

## Laroche buys Sentinel 27 February 2007

### L'Avenir acquires its financially embarrassed neighbour

After three years on the market (and a thwarted sale by auction last year), Stellenbosch winery Sentinel Vineyards on the R44 has finally been sold to Laroche South Africa Wines Estates, owners for a few years of premium property L'Avenir, right next door.

The winery, which was established by and belonged to Rob Coppoolse, Walter Finlayson and Viv Grater, was the home to the now discontinued, but in its time top-end brand, Sentinel. The brand, together with other wines in the Coppoolse Finlayson stable, mostly aimed at export, fell victim to the international down turn in sales.

L'Avenir was acquired in 2005 by the esteemed Chablis producer Michel Laroche, and added to his portfolio of Chilean and Southern France wines.

The acquisition of the Sentinel land, of which some 27 hectares is under vine, adds significantly to L'Avenir's extension plans. The property changed hands for some R14 million, not a large sum in today's terms – especially given that its sale by auction was announced in August last year for R18.6 million. Apparently this and another deal fell through, leaving it open for Laroche to make an offer.

According to Tinus Els of L'Avenir they will have a careful look at the vines and possibilities. He added that they have plans to alter the awful winery building that was constructed on the Sentinel property some years ago. A fake, Hollywood-style 'castle', the monstrosity has been an eyesore to passers by on this prime wine route – home to a concentration of French investment in South African wine.

The idea is to consolidate the newly acquired property into L'Avenir, with the present Sentinel gate becoming the main entrance. After extensive changes, the 'castle' will be used as functions venue.

- *L'Avenir recently relaunched its series of wines in revamped labels, with the whites under screwcap.*

- *[Link to L'Avenir](#)*

