

MEDIA RELEASE

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ENTRIES FOR 2007 AIR NEW ZEALAND WINE AWARDS REVEAL A RISE IN NEW VARIETALS

Entries for the 2007 Air New Zealand Wine Awards are now closed and counted with more than 1,550 entries [editors: 1,558] received from the country's 10 winegrowing regions.

Run by New Zealand Winegrowers, the Air New Zealand Wine Awards is the country's most prestigious wine competition and is open only to New Zealand wines.

A strong number of entries from new varietals such as Pinot Gris, Syrah and Viognier have been received this year. The number of Syrah entries has increased 25 per cent this year, with a record 62 entries received in total. Meanwhile, the Viognier category, added in 2006, continues to grow with 25 entries received. The Pinot Gris category has also increased 11 per cent with 126 entries received.

Pinot Noir is closely chasing the highest number of entries, with 240 entries received, only slightly behind Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc which lead this year's entries, both with 273 entries received.

Marlborough has once again topped the entries with 579 wines, making up 37 per cent of the total entries, followed by Hawke's Bay with 385, Gisborne with 118 and Nelson with 111 entries. Entries from Otago have rapidly increased over the past three years with 105 entries received this year, an increase of 20 per cent on last year.

There have been a number of changes to the awards this year including a new Exhibition category, a new Sustainable category and changes to the volume requirements in the Limited and Open categories which include the following results:

- The new Exhibition category, which was added this year to encourage smaller producers and small specialist batches, has had 302 entries, making up almost 20 per cent of the total entries
- The Limited and Open categories, which this year have higher volume requirements allowing consumers more opportunity to purchase winning wines, received 935 and 321 entries respectively
- The new Sustainable category has attracted strong interest in its first year with almost 200 entries. These wines will be eligible to vie for "Pure Bronze," "Pure Silver", "Pure Gold" or "Pure Elite Gold" medals and will in turn compete for the prestigious and first ever Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy, which replaces the Reserve Wine of the Show.

New Zealand Winegrowers global marketing director, Chris Yorke, said the awards are an opportunity for New Zealand winemakers to gain recognition for the high-quality wines they produce.

"Consumers rely on the Air New Zealand Wine Awards' sticker to aid in their decision to buy premium quality wine.

“The rise in entries of new varietals, such as Pinot Gris, Viognier and Syrah, confirms New Zealand’s increasing interest in these varietals. Pinot Gris is now vying for fourth highest number of entries, only slightly behind Riesling. It is encouraging to see these new varietals and emerging winegrowing regions continue to grow,” said Mr Yorke.

The wines will be judged over three days (5 November – 7 November) at North Harbour Stadium, North Shore City.

The trophies, including the overall Champion Wine of the Show, will be announced at the Air New Zealand Wine Awards dinner, being held in Christchurch on Saturday 24 November.

The judging team of 16 wine experts is chaired by Steve Smith MW, who was appointed in April, and will include four international judges, two judges from Australia; (Tom Carson and Mike de Garis), Peter McCombie MW, a New Zealander based in the United Kingdom, and Joshua Greene from the United States.

All results will be posted on the interactive consumer website www.airnzwineawards.co.nz and www.wineshow.co.nz.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

All wines are critiqued for either a bronze, silver or gold medal, with outstanding wines awarded the new 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 Gewurztraminer Trophy
- Champion Pinot Gris Trophy
- Champion Riesling Trophy
- Champion Sauvignon Blanc Trophy
- Champion Chardonnay Trophy
- Champion Other White Styles Trophy
- Champion 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 judges

Peter McCombie, MW

Peter McCombie is a New Zealand-born, English resident Master of Wine.

The roster of clients for his restaurant wine consultancy has ranged from Jamie Oliver's Fifteen to the Cinnamon Club, from the funky boutique Zetter to the five-star Dorchester Hotel. He currently chooses wine for Moro, Zetter, Bar Shu, Canteen and the Cliff (Barbados).

Peter writes for a number of magazines including Restaurant, Decanter and Square Meal and is a respected senior judge in several international competitions.

James Rodewald

James Rodewald is the editor the "Drinks" section of highly respected United States' publication, Gourmet. He also follows fisheries and other environmental issues for the magazine. Showing just how random a career path can be, James has a Masters degree from the American Graduate School of International Management in Phoenix, Arizona. Prior to his first journalism job, James worked behind the bar at various restaurants in Santa Fe, New Mexico, New York's Hudson Valley, and New York City.

After ten years as a reporter at Sports Illustrated and two years as the online editor at Outside magazine, he was lucky enough to jump to Gourmet, where he has been for the past nine years. James has served as a judge at the Hawke's Bay Wine Awards, the National Wine Show of Australia, and several shows in America.

Mike de Garis

Mike de Garis graduated from Roseworthy Agricultural College in 1980. He has had extensive winemaking and management experience in most regions of Australia and New Zealand. His term in New Zealand (a two year contract which lasted for nearly eight years) has almost made him part Kiwi! He left in early 2005 to go back to the Hunter Valley to resurrect The Rothbury Estate, which was subsequently sold by the Foster's Group. He now runs his own wine consultancy.

Mike has previously been a Panel Leader at the Air New Zealand Wine Awards from 2000 to 2004. This year, he has been Chairman of Judges at the Liquorland Top 100 and the International Chardonnay Challenge, as well as being a Panel Leader at the Royal Easter Show Wine Awards.

Tom Carson

Tom Carson has been the chief winemaker at Yering Station since 1996. During this time Yering Station has received international acclaim for its wines, culminating in being awarded International Winemaker of the Year at the 2004 International Wine

and Spirit Challenge (IWSC) in London. Tom judges at many of the Australian capital wine shows, including panel chair at Sydney and the National Wine show.

Tom has worked in Burgundy and Champagne.

In 2002 he was awarded dux at the Len Evans tutorial. In his spare time he looks after his own close planted vineyard.

For further information contact:

Chris Yorke
Global Marketing Director
New Zealand Winegrowers
Phone: +64 9 306 5551
Mobile: +64 21 419 194

or

Marie Pilkington
nbpr
Phone: +64 9 354 0554
Mobile: +64 27 434 7977