Air NZ Wine Awards results

26 Nov 2012 by Julia Harding MW

The full results of the Air New Zealand Wine Awards were announced yesterday following the awards dinner on Saturday night in Wellington. This competition, generally considered to be the most prestigious in New Zealand and now in its 26th year, was the original impetus for my recent two-week trip to New Zealand. Before and after the competition, I took the opportunity to explore the wine regions of Waiheke Island, close to Auckland, and Waipara and North Canterbury, due north of Christchurch on the South Island. I will be writing about these visits in due course.

Of the various international competitions I have judged in, this was definitely the most civilised and manageable in that no one panel of judges had to taste more than 125 wines in a day over the three days of the competition. Michael Brajkovich MW was also an excellent chair of judges, giving panels full responsibility, offering advice where needed, and, when the need arose, taking a firm lead without appearing to be authoritarian.

Although the competition is sponsored by Air New Zealand, it is owned and organised by New Zealand Winegrowers, the national organisation for the country's 1,700 grape growers and wineries. This year's competition saw 1,367 wines entered into 17 different classes. In addition to the 97 gold medals, 183 silver medals and 364 bronze medals were also awarded, bringing the total number of medals awarded to 644.

The breakdown of regions in relation to grape varieties was very interesting, if not unexpected, as Michael Brajkovich wrote to me later: 'all 17 gold medal Sauvignon Blancs came from Marlborough. The 21 Pinot Noir golds were split 11-10 between Otago and Marlborough. The Chardonnay golds came from Auckland, Gisborne, Hawke's Bay and Marlborough. Of course, this spread is very much dependent on who enters the wine competition.' Exactly, though I was rather surprised by the lack of golds for Pinot Noir from Martinborough, particularly given their good showing at a tasting in London recently, though perhaps they show better when they have had a little longer in bottle.

To download a pdf of the full results, click here.