Trade confident of strong potential for Tasmanian wine in the UK

The future for Tasmanian wine in the UK looks bright, trade representatives have said following a Tasmanian wine tasting in London last week.

Wine Tasmania, supported by Wine Australia, hosted a trade and press master class for more than 50 guests at Australia House on Thursday.

Presented by Michael Hill-Smith MW, co-owner of Tasmania’s Tolpuddle Vineyard, the two-hour master class featured 12 premium wines from the cool-climate island state that is making headlines around the world.

Following the tasting, several guests said how impressed they were with the quality of wines tasted and spoke of the potential growth for Tasmania in the UK.

Among those was Peter Dean, the Drinks Editor for new online trade publication The Buyer. He said Tasmania was now a region in which he would take more interest.

‘My knowledge of Tasmanian wine in the UK is not that considerable but this tasting has opened my eyes and my taste buds to it considerably,’ he said following the tasting.

‘I think for premium on-trade, the future looks very interesting for Tasmania in the fact that sommeliers and wine buyers are always looking for exciting wines.

‘I would recommend Tasmanian wine to wine buyers and sommeliers as a way of getting a real point of difference within your wine lists.’

The focus of the master class was to showcase the varieties and styles for which Tasmania is increasingly becoming known, and included some wines that are not currently available in the UK market, such as Pooley, Pressing Matters and Home Hill.

Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are the hallmark varieties of the region, used to produce both still and sparkling wines. This was illustrated at the master class with Chardonnay from Tolpuddle Vineyard, Josef Chromy and Stoney Rise’s Holyman, and Pinot Noir from Bay of Fires, Dawson James, Home Hill and Tolpuddle Vineyard.

Tasmania is an exceptional producer of sparkling wines, which reflect the island’s cool climate conditions through striking acidity. Sparkling wine was represented at the master class with three wines including Pirie NV, Jansz Tasmania Vintage Cuvée 2010 and House of Arras Blanc de Blanc 2006.

Riesling is also making its mark across the style spectrum, with Pooley Wines Margaret Pooley Tribute and Pressing Matters R9 Rieslings tasted.

Michael Hill-Smith MW said Tasmania is a ‘hidden gem’ because very few people see the wines, with only 10 per cent exported. Plus, there are more sites to be explored and planted.

‘I think the perception of Tasmanian wine in the UK and elsewhere is that it’s sort of a brave new frontier and then you realise how little wine is made from it and how good so much of it is,’ he said.

‘Even people who haven’t been to Tasmania have this sense of this pure, unspoilt beautiful island, which indeed it is, and we are now finding wines coming out there that are second third generation that are really, truly exciting.’
Wine Tasmania CEO Sheralee Davies welcomed the opportunity to share a little of the island’s wine with participants in the tasting.

‘As a small region, we know that it’s not always easy to find Tasmanian wines in the UK market, but we are looking forward to growing our presence over the coming years. The masterclass has provided a small taste of Tasmania's wines and we extend an open invitation from our small island to yours to come and visit if you’d like to taste more.”

With 160 licenced wine producers in Tasmania, the region contributes to just 0.5 per cent of total Australian wine production, but is one of the highest valued regions in the country, in terms of pricing for both its wine grapes and bottled wine. Of this, 50 per cent remains in Australia – including 40 per cent consumed in Tasmania itself – and just 10 per cent is exported.

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For further information please contact:
Sheralee Davies – Wine Tasmania
Chief Executive Officer
Phone: +61 3 6223 3770
Mobile: +61 407 004 959
Email: sdavies@winetasmania.net.au
Twitter: @WineTasmania
Website: www.winetasmania.com.au

About Wine Tasmania
Wine Tasmania is the peak body representing the island's grape growers and winemakers - working together to promote Tasmania as a benchmark wine region of world renown.

For media enquiries please contact:
Hannah Silverman – Wine Australia
Communications Manager
Phone: +44 (0)207 438 4669
Mobile: +44 (0)745 354 8601
Email: hannah.silverman@wineaustralia.com
Twitter: @Wine_Australia
Instagram: @WineAustralia
Facebook: WineAustralia
Website: www.wineaustralia.com

About Wine Australia
Wine Australia supports a competitive wine sector by investing in research, development and extension (RD&E), growing domestic and international markets and protecting the reputation of Australian wine.

Wine Australia is funded by grape growers and winemakers through levies and user-pays charges and the Australian Government, which provides matching funding for RD&E investments.

Wine Australia is the trading name of the Australian Grape and Wine Authority, a Commonwealth statutory authority established under the Australian Grape and Wine Authority Act 2013.