

AIR NEW ZEALAND   
WINE AWARDS



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**International judges announced for 2016 Air New Zealand Wine Awards**

Two highly respected international wine personalities will be joining this year's judging panel for the country's premier wine competition, the Air New Zealand Wine Awards.

Michael Franz, Ph.D. is a wine writer, educator, and consultant in the United States will be joining the judging panel in 2016. Mr Franz is editor of Wine Review Online, one of the world's most widely viewed wine publications, as well as Sommelier magazine, and is a freelance contributor to many national and international wine magazines.

Mr Franz is a wine consultant for 15 restaurants in the USA and also works as a wine instructor for L'Academie de Cuisine. He tastes approximately 9,000 wines each year, judges wine competitions regularly around the world, and has acted as Chief Judge for international competitions in Washington, D.C., San Diego, New Zealand and China. Mr Franz was a judge at the Air New Zealand Wine Awards in 1999.

Australian Ralph Kyte-Powell has over 40 years' experience in wine and hospitality and will be the second guest judge for the 2016 Awards. Mr Kyte-Powell has worked in sales and marketing for leading Australian wine merchants, managed a wine shop, been sommelier and assistant manager at two of Victoria's best restaurants, worked in vineyards in Australia and France, extensively travelled the world of wine, and lectured on wine.

Mr Kyte-Powell is a regular contributor to The Age in Melbourne, the Sydney Morning Herald, and Cuisine magazine in New Zealand. For eight years, he co-authored the award-winning Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide, and he regularly judges in Australian and New Zealand wine shows.

Leading the 26-strong judging panel, which includes some of the best and most experienced wine judges in New Zealand, is Chair of Judges, Michael Brajkovich, Master of Wine.

"We are thrilled to have Michael and Ralph on the judging panel this year," says Michael. "The international judges bring their wide ranging expertise to the competition and they have both judged in New Zealand before. This expertise and experience is important for New Zealand wine makers and the industry as a whole."

Judging for the 2016 Air New Zealand Wine Awards will take place from 17 to 19 October in Auckland. The gold medal winners will be announced on 26 October, and the 'best of the best' trophy winning wines will be revealed at a black tie dinner in Auckland on 12 November. The dinner marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partnership between New Zealand Winegrowers and naming rights sponsor Air New Zealand.

The Air New Zealand Wine Awards are a celebration of excellence in New Zealand winemaking and are widely considered to be the country's most prestigious wine competition. New Zealand Winegrowers, the national organisation for the country's 1,600 grape growers and winemakers, has owned and organised the competition for the past 40 years. Entries for the 2016 competition close to New Zealand wineries on 9 September.

For more information visit [www.airnzwineawards.co.nz](http://www.airnzwineawards.co.nz)

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