, so it depends on whether you like that fruity-tutti, fresh Cinsaut style, or you like something a lot more on the bolder style, so I think we still need to have some sort of identity and know exactly what we want to produce when we are producing Pinotage. That is my two cents on Pinotage.

JONO LE FLEUVRE: Was there a connection to regions, because [audio cut 1:25:54]

HEIDI DUMINY: No, we don't and I cannot say that the origin was playing a huge role. There was definitely brightness, but quite a lot of simplicity, and you know what, I will venture to say exactly what Christian said. This is an adventure, man. It does not really, you know, we should not really be ... trying to define a particular style. The more adventurous you are, the more that we are pulling it out and trying, I think, the better it is for us, but I cannot say that we had a really discernible regional influence, no.

MICHAEL FRIDJHON: The clock has ticked. The time is past, and there is a joke about that I am not allowed to repeat, but unless there is a question that will be life-changing for somebody, I think it is a good time to wrap up. It really has been a very engaging session. It has been a spectacularly good panel to work on, so it is my opportunity to thank all the judges. You have done a sterling job. It is hard work, even though we keep saying panels work well together, and you guys will have the afternoon off, no one did. Worked right through, some till 5:00, half past 5:00, with only 70 wines on the tasting bench. I can tell you, every wine was given the fairest of fair chances, and the discussion was always fruitful, never personality-driven, and certainly always ready with the interests of the industry at heart. So it has been a fabulous 25th anniversary show. Thank you all for joining us at this feedback session. There are rewards for those who stayed the course. Thank you very much for being here, and a very special thank you to the judges who really put in the hard hours. Thank you.

ENDS