

Wednesday February 17th 2010

# Hunter top drops rewarded with fine haul

**L**AST week was a joyful one for Hunter wine producers as they wound up a quick and successful 2010 vintage and harvested a haul of two major trophies and 20 gold medals at the Sydney Wine Show.

For the third time in four years, the Tyrrell family wine company won the NSW Royal Agricultural Society Trophy for the best semillon of show.

The 2010 trophy wine is the Tyrrell's 2005 Vat 1 Hunter Semillon, which won a gold medal in the dry-style semillon class.

It was one of three Tyrrell's gold-medal semillons. The Tyrrell's 2004 HVD Semillon won a gold medal in the semillon and semillon-predominant blends class, while the 2004 Belford Semillon won gold in the dry-style semillon class. Both sell for \$30 a bottle.

Early this year I selected the 2005 Vat 1 as my runner-up wine of 2009, white of the year and semillon of the year. At the 2009 Sydney Wine Show the wine won the Albert Cham Trophy for best white of show and the RAS Trophy for best semillon.

It had its first release at \$59 a bottle in February 2009 and I gave it a rare five's star rating. The wine is no longer available, but will go on the market as an aged release in June 2011.

The Sydney 2010 show was also a triumph for Hunter winemaking wizard Andrew Thomas, Australian Vintage's McGuigan and Tempus Two brands and the Pepper Tree and Briar Ridge arms of geologist Dr. John Davis's wine portfolio.

Australian Vintage (AVI) won the Dr. H. J. Lindeman Trophy for the best white wine in the premium and aged vintage classes and a gold medal in the semillon or blends thereof class with its current-release \$30 Tempus Two 2004 Copper Zenith Semillon.

The Tempus Two 2005 Copper Zenith Semillon also won gold in the semillon or blends thereof class.

The \$13.50 McGuigan 2007 Bin 9000 Semillon won a gold medal in the dry-style semillon class and the \$25 McGuigan 2005 Vineyard Select Semillon gained gold in the semillon and semillon predominant blends class.

John Davis's Briar Ridge winery won a gold medal in the named vineyard shiraz class with its \$60 Briar Ridge 2007 Dairy Hill Single-Vineyard Shiraz.

The wine had previously been judged the champion red wine at the 2009 Australian Small Winemakers' Show.

Briar Ridge is the former Murray Robinson vineyard in Mount View Road, Mount View, and is part of Dr. Davis's wine empire that also includes the Hunter Pepper Tree and Tallavera Grove operations and vineyards in Wrattambully, Orange and Coonawarra.

In last week's Sydney judging, the Pepper Tree 2008 Cabarec Reserve Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon and the Pepper Tree 2009 Alluvius Reserve Hunter Semillon each won gold medals.

The 2008 Cabarec Reserve scored in the cabernet sauvignon varietal class and the 2009 Alluvius Reserve won in the named vineyard dry white, other than chardonnay, class.

Neither is now available, but the Alluvius is due for re-release in the future.

Andrew Thomas won four gold medals with semillons made from grapes grown by 2008 Hunter Viticulturist of the Year Ken Bray on his Braemore vineyard in Hermitage Road, Pokolbin.

The \$45 current-release Andrew Thomas 2004 Braemore Semillon won gold in the semillon or blends thereof class and the 2006, 2007 and 2009 Braemore semillons won gold medals in the named vineyard dry white, other than chardonnay, class.

The fine Inglewood vineyard at Denman displayed the quality of its chardonnay and semillon grapes by winning two golds with as-yet-unreleased 2009 Two Rivers label wines.

The Two Rivers 2008 Stone's Throw Semillon gained a gold in the named vineyard dry white, other than chardonnay, class and the Two Rivers 2009 Reserve Chardonnay starred in the named vineyard chardonnay class.

Another Hunter chardonnay, the Drayton's 2009 Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay, received a gold medal in the varietal chardonnay class.

This \$30 current release previously won the trophy for the best current-vintage chardonnay at the 2009 Hunter Valley Wine Show.

**TESTING:** The 2010 Sydney Royal Wine Show chairman of judges, Iain Riggs.



It was made by William Rikard-Bell, who suffered serious burns in the explosion that killed revered Hunter winemaker Trevor Drayton at Pokolbin in January 2008.

The current-release \$45 Brokenwood 2004 FLR Reserve Semillon, named in honour of Brokenwood managing director chief winemaker Iain Leslie Riggs, won a gold medal in the semillon or blends thereof class.

The \$25 Tower Estate 2008 Clare Valley Riesling, made at the Tower Estate winery, in Broke Road, Pokolbin, won a gold medal in the named vineyard dry white, other than chardonnay, class.

The Sydney judging panel, chaired by Iain Riggs, awarded the Macquarie Group Trophy for the best wine of the show to the Hardy's 2008 Filslee Hardy Chardonnay.

The Fine Wine Partners Trophy for the best wine exhibited at capital city shows over the past 12 months went to the Penfolds 2007 Reserve Bin 8 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay.

Another point of interest for me was the cabernet sauvignon varietal class gold medal awarded to the Flints of Coonawarra 2006 Gammon's Crossing Cabernet Sauvignon.

It's a wine I reviewed on December 23 last year and, at \$18 a bottle, I rated it one of the best Coonawarra cabernet bigs of the year.

It comes from a wine operation only launched in 2003 by a family that had raised sheep and wool and grown cereals at Coonawarra since 1840. It can be bought by emailing flints@flints@coonawarra.com.au.