

MEDIA RELEASE
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**RECORD ENTRIES FOR 2008 AIR NEW ZEALAND WINE AWARDS
REFLECT INDUSTRY'S INCREASING DIVERSITY**

- *Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir entries hit record high*
- *Entries for aromatic varietals increase significantly*
- *Emerging wine regions' entries continue to grow*

Record entries have been received into the 2008 Air New Zealand Wine Awards, with more than 1,750 wines entered from the country's 10 winegrowing regions.

The 1,755 entries are the highest number in the competition's almost 30 year history.

Open only to New Zealand wines, the Air New Zealand Wine Awards is the country's most prestigious wine competition and is organised by the country's grapegrowing and winemaking industry body, New Zealand Winegrowers.

The entries this year are dominated by Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, with 320 and 296 entries respectively, reflecting the record vintage and the confidence winemakers have in the vintage's quality.

Additionally, there is a significant increase in entries for aromatic varietals such as Pinot Gris, Riesling and Gewürztraminer. Pinot Gris entries have increased by 46 per cent, to a record 184 entries. Entries in the Gewürztraminer category have increased once again with 68 entries, continuing a four-year trend.

The number of Syrah entries has continued to grow, with 25 per cent more entries in the category this year with 80 entries.

New Zealand Winegrowers global marketing director, Chris Yorke, said the awards recognise the high-quality wines produced by New Zealand winemakers and the exciting diversity of our varietals.

"The Air New Zealand Wine Awards sticker is widely recognised by consumers and helps them with their wine buying, so it's an extremely important competition for all New Zealand winemakers.

"It's very encouraging to see entries from emerging varietals such as Pinot Gris, Syrah and Gewürztraminer continuing to increase, confirming the New Zealand wine industry's increasing diversity. This year, entries in the Pinot Gris category have overtaken Riesling for the first time."

From the 10 winegrowing regions represented, Marlborough topped the entries with 644 wines, making up 37 per cent of the total entries, followed by Hawke's Bay with 424. Entries from Central Otago have continued to increase for the fourth year running, with 175 entries this year, up 67 per cent on last year, followed by Nelson with 122. Entries in the Canterbury/Waipara region have risen to 100 entries

"It's exciting to see some of our emerging wine regions continuing to enter more wines.

"With record number of entries received, this year is set to be an exciting competition," said Mr Yorke.

The Sustainable category, which was introduced last year, has attracted 180 entries from around the country. This has increased by 73% from last year, demonstrating an increasing dedication to sustainable practices amongst New Zealand winemakers.

These wines are eligible to vie for “Pure Bronze,” “Pure Silver”, “Pure Gold” or “Pure Elite Gold” medals and will compete for the prestigious Bell Gully Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy, which is awarded to the top wine that is sustainably grown and produced.

Judging

All wines in the competition will be judged over three days from 3 – 5 November at the ASB Showgrounds in Auckland.

The 26-strong judging team is chaired by Steve Smith, Master of Wine (MW), and includes four international judges - two judges from Australia; (Kym Milne MW and Nick Stock), Joshua Greene, editor of much-respected *Wine and Spirit* magazine in the United States and James Lawther MW, an independent wine writer in Bordeaux. *Full biographies of the international judges are below.*

Medal winning wines will be announced on Wednesday 12 November.

The trophies, including the overall Air New Zealand Champion Wine of the Show Trophy, the Bell Gully Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy and the Elite Gold medal winners will be announced at the Air New Zealand Wine Awards dinner, which will be held in Wellington on Saturday 22 November.

All results will be posted on the following websites:

www.airnzwineawards.co.nz and www.wineshow.co.nz.

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Notes to Editors

All wines are critiqued for either a Bronze, Silver or Gold medal, with outstanding wines awarded an Elite Gold medal.

Sustainable wines will compete for “Pure Elite Gold”, “Pure Gold,” “Pure Silver” or “Pure Bronze” which will in turn vie for the Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy.

“Gold” medal, “Elite Gold”, “Pure Gold” and “Pure Elite Gold” wines are then re-tasted to find the possible 19 Air New Zealand Wine Awards trophy winners.

Air New Zealand Wine Awards Trophies

In addition to the Champion Wine of the Show and the Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy, other trophies include:

- Champion Sparkling Wine Trophy
- Champion Gewürztraminer Trophy
- Champion Pinot Gris Trophy
- Champion Riesling Trophy
- Champion Sauvignon Blanc Trophy
- Champion Chardonnay Trophy
- Champion Other White Styles and Rosé Trophy
- Champion Medium Sweet or Sweet Wine Trophy
- Champion Pinot Noir Trophy
- Champion Merlot Trophy
- Champion Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot/Cabernet Blend Trophy
- Champion Syrah Trophy
- Champion Other Red Styles Trophy
- Champion Open White Wine Trophy
- Champion Open Red Wine Trophy
- Champion Exhibition White or Sparkling Wine Trophy
- Champion Exhibition Red Wine Trophy

About the international judges

Joshua Greene - USA

Editor and Publisher of *Wine & Spirits* magazine since 1986. After graduating from Princeton University in 1981, Mr Greene pursued a career in magazines, starting in management of special interest publications. His involvement with *Wine & Spirits* began on a consulting basis, and eventually led to his purchase of the magazine in 1989.

Mr Greene has travelled extensively through the wine regions of Bordeaux, Burgundy, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Australia and Chile, as well as all the major regions of the United States. In addition to his duties as editor and publisher, Mr. Greene serves as the critic for California, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Northern Italy, Portugal, Australia and South Africa, and contributes feature stories and commentary in each issue of the magazine.

James Lawther MW - France

James Lawther MW is an independent wine writer based in Bordeaux. During his 25 years in the wine industry, he has retailed wine in Paris (Steven Spurrier's Caves de la Madeleine), had hands-on winemaking experience in Bordeaux, the Languedoc and Western Australia (Cape Mentelle) and lectured on food and wine. He passed the Master of Wine examination in 1993.

He is a contributing editor to *Decanter Magazine*, writes for other international publications and has contributed to a number of wine books.

Kym Milne MW - Australia

Kym has worked in the wine industry for over 30 years and has extensive international wine show judging experience. A winemaking graduate of Roseworthy College in Australia, he worked initially as a winemaker in Australia, before moving to New Zealand for a nine year stint as Chief Winemaker for Villa Maria winery from 1983 to 1992.

In 1991 he qualified as a Master of Wine (MW), becoming only the second Australian to pass the exam, before moving to Europe, and then to the UK. He became Director of Winemaking Operations for UK importer International Wine Services and for the next ten years ran winemaking projects throughout Europe, South Africa, and South America producing wine for the UK market.

In 2003 he moved back to Australia, and now has his own consultancy company Global Wine Solutions, working with wineries in Australia and around the world. He is currently Chairman of Judges at the Sydney International Wine Competition and resides in the Adelaide Hills.

Nick Stock - Australia

Nick Stock is one of Australia's most respected and prolific wine critics. Having twice been awarded Australian Sommelier of the Year, his deep involvement in wine stretches well beyond wine writing to show judging, educating, broadcasting and winemaking. His wealth of knowledge extends to all corners of the wine world and this, combined with his frank and fearless style, has made him one of the most popular and widely read Australian wine writers.

Nick was awarded Best Drinks Journalist at the 2007 Le Cordon Bleu World Food Media Awards and is the author of the Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide.

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