

YOUNG AUSTRALASIAN WINEMAKER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

By Paul Foster

When wine after wine is a joy to try you know you're onto a good thing. And that's how it was, judging the Young Winemaker of the Year awards this year. Not that there was a large number of submissions - about 200 - but quality was there and 7 of the 10 finalists proved to be within a remarkable 3 points of the major Award.

How does it work? Each year The Wine Society invites Australian and New Zealand winemakers under the age of 30 to submit examples of their best. The entries are assessed by a professional panel for the main Award, then the top twenty wines from this assessment are shown to interested sommeliers and Society members in a series of tastings staged around Australia. The tastings are blind and the participants are asked to rank their favourites. Accordingly, three Trophies get to be awarded at a grand public Dinner.

As it was, the Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz classes were strong. You'd expect that with Shiraz but I have to say that most of the Pinots I see in a year are pretty ordinary wines while, disappointingly, the standard of Australian Cabernet seems to have been in decline for some time. So it was wonderful to face a phalanx of quality wine.

Two of the top Pinots were the Southern Tasmanian **Bream Creek Reserve Pinot Noir 2005** made by Greer Carland and Malcolm Francis-Rees' finely tuned **Rockburn Pinot Noir 2007** from Central Otago. The latter, a favourite with the judges, went on to

win the Sommeliers' Trophy. Exciting Cabernets included Angela Miranda's marvellous **Jacob's Creek Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2004** and Helen McCarthy's **Taylors Jaraman Cabernet Sauvignon 2005**. Two of the top Shiraz were Helen's dark berries and licorice **Taylors Jaraman Shiraz 2005** and Ben Haines' impressive **Mitchelton Print Shiraz 2006**.

Taylors Jaraman Cabernet Sauvignon 2005

Members' Choice, clear winner across 6 Roadshow tastings. Intense, luscious, juicy. Blackcurrant and blue fruit flavours. Charred oak. A marvellous mouthfeel; you can roll this one around your cheeks and chew it. Grippy finish. Clare and Coonawarra. \$32

Mitchelton Print Shiraz 2006

Judges' Choice. Coffee, chocolate and plum. Savoury spicy oak. Velvety smooth middle palate and modestly firm finish. Rich ripe tannins. A full-bodied but graceful Shiraz. From fruit off old vines in the Nagambie Lakes region of Central Victoria. \$49