

Media release
Wednesday 10 2020



Grape expectations as entries open for 2020 New World Wine Awards

Entries are now open to the 2020 New World Wine Awards and the judges are eagerly awaiting the chance to taste test the first wines from what has been hailed as one of the country's most memorable vintages, due to both outstanding grape quality and the challenges of harvesting and processing during lockdown.

The return of the New World Wine Awards will offer local wineries the opportunity to have their teams' hard work recognised and their top wines showcased to wine-loving shoppers in New World stores nationwide.

A unique design among international-standard wine shows, the New World Wine Awards is New Zealand's most consumer-focused wine competition. It combines the rigour of international-standard judging with the New World retail platform to reward the Top 50 ranked wines with distribution through 135 stores and broad promotional support. The result is a measurable lift in sales for the winning wines as a direct outcome of their win.

On a mission to provide supermarket shoppers with the best quality wines that are also accessible and affordable, all entries to the awards must retail for \$25 or less and have at least 4,000 bottles (1,800 for niche varietals) available to meet high demand in store.

Chair of Judges Jim Harré says the judging panel, which will this year assemble in the key wine regions for localised judging, are particularly excited to put early 2020 vintage wines to the taste test.

"The warm summer and dry autumn produced amazing fruit all across the country and by early March many were buzzing in expectation of the great wines to come. However, the harvest – which is already the busiest and most backbreaking time – became even more momentous this year as vineyards and wineries grappled with the challenges of working as an essential service over lockdown."

He says the Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Aromatic and Rosé classes will feature many 2020 vintage wines, providing the first taste of these new wines in a competition setting.

"We look forward to the privilege of assessing the tireless efforts of the industry and celebrating their accomplishments."

The Hunting Lodge, which won a Top 50 spot for its Expressions Delicate Rosé in last year's highly competitive Rosé class, is one of the many wineries that prevailed through lockdown and will again put their entries forward in hopes of striking gold.

"As a small family-owned winery, only opening our doors in 2016, we were extremely proud to have achieved Top 50 status last year," says Pete Turner, Winemaker for The Hunting Lodge.

“This level of recognition undoubtedly impacted the awareness of The Hunting Lodge wine brand across New Zealand.”

“This year’s harvest presented some unforeseen challenges, yet none of these came from the vineyard or winery. As we battled through the vintage in a bizarre new reality brought on by Covid-19, the weather kept us buzzing as the first grapes rolled through the de-stemmer. All regions and all varieties shone for us this year – there were no disappointments. Vintage 2020 will be remembered for many reasons, but best of all for exceptional wines.”

Now in its 18th year, the New World Wine Awards judging is run to international standards including assembling an independent panel of expert wine judges, employing a double blind tasting process to ensure results are based only on the quality of the product in the glass on the day, and using the world-recognised 100-point scale for scoring.

“Winemakers and consumers alike can place their trust in the integrity of a New World Wine Awards medal and choose from the Top 50 list with confidence,” says Mr Harré.

He returns as Chair of Judges for the 13th year, albeit under a new temporary format that will see the usual three day judging event in Wellington split into series of smaller regional events to be hosted in Auckland, Hawke’s Bay, Marlborough and Central Otago.

The regional hub format will allow for localised judging of the nearby regions’ wines and was originally designed to accommodate any considerations around national travel and physical distancing.

The first round of judging will be held in this way, with wines being awarded Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. All Gold and Silver wines will then be re-tasted by an expert panel to ensure absolute consistency across the regionalised judging. During this second round, the panel will also determine the Top 50 wines, the Champion of each varietal and overall Champion Red and Champion White.

Entries to the New World Wine Awards must be received by Friday 26 June. All details can be found online at www.newworld.co.nz/topwines.

Results will be announced later in the year.

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For more information, images and interviews:

Megan Green, megan@nwkcom.co.nz, 027 221 7126

Claire Mourits, claire@nwkcom.co.nz, 027 842 3663

Joanna Braeckel, joanna.braeckel@foodstuffs.co.nz, 027 972 4580