



Sydney International Wine Competition 2011

Reflections from returning SIWC judge Brent Marris (New Zealand)

Having judged and chaired many wine shows in NZ, South Africa, USA and Australia; having judged “Best Restaurant Wine List of the Year” for several years; having judged specific varietal wine shows such as Canberra’s International Riesling Challenge, it is fair to say I have never judged another wine show that has so much meaning for the consumer as the Sydney International Wine Competition.

Most wine is consumed with food, so why not a show that understands this fact and rewards the wines that are best suited to the dining table? In several judging phases, this competition carefully scrutinises all entered wines until the very best are selected to be judged again alongside lovely food dishes created by competition co-founder Jacquie Mason.

As a judge at this show you have to think much more, to concentrate and analyse how each wine in the category complements the dish. The wine’s balance of fruit, sugar, acid, tannin, all have an influence on how each wine presents when tasted alongside appropriate food. Ultimately, the aim is to recommend to the consumer a list of wines that will offer greater enjoyment when consumed with the right food.

In the early part of the last decade I judged the Sydney International for four years straight. After an eight-year break, my return has made me realise just how much I benefited from that experience, how much more conscious I am, in tasting, judging and blending, of how different wines might work with food. Yes, I was “influenced” and I really value that!

For all wine shows, its organisation, the judging environment and the number of samples to be judged at one sitting has an influence over not only the enjoyment of judging for the judges, but also the final results.

Consider these benefits:

- ❑ Judging at a purpose built property and gardens, nestled amongst the trees and the many birds of the Blue Mountains;
- ❑ Judging alongside some of the top wine-judging palates from around the world;
- ❑ Judging with a support crew of stewards that operates like a well oiled machine;
- ❑ Judging in conjunction with food of the highest standard presented with so much thought and consideration of the various wine styles being judged;

- Judging with the ability to run your private and commercial life effortlessly from the facilities provided us in the breaks between judging classes;
- Judging with a Convenor that has been running this show for some years, constantly tweaking it, with the judges, the entrants and the overall flow of the event his most important consideration.

All this makes for a wine show that is, in my view, second to none.

Maybe I'm getting older, but I cannot see the point in putting time and effort into activities where you or others don't derive real value from it. The Sydney International Wine Competition is definitely a show worth putting time and effort into, not only as a judge, but also for the winemakers analysing the subsequent results — those winemakers who are trying to make wines with great texture and balance which complement food.

And of course, consumers will find many lovely award winning wines that will grace their tables, be it at home or in restaurants. Enjoy the winners!