

## Canadian Wines Poised to Pour into American Wine Country

by Doug McCracken and B. Carl Kuhnke, Canadian Consulate General, Seattle

Canadian wineries stand to gain a share of the U.S. wine market after coming up winners at the Pacific Northwest Enological Society's annual wine and food festival.

While not the Napa Valley, the Pacific Northwest is a prolific producer of quality red and white wines. But this has not stopped Canadian wineries from as far away as Ontario from vying for their share of the market.

Their success can be attributed to several factors: the expanding Pacific Northwest wine market, the competitive Canadian dollar, and — not least — the high-quality wines now being produced in exportable quantities by Canadian wineries.

Providing an impetus for penetrating this market was the first-ever wine New Exporters to Border States (NEBS) visit, co-organized by the Canadian Consulate in Seattle, the Vancouver International Trade Centre, and the B.C. Regional Office of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. The 18 wineries that took part in the May

event came away with valuable market information, as well as confidence in their ability to compete. Most felt they could quickly profit, with relatively little incremental expense, in comparison with overseas European or Asian markets.

Demonstrating Canadian quality and competitiveness to potential U.S. clients was the next step in the strategy. To this end, the Canadian Consulate approached members of the Pacific Northwest Enological Society, who were intrigued by the idea of including Canadian wines in their festival.

Notwithstanding the Canadian Civic Holiday, 12 Canadian wineries took part — six in the competition and six at the Canadian stand, hosted by the Canadian Consulate, for wines not being judged.

Five of the competing Canadian wineries — Inniskillin Okanagan Vineyards, Gehringer Brothers, Jackson Triggs Vintners, Quail's Gate Estate Winery, and Sumac Ridge Estate Winery — came away with eight medals in the categories for Late/Special Harvest, Other Reds, Other Whites, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Sparkling.

To put this achievement into perspective, the Canadian wines represented less than 2 per cent of the wines being judged, but won 8 per cent of the medals.

Since the festival, many of the producers have been cultivating the market, dealing directly with importers and distributors. At least half a dozen are expected to be selling in the Pacific Northwest within the next few months.

## CANADIAN WINES TAKE TOP AWARDS AT INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

The Canadian wine industry has once again excelled on the world stage by winning more than 80 awards at the prestigious International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC).

Canadian vintners walked away with two international trophies and five gold, 34 silver and 44 bronze medals from the IWSC Awards Dinner, held in the fall in London, England.

The trophies were awarded to Château des Charmes Wines for the "World's Best Icewine" (Vidal Icewine 1995) and to Henry of Pelham Family Estate for the "World's Best Sweet

Riesling" (Select Late Harvest Riesling 1995).

Receiving the trophy for Château des Charmes, vice-president Paul-André Bosc commented, "Our ice-wines have developed a very strong international reputation for quality, and an IWSC Trophy will not only enhance our image, but also most certainly boost our export opportunities."

Gold medal winners were Vinelands Estates Winery's Merlot Reserve 1995, Colio Estate Wines' Select Late Harvest Vidal 1995, Chateau des Charmes' Vidal Icewine 1995, Calona Vine-

yards' Merlot 1995, and Kittling Ridge Estates Icewine 1995.

The Government of Canada has worked with the grape and wine sector to develop wine quality standards and to create an international marketing plan to increase exports through its Agri-Food Industry Market Strategies (AIMS) initiative.

For more information, contact Rod Ralph, Market and Industry Services Bureau, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ottawa, ON, tel.: (613) 759-7625.