

Festival celebrates 20 years of food and wine

Each year people are eager and excited to discover new wines at the World Wine and Food Expo. This year we are celebrating 20 years of innovation, discoveries and trends.

From its modest beginning at the Brunswick Hotel (currently The Crowne Plaza) in 1991, the demand for this wonderful and educational event necessitated a move to the Moncton Coliseum in 1996. With this success, the organizers added more food booths in 2002 and then changed the name to World Wine and Food Expo in 2004.

To mark this 20th anniversary, NB Liquor has brought in over 380 wines (the biggest wine list ever) and will transform the Agrena Complex into the province's largest wine boutique on Friday and Saturday.

What better way to celebrate a big anniversary than with a bottle of bubbly? Better yet, how about 38 different styles of bubbly? Drop by the Selection Wine Club table at the grand tastings to sample 20 of these delightful bubbles.

Speaking of bubbles, I am excited to announce that the 2010 Wine Excellence Award for "Sparkling Wine of the Year" and "Dessert Wine of the Year" went to Canadian wineries. Yes it's true, Canadian wineries produce excellent wine.

The winner for Sparkling Wine category is the VQA Peller Estates Ice Cuvée NV, \$24.99. This exquisite sparkling wine is made in the traditional "méthode" with hand-picked chardonnay and pinot noir grapes. Enhanced by a burst of flavour from the vidal ice wine, this sparkling wine has a unique style and finesse. The bouquet consists of apricot, yeast and ripe apple, with hints of honey and is followed by tropical fruit on the palate and a refreshingly sweet grapefruit finish. Enjoy with spicy food or Indian curry dishes.

The winner in the Dessert Wine category is the VQA Quails Gate Estate Late Harvest Optima 2008, \$36.99; the grapes were foot-stomped and the soft -skinned grapes were thoroughly dehydrated from the 'Botrytis Cinerea' mold.

This harmless fungus pierces the grape skins causing the fruit to shrink and raisin, leaving the remaining juice naturally sweet.

This succulent dessert wine exhibits a very aromatic profile of baked pear, fig, orange and ripe citrus with a classic honey beeswax note derived from the Botrytis mold.

The palate is full of candied sweetness balanced by firm natural acidity. Enjoy with crème brûlée or soft, flavoured cow's milk cheese.

If you are looking for the best bang for your buck, here are some of the winners under \$15. There was some tough competition this year as evidenced by categories that had multiple winners.

New World under \$15 Red:

Gold medal: Johnny Q Shiraz Viognier, Australia, 750 ml \$13.49
Silver medal: Twisted Old Vine Zinfandel, USA, 750 ml \$14.99
Bronze medal: PKNT Gold Reserve Shiraz, Chile, 750 ml \$14.99

Old World under \$15 Red:

Gold medal: Feudi di San Marzano, Italy, 750 ml \$14.99
Silver medal: La Casona Monastrell, Spain, 750 ml \$10.79

Silver medal: Folonari Verona Rosso, Italy, 750 ml \$13.99
Bronze medal: Rigal The Original Malbec, France, 750 ml \$14.99
Bronze medal: Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Italy, 750 ml \$13.99

Other mentions:

White wine of the Year: Treana White, USA, 750 ml \$37.99
Red wine of the Year: Mormoreto Castello di Nipozzano, Italy, 750 ml \$64.99.

Whether you're a connoisseur or enjoy the occasion glass, there's something for everyone at the 20th World Wine & Food Expo. Every brand featured at the grand tastings will be available for purchase at the on-site store which is open to the public from 1 p.m.- 11 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m.- 11 p.m. on Saturday. As in past years, the Wine Check program will be in place, whereby customers can leave their purchases at the on-site store for pick up by noon on Sunday, Nov 7.

For more information about the festival visit www.wineexpo.ca

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