

Blackenbrook

VINEYARD

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Blackenbrook Vineyard 'accidentally' wins International Wine Trophy

When co-owner of Blackenbrook family vineyard in Tasman, Ursula Schwarzenbach was sent an email telling her their Sauvignon Blanc had been selected for an award in South Africa her first thought was that it was spam.

"I hadn't sent any wine to a South African award so I just ignored the email thinking it wasn't real. Then I got several more emails from them asking urgently for information about the wine. So I sent it off, still not quite sure what was going on. And then they told us we'd won the 2009 Bartho Eksteen Sauvignon Blanc Celebration Trophy!, she says"

Ursula and her winemaker husband Daniel still needed convincing that it was real.

"Then we were contacted by respected New Zealand wine consultant, Jenny Dobson, who had been a guest judge at the awards – accepting the Trophy on behalf of Blackenbrook. She assured us it was a prestigious event and something to be extremely proud of," says Ursula.

The award is an annual event where an international panel chooses the top 10 South African Sauvignon Blancs and their top 10 from around the world. Blackenbrook's 2007 Sauvignon Blanc was one of five New Zealand wines selected to be in the final scored tasting.

Jenny Dobson says it was the first time she'd attended the event and she was blown away by how serious and well attended it was.

"When I spoke to Ursula I was able to convince her that this is a great honour to win the award and that it was a prestigious event.

80 people took part in the scored tastings. It was incredibly professionally run - a blind tasting of the twenty wines which were all quite diverse in their styles and

ages. After scoring, all wines were discussed, which turns this competition into a valuable learning opportunity for the winemakers in South Africa."

"This event is very well thought of in South Africa and this is the 17th year it's been held. Bartho Eksteen, the man who started the competition, is a well respected Sauvignon Blanc fanatic. He started the event because he wanted to deepen the knowledge of this amazing grape variety. He was also keen to find out how South Africa was positioned on the world scene and to help South Africa improve and enjoy their wines", says Jenny Dobson.

The other New Zealand wines in the top ten were The Ned Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2008, Cloudy Bay Te Koko 2004, St Clair Wairau Reserve 2007, Astrolabe Awatere Marlborough 2005. Other countries represented were France, Chile and Australia.

Jenny Dobson says the tasting experts from around the world were in admiration of the expression of Sauvignon Blanc that comes out of New Zealand.

"There was very good reaction to our New Zealand wines and they were interested to learn that New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc isn't one animal, that there are many expressions of it."

Jenny Dobson says when Blackenbrook 2007 Sauvignon Blanc was announced as the winner, people were delighted.

"The majority of the tasters had put it in their top three wines and everybody said it was the very essence of Sauvignon Blanc. For me, Blackenbrook was quintessential Sauvignon Blanc – the vibrancy, the aromatics – you couldn't ask for anything more."

Ursula Schwarzenbach says now they understand the significance of the event, they're very proud to have won.

"International recognition is always gratifying, especially when we were up against some of the best of our fellow kiwi winemakers. It's been a great month for our Sauvignon Blanc - our 2009 vintage has just been selected for our very first export order to Canada," says Ursula.

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