



Rosé among the roses

It's been a rather glorious summer on the banks of the Thames. Even though I'm not much of a gardener, an unquestionable highlight of the season was attending the Chelsea Flower Show in May.

If you've ever been to the event, you'll know it takes place in the most glorious surroundings, in arguably the most expensive postcode in the UK. Nothing around there is cheap; restaurants and pubs in the area cater for A-list celebrities and captains of industry. And they certainly know how to charge accordingly.

Upon entering the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, where the flower show is held every year, large signs reminded visitors that the event was sponsored by The Newt in Somerset. For the uninformed, this is a sister property to Babylonstoren in the Cape – both would rank among the most luxurious hospitality venues you'll find anywhere in the world. And obviously not cheap, I might add. The Sloane Square crowd (the nearest Underground station to the show) would feel right at home.

Both The Newt and Babylonstoren (as well as a few other hotspots in Italy, the Netherlands and elsewhere) had been bought and redeveloped by Naspers chair Koos Bekker and his wife, décor expert Karen Roos, over the past two decades. Amazing how far a few bob from a small investment in a Chinese internet company can go these days.

Once inside, there was a selection of bars – most English summer activities revolve around daytime drinking, after all, and flower watching in the sunshine is most certainly thirsty work. A pint of lager would set you back £8.80 (R212 at current exchange rates) and a glass of

Pimm's could be had for only £16 (just under R400) – including lots of ice (all free of charge). A bargain, obviously.

It was rather refreshing in more ways than one when we walked past the Babylonstoren stand, proudly advertising the fact that it was the official rosé supplier to the event. Clearly, my party and I were drawn to this – who wouldn't want to celebrate with a glass of South Africa's finest while hobnobbing with the English upper class on a fine afternoon?

the whole experience was the price point: at an event where everything was charged at an absolute premium, Klaas and Charl were handing out glass after glass for free – South African hospitality at its finest.

Different worlds

Advertising man David Ogilvy wrote this more than 60 years ago: "The two most powerful words you can use in a headline are FREE and NEW." By giving away high-quality wine for hours on end, Babylonstoren illustrated Ogilvy's principle – no doubt it bought the estate a huge amount of goodwill. My wife promptly proved the point by falling for the show special and ordering a dozen bottles for home delivery.

The free drink was, of course, not the only highlight of this year's show. Mention must be made of the South African stand, which received the top award from the Royal Horticultural Society for its breathtaking arrangement of 25,000 stems of fynbos – including thousands of magnificent proteas in a variety of hues.

The following evening, I watched on Sky News how US President Donald Trump grilled President Cyril Ramaphosa and his delegation, highlighting some "very bad things" happening in the country. The contrast from what I experienced 24 hours earlier could not have been greater – were they even talking about the same South Africa?

Not long after, my wife and I took our seats at Lord's to watch a team of magnificent Proteas of a very different kind taking on the Aussies in the final of the World Test Championship. Some daytime drinking may once again have been involved ... including a bottle or two of Babylonstoren rosé.

Bring on the rest of the summer! ✕
Gouws is chief investment officer at Credo, London



Taking it in: A Chelsea Pensioner at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in London

Reuters/Toby Melville

We received generous pourings from two gents named Klaas and Charl, both of whom sounded just about as British as I do. Only later would I find out that they were not mere waiting staff: they are, in fact, Babylonstoren's winemaker and cellar master, respectively. The pair had flown over from the Cape with a whole host of colleagues, especially for the event.

The banter was good and the wine went down a treat. But the best part of