

Canadian vintners win big in wine country

Canadian winemakers took top prizes at an international wine competition in Italy recently, which should be encouraging to vintners across the country.

In the best results for Canada, wines from the Niagara Peninsula and the Okanagan Valley won four of the most coveted Grand Gold Medals. Canada was also awarded a gold, silver and bronze medal and 20 Grand Mentions.

Vinitaly, held in the biggest wine-producing country in the world, is considered by winemakers to be the most important event of the year. Some 3,500 wines from 30 countries were featured in this edition of the international wine competition.

The Special Vinitaly 2006 Prize, the second-highest prize



awarded to winemakers, went to Jackson-Triggs Vintners' Okanagan Estate. The company received two of the Grand Gold Medals for its 2003 Sun Rock Vineyard Syrah and its 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon Grand Reserve.

The other two Grand Gold Medals went to the Pillitteri Estate Winery of Niagara on the Lake for its 2004 Vidal Icewine and Vidal Sparkling Icewine. Magnotta Winery Corporation of Vaughan, Ontario, also took home a gold medal thanks to its 2003 Riesling Icewine.

Canadian Ambassador to Italy Robert Fowler and Consul General for Milan Margaret Huber were on hand to congratulate the Canadian companies attending this event.

For more information, contact PierPaolo Chicco, Canadian Consulate General in Milan, tel.: (011-39-02) 67-58-34-53, email: ital-td@international.gc.ca.

Erratum

Issue: March 15, 2006

Article: *The Controlled Goods Directorate: Strengthening Canada's defence trade controls* (Page 3)

In the first line of the article two numbers were reversed, incorrectly suggesting that Canada had a trade deficit with the United States in 2003. The line should read:

"In 2003, Canada imported an estimated \$282 billion worth of goods and services from the U.S. and exported an estimated \$366 billion to the U.S."



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Trusted relationships make things happen, say Canadian contractors - from page 1

pretty good reputation quickly," recalls company president Brian Mergelas.

On a larger scale, Canadian engineering and construction giant SNC-Lavalin was hired to dig 700-metre-deep wells below the Saharan desert to tap Libya's aquifers for the water pipeline. Since then, the Montreal company has steadily landed bigger contracts for the project.

"You do one project, then you do another, and the fact you are there gives you an advantage," explains Sami Bébawi, Executive Vice-President of SNC-Lavalin. Bébawi says that local partners are key allies for Canadians to understand conditions on the ground. He notes there is no substitute for earning a client's trust over time through face-to-face dealings and informal social networks.

Easy pickings?

But Bébawi, who came to Canada 33 years ago from Egypt and speaks a number of languages including Arabic, English, French and Spanish, warns that the dazzling size and pace of regional mega-projects—from gas expansion in Algeria to urban renewal in Kuwait and giant entertainment complexes in Dubai—might give a false impression of easy pickings.

"There is a lot of money and a lot of projects but the competition is fierce," says Bébawi, whose company first came to the region in the 1970s and now has five permanent offices there. "Don't think this is a big and easy catch."

Those who succeed in the region underscore the power of personal relationships. "Decisions are often made by very few people, so if you have a trusted-advisor-relationship with the decision makers, things can move quickly," observes Jim Metcalfe, President and CEO of Cansult Ltd. The Markham, Ontario, engineering and project management firm carries out 75% of its total business in the Arab world and has four permanent offices in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

"Developing these relationships across different cultures and crossing the language barriers can take time but, once established, they are very lasting

and powerful," observes Metcalfe, a 32-year veteran of the region who now lives in Abu Dhabi. For Canadian firms doing work in the region, business relationships can begin in unconventional ways. In 2001, Ocean Nutrition Canada of Halifax met Noritech Seaweed Biotechnologies Ltd., of Haifa, Israel through a corporate matchmaker, the Canada-Israel Industrial Research and Development Foundation. Set up in 1994 with seed money from the two countries, the foundation matches companies to work together on new ventures with commercial promise. For example, Ocean Nutrition has expertise in the supplement and food market while Noritech knows how to grow nori seaweed under controlled conditions. Their shared expertise may lead to commercial production of new seaweed-rich health-food products.

"There is a lot of money and a lot of projects, but the competition is fierce," says Sami Bébawi, Executive Vice-President, SNC-Lavalin.

Invest in people

"The matchmaking component is the key to the success of it," says Colin Barrow, Vice-President of Research and Development for Ocean Nutrition. The export-dependent company had no previous ties to Israel's active, well-financed bio-technology sector, but through Noritech it has met other Israeli investors keen to tap the growing global market for health food.

No matter how—or where—the opportunities come, veteran Canadian companies offer the same advice to newcomers dazzled by the prospect of mega-dollars in the region: invest in people and relationships. "You start small and deliver, you live up to expectations and slowly, slowly, they will come to respect you tremendously," says Bébawi of SNC-Lavalin.

Like others, he sees a bright future for Canada in a fast-modernizing region. "The opportunities are amazing," he says. "It is up to Canadians to decide how much we want our share to be."