

B.C. wines shine at festival

The province's relatively young wine regions displayed surprising depth at the 31st annual Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival.

It's been a little over two weeks since the 31st annual Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival came to a close. It was another very busy but fun filled and educational week of tasting, wining and dining this year. I kicked off the week at a reception at Earls Paramount with Inniskillin Okanagan, their winemaker Sandor Mayer and his

good
eats

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Discovery Series wines. The Discovery Series are wines made with grapes from small lots that were previously unexplored in the Okanagan Valley. Great – I loved the Rhone style Marsanne Roussanne blend. Later that evening it was off to Bishops Restaurant where Cedar Creek Estate Winery joined forces with John Bishop and his culinary team for a memorable evening of fabulous food and wine. And that was just the first night! There were many wonderful events again this year. Mission Hill proprietor Anthony von Mandl and his chief winemaker John Simes presented their awarding wines with the world-class culinary creations of Daniel Boulud's team at DB Bistro Moderne. After numerous lunches, seminars, receptions and two days and three nights on the tasting floor, I closed the week with a final winemaker's dinner at Yaletown's Blue Water Café and Raw Bar.

Proprietor and North Shore resident Jack Evernsal along with his chef Frank Pabst and 2009 sommelier of the year Andrea Vescovi teamed up with the Great Estates of the Okanagan for an incredible multi-course dinner. But what made this year even more special was B.C. didn't just host the festival, our wines were the regional theme. It was our chance to show the world that although small in comparison to wine regions like France, Italy and Australia, we are a regional force to be reckoned with, with wines that belong on the world stage. Overall 58 B.C. wineries were showcased – the largest showing ever of the province's wines.

As a wine region B.C. is still just a baby. In just a little over 20 years our wine industry has grown leaps and bounds from just 14 wineries in 1988 to 160 today. The quality of our wine has increased dramatically and we have been regularly recognized for our quality around the world, winning numerous international awards. B.C. produces more than 60 different grape varieties from five designated viticultural areas. There is of

course the Okanagan Valley, which is split into five sub-regions: Kelowna, Naramata, Okanagan Falls, the Golden Mile and Osoyoos/Black Sage. The others are the Similkameen Valley, The Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

As I mentioned earlier there were many great moments throughout the week that reminded me just how impressive and special our wines are. There were many good seminars this year but the two that really showed the quality of our wines were "The Taste of British Columbia" and "Icons of B.C."

The best of the province's wines were showcased at these seminars, including 2005 Steller's Jay Brut from Sumac Ridge, 2008 Ehrenfeller from Cedar Creek, 2007 Pinot Noir from Quails' Gate, 2006 Qwam Qmt Merlot Nk'Mip Cellars, Road 13's 2007 Old Vines Chenin Blanc and 2007 Riesling Icewine from Mission Hill.

In next year's festival Argentina and New Zealand are sharing the stage as theme regions with a global focus on Rosé. So if you missed out this year, book early for 2010.

perfectpairs

Mission Hill Family Estate Perpetua Chardonnay 2006

Okanagan Valley \$32.99/btl – This outstanding single-vineyard chardonnay has the sophistication of old world wine with a fresh new world look (love the label) and taste. It has wonderful full ripe pear, orange, lime, green apple, vanilla, nut and light butter aromas. The palate has more pear, lime, grapefruit, green apple, peach, butter and toasty vanilla notes with a lingering and elegant finish. I enjoy sipping this wine on it's own but it also pairs very well with fresh Dungeness crab or a Lobster ravioli in a cream sauce. **93pts.**



Jackson-Triggs Shiraz SunRock Vineyard 2006 Okanagan Valley \$34.99/btl

– This single vineyard red comes to us from a site called the Osoyoos lake bench. As the name implies, this vineyard gets a great deal of sunlight and thanks to the lake cooler temperatures in the evenings – ideal for growing rich ripe grapes. This fabulous red has white pepper, earthy, black fruit aromas with a touch of dark chocolate on the nose. The palate has ripe juicy black fruit with more spicy peppery notes - pair with barbecued rib steak, herb crusted rack of lamb, game meat like venison or full flavoured cheese. **93pts.**