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Lighter-bodied wines again the big winners at 2013 Sydney International Wine Competition

Two lighter-bodied wines — a Hunter Valley semillon and a shiraz from the Grampians in western Victoria — emerged as the major winners at the 2013 Sydney International Wine Competition, which culminated on Saturday with a gala presentation banquet in the Grand Ballroom of Sydney’s Shangri-La Hotel.

The McLeish Estate 2007 Hunter Valley Semillon won three 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.
- Joy Lake Memorial Championship Trophy for Best Wine of Competition.

The Mount Cole Wineworks 2010 Fenix Rising Reserve Shiraz also won three trophies:

- Perpetual Trophy for Best Lighter-Bodied Dry Red Table Wine.
- Mark de Havilland Trophy for Best Red Wine of Competition.
- Perpetual Trophy for Runner Up to Best Wine of Competition.

It is the third year running that the Joy Lake Memorial Championship Trophy has gone to a lighter-bodied wine, something that thrills the competition’s convener, Warren Mason.

“It certainly vindicates our decision, when we set up the competition 32 years ago, to classify entries predominantly on weight rather than variety and to judge them in the context of appropriate food,” he said.

“We felt that in other wine shows many great wines were simply being blown out of the judging by the sheer amplitude of other wines. You only have to look at our competition to see that we regard big wines as important, but I think we have levelled the playing field.

“Perhaps even more importantly, I’m confident that this sort of competition is much more meaningful for consumers because it enables them to select wines that will truly match the food they’re eating and to heighten the dining experience.”

The success of 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.”

As usual, entries for the 2013 Competition were capped at 2000, though an extra 86 slipped through. Of these, only 346 (16.5 per cent) received awards, making it one of the toughest judging arenas in the world of wine. The awards were: 120 TOP100/BLUE-GOLD, 119 BLUE-GOLD and 107 HIGHLY COMMENDED. There were 24 trophy winners.

For a full list of 2013 award winners, please visit www.top100wines.com.

Tastings of all Blue-Gold Award winners will be available on Saturday 23 March at The Menzies Sydney. Session 1 (white wines) will run from 10am to noon and costs \$35 per person. Session 2 (red wines) will run from 2pm to 5pm and costs \$45 per person. Combined tickets are available for \$70 per person.

The judging panel for the 31st Sydney International Wine Competition, chaired by Kym Milne MW (South Australia), comprised Adrian Atkinson (United Kingdom), Meg Brodtmann MW (Victoria), Dr Ken Dobler (New South Wales), Steve Flamsteed (Victoria), Warren Gibson (New Zealand), Xenia Irwin MW (United Kingdom), Marian Jansen op de Haar (USA), Brent Marris (New Zealand), Oliver Masters (New Zealand), Mark Robertson (South Australia), Elizabeth Thatch MW (USA), Wilfred Wong (USA). Reserve Judge in Residence was Tom Hogan (Victoria).

Keynote speaker at the awards presentation gala banquet was James Gosper, General Manager (Market Development) for Wine Australia. The topic of his speech was: “Shifting the Promotion of Australian wine into a Lifestyle Space”.

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

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