

MEDIA RELEASE

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ENTRIES OPEN FOR 2008 AIR NEW ZEALAND WINE AWARDS

Entries have now opened for this year's Air New Zealand Wine Awards, the official competition of the New Zealand wine industry.

Steve Smith, chair of judges for the Air New Zealand Wine Awards said the competition is set to be fierce again this year as New Zealand winemakers vie for top honours in the country's most prestigious wine competition.

"High quality is the defining feature of New Zealand wines, and something that our winemakers are world-renowned for," Mr Smith said.

"Competitions like the Air New Zealand Wine Awards are critical in helping winemakers to strive for improvement in quality and innovation.

"We continue to see strong demand for emerging varieties in both established and growing markets, so pushing the boundaries of premium winemaking is extremely important."

The Air New Zealand Wine Awards is owned and organised by the country's grapegrowing and winemaking industry body, New Zealand Winegrowers, with support from long-time naming-rights sponsor Air New Zealand.

The Awards continue to be regarded as New Zealand's most prestigious wine competition, with a history approaching 30 years.

Top awards

In addition to the Air New Zealand Champion Wine of the Show Trophy, and trophies and medals for each wine variety, the Bell Gully Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy returns again this year. Introduced at the 2007 Air New Zealand Wine Awards, the Bell Gully Champion Sustainable Wine Trophy is awarded to the top wine that is sustainably grown and produced.

Mr Smith said that sustainably-produced medal-winning wines are entitled to add "Pure" in front of the medal awarded, in line with the New Zealand Wine brand "Pure

Discovery,” which reflects the way in which our wines are perceived in key overseas markets.

“Sustainability is an area that the New Zealand wine industry has been committed to for a long time, and continues to be committed to. Through the Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand initiative, New Zealand Winegrowers has set the standard for sustainable practices since 1995.

“At last year’s Air New Zealand Wine Awards, three pure elite gold medals, three pure gold medals, 19 pure silver medals and 23 pure bronze medals were awarded. We hope to see this number increase this year.”

Judging panel and process

With a judging panel featuring experienced judges from New Zealand and around the world, the Air New Zealand Wine Awards is an independent competition with a rigorous judging process.

Mr Smith said this year’s panel features four international judges including Joshua Greene, editor of *Wine and Spirit* magazine in the United States, and Master of Wine (MW) James Lawther, an independent wine writer in Bordeaux.

Joining them is an Australian Kym Milne MW, owner of consultancy company Global Wine Solutions, which works with wineries in Australia and around the world. The fourth international judge will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

“Each of these judges are extremely experienced and we’re very pleased to have them here as part of this year’s Air New Zealand Wine Awards.”

Dates and locations

Entries close on 19 September with judging taking place over three days (3-5 November 2008) at the ASB Showgrounds in Auckland.

This year’s Air New Zealand Wine Awards Gala Dinner will be held in Wellington on Saturday November 22.

“With more than 300 cafes, bars and restaurants, Wellington is one of the country’s top wine and food destinations. We’re thrilled to holding the Award’s in the nation’s capital,” Mr Smith said.

For further information visit www.airnzwineawards.co.nz

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Judges biographies

Joshua Greene

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

James Lawther MW is an independent wine writer based in Bordeaux. During his 25 years experience 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* and writes for other international publications and has contributed to a number of wine books.

Kym Milne MW

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 where 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

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