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Lighter-bodied wines dominate the podium at 2012 Sydney International Wine Competition

“It’s a show designed for the benefit of consumers”

For the second year running a lighter-bodied dry red from New Zealand’s Hawkes Bay* has dominated proceedings at the Sydney International Wine Competition, with the Trinity Hill 2010 Gimblett Gravels Syrah taking out three trophies in the 2012 Finals Judging, beside appropriate food:

- Perpetual Trophy for Best Lighter-Bodied Dry Red Table Wine.
- Mark de Havilland Trophy for Best Red Wine of Competition.
- Joy Lake Memorial Championship Trophy for Best Wine of Competition.

What’s more, a lighter-bodied dry white also figured prominently on the podium, with the Coolangatta Estate 2006 Semillon, from Shoalhaven on the NSW South Coast, awarded two trophies:

- Ernie Hunter Memorial Trophy for Best Lighter-Bodied Dry White Table Wine.
- The Wine Society (Australia) Perpetual Trophy for Best White Wine of Competition.

The success of these lighter- and medium-bodied wines didn’t surprise the Competition’s Chairman of Judges, Kym Milne MW.

“Judging the wines in combination with appropriately weighted food clearly changes the dynamics of the exercise,” he said.

“Instead of being seduced by the power and richness of the bigger wines, as sometimes can happen when wines are judged in purely varietal classes, these high-quality lighter-bodied wines can compete on their own terms with more subtle dishes and, indeed, show themselves in many cases to be superior food wines with such dishes.

“And, surely, compatibility with food is really at the very heart of enjoying wine.

“We must be sure that these wines are adequately represented when we sit down at the judging table and start using a knife and fork.”

Kym Milne MW provided this comment on the Trinity Hill 2010 Gimblett Gravels Syrah: “Vibrant and peppery with very good fruit. A cool-climate Syrah with sweet oak and a bright palate. Peppery notes and a vibrant fruit. Light to medium bodied with very good tannins. Lovely silky texture. Sweet oak but not overpowering. A very good wine with the food.”

Commenting on the Coolangatta Estate 2006 Semillon, United Kingdom judge Xenia Irwin MW said: “Intense smoky honeycomb bicarbonate on the nose. Clearly showing development with bright racing acidity and savoury secondary characteristics. Good intensity and concentration run into a long lean mineral chalky textured finish. Excellent with food. Delicate and long.”

The runner-up to the top wine was another shiraz, this time from McLaren Vale — the Penny’s Hill 2010 Cracking Black Shiraz, which won the Perpetual Trophy for Runner Up to Best Wine of Competition and the Kemenys Perpetual Trophy for best Fuller-Bodied Dry Red Table Wine.

The Wine Society Perpetual Trophy for Most Successful Entrant in the Competition was won by Marlborough’s Saint Clair Family Estate.

One interesting facet to come out of the 2012 Competition was the rise of vermentino, an Italian white variety increasingly finding favour with Australian winemakers. Two wines made from vermentino made it into the TOP 100.

The judging of wine alongside food makes the Sydney International Wine Competition, now in its 31st year, unique.

“This isn’t a show staged principally for the benefit of winemakers,” said the Competition’s convener, Warren Mason.

“It’s a show designed for the benefit of consumers. Our website points consumers to the best wines in specific categories so that they can maximise the pleasure they get from creating harmonious food-wine matches.

“And a mobile app is on the way, so they really will be able to take this marvellous reference with them into bottleshops and restaurants.”

As usual, entries for the 2012 Competition were capped at 2000, with 400 graduating to the second-phase judging alongside food. From these, 200 are awarded Blue-Gold Awards and, of these, 100 given the TOP 100 rating. Then there is the selection of the trophy winners.

The winning wines were presented at a wine/food matching Dégustation Banquet held in the Grand Ballroom of Sydney's Shangri-La Hotel this afternoon [Saturday 25 February]. And immediately after that, at 4pm, they were presented on the Competition's 2012 website: www.top100wines.com.

Tastings of all Blue-Gold Award winners will be available on Saturday 24 March at The Menzies Sydney. Session 1 (white wines) will run from 10am to noon and costs \$33 per person. Session 2 (red wines) will run from 2pm to 5pm and costs \$44 per person. Combined tickets are available for \$66 per person.

The judging panel for the 31st Sydney International Wine Competition, chaired by Kym Milne (South Australia), comprised Meg Brodtmann MW (South Australia), Dr Ken Dobler (New South Wales), Peter Forrestal (Western Australia), Rob Geddes MW (New South Wales), Warren Gibson (Hawkes Bay, New Zealand), Neil Hadley MW (New South Wales), Xenia Irwin MW (United Kingdom), Brent Marris (Marlborough, New Zealand), Oliver Masters (Martinborough, New Zealand), Mark Robertson (South Australia), Navneet Singh (South Australia) and Martin Williams MW (Victoria). Sharon Wild (New South Wales) was reserve judge. To read some of their thoughts on the Competition, visit:

<http://www.top100wines.com/judges/judgesReflect-new.asp?Section= writings&objectID=judReflect&RefYear=2012>

For further information on the Sydney International Wine Competition, please contact Warren Mason on 02 4757 4400 or visit www.top100wines.com.

High-resolution images can be downloaded from WineMedia's website (www.winemedia.com.au).

*Last year the Competition's top wine was an Elephant Hill Estate 2009 Hawkes Bay Syrah.

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