BIRKS

Chip Dry

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When Andrew Birks wants a fine sherry, he sleeps on it, quite literally

- Birks Chip Dry Fino — $25/375ml

Andrew Birks has a deep-seated passion for fortified wines. So deep, indeed, that 25 years ago he established a palomino fino solera in the cellar of his house in Wagga, where he was head of the Wine Science School at Charles Sturt University.

He entered his Birks Chip Dry Fino in the 2010 Royal Sydney Wine Show and won the JCM Fornachon Memorial Trophy for best fortified wine of the show, beating some of Australia's largest wine producers.

It was the second time that Andrew had won the trophy, the first having been in the 1970s when he was chief fortified maker for Lindemans, quite at the opposite end of the winemaking scale.

Later in 2010, the wine was awarded a gold medal at the London International Wine Competition, the world's largest wine show.

Previously, Birks Chip Dry Fino has been eked out to a few friends and associates. Now, Birks is releasing about a thousand 375ml bottles, available through Bidgeebong Wines, the Wagga-based company he was a founding partner of in the 1990s.

"I started the project because I liked drinking fino sherry and had plenty of friends who enjoyed it as well," said Andrew.

"But it's become something more. I'd like to think I can play a small part in ensuring the future of a wine style that seems quite endangered, even in its Spanish homeland."

And sherry's Spanish homeland is quite familiar to him through numerous stints as guest winemaker and speaker there.

So, what's next for Andrew? Well, he's putting together a fortified muscat using aged material from vines he helped plant in the Charles Sturt University vineyard in the 1980s. Watch this space.

Birks Chip Dry Fino is available by contacting Bidgeebong Wines (phone 02 6931 9955 or email winery@bidgeebong.com.au).

For further information, please contact Andrew Birks on 02 6931 9955. High-res images can be downloaded from WineMedia's website (www.winemedia.com.au).