

New Zealand wins Best in Show for Awatere Valley Sauvignon Blanc at the Decanter World Wine Awards 2020

After a challenging year for the global wine industry, there's finally reason to raise a glass!

22nd September 2020: There's perhaps never been a time the global wine industry has been so hard hit, but the world's largest and most influential wine competition is giving reason to celebrate with the release of its 2020 results. After completing judging under strict Covid safety guidelines that included innovations such as proximity lanyards and bespoke disposable spittoons, the Decanter World Wine Awards has today announced its 2020 winners.

Now in its 17th year, the 2020 competition has seen a rise in successes from lesser-known wine producing regions such as the South & Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, which showcased their impressive quality and value for money. Classic regions in France, Italy, Spain, the USA, and Australia once again performed well.

During the judging month, 116 expert wine judges including 37 Masters of Wine and nine Master Sommeliers, tasted and debated the merits of 16,518 wines from 56 countries. New Zealand performed well again this year, collecting one of the 50 Best in Show awards on offer for **Yealands Single Block L5 Sauvignon Blanc 2019**, the second consecutive year that the Marlborough region has produced the only Sauvignon Blanc to be awarded the Best in Show medal.

DWWA 2020 Regional Chair for New Zealand, Rebecca Gibb MW comments, "I think the thing that tasting New Zealand wines over four days underlines is that Central Otago continues to make great Pinot Noir, New Zealand makes excellent Chardonnay that continues to be underrated, and that Sauvignon Blanc is obviously New Zealand's calling card."

Of New Zealand's four Gold medals, two were awarded to white wines from Marlborough: **Letter Series O Chardonnay 2018** and **Villa Maria's Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2019**. **Church Road McDonald Series Cabernet Sauvignon 2016** from Hawke's Bay and **Nga Waka Lease Block Pinot Noir 2016** from Martinborough completed the quartet.

In addition to this, New Zealand also picked up 120 Silver and 284 Bronze medals, exhibiting significant diversity and quality across its winemaking, with the top 10 producers by medals only contributing just over 25% of the total medals awarded, and 145 producers medalling overall.

Andrew Jefford, Co-Chair says, "The Decanter World Wine Awards really helps producers to raise their profile internationally. It can do the same for wine-producing regions and nations,

too. Our judging system - including re-tasting of all Golds, with possible promotion to Platinum - is something we are very proud of. We explain it as often as we can. So, when consumers see a DWWA sticker on a bottle, be it Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze, they can be reassured that the wine in question has been judged by regional experts and specialists before receiving its medal. We discuss, we argue, we fight it out...that's all part of the judging fun. Even with social distancing! But that's also how you get the results which have made the DWWA an international wine benchmark."

After much uncertainty on whether the awards could take place this year, Decanter was meticulous in its approach and innovation to ensure the judging went ahead, introducing strict safety measures that were put in place, including temperature checks on the door, PPE for all judges and staff, disposable spittoons with antibacterial powder that solidifies with liquid and is later incinerated with other hazardous waste, proximity tags worn on lanyards that vibrate when you are less than two metres from another person, and isolated tasting areas with designated facilities.

Co-Chair Sarah Jane Evans MW comments, "The competition has been terrific, it has been a perfect atmosphere to taste and judge this year. After months of lockdown and uncertainty everyone has been delighted to be back again, working together, sharing ideas and thoughts, and above all, focused on picking out the great wines from this year. There have been some wonderful discoveries. As ever the Best in Show day was tough, narrowing down to 50 top wines".

A full list of winners can be viewed online at <http://awards.decanter.com/DWWA>

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The Decanter World Wine Awards Co-Chairs and key spokespeople are available for interviews, please use the contact details below to arrange.

Notes to Editors

New Zealand was awarded a total of 409 medals, with one Best in Show, four Gold, 120 Silver and 284 Bronze. The most successful region was Marlborough, collecting 65% of the medals awarded.

Launched in 2004, the Decanter World Wine Awards is the world's largest and most influential wine competition.

The 2020 awards introduced new innovations, including bespoke disposable spittoons and proximity lanyards, to ensure Covid safety guidelines were adhered to in Decanter's first socially distanced judging month, held at the Future Plc offices in Canary Wharf. A panel of 116 expert wine judges blind-tasted 16,518 wines from 56 countries over four consecutive weeks in August.

Only a total of 50 wines were awarded the highly sought-after accolade of "Best in Show", and the four-week tasting culminated in 178 Platinum, 537 Gold, 5,234 Silver and 7,508 Bronze medals being given out.

Full details on the judging process can be found on www.decanter.com/decanter-awards/.

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