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2019 St. Anne's Crossing "Shumahi" Primitivo Takes Best of Show for Sonoma Valley at 2021 Harvest Challenge Competition: Finger Lakes Thirsty Owl 2019 Riesling Takes Best White; France's Chateau Cazeau Cremant de Bordeaux Brut Takes Best Sparkling

Santa Rosa, Calif., —November 22, 2021—The Sonoma Valley AVA took the big prize at the 2021 Harvest "Terroir" Challenge, the only competition to judge wines by American Viticultural Area. In a spirited final round, the 2019 St. Anne's Crossing Primitivo, which was selected Best Red, beat out the 2019 Thirsty Owl Riesling (New York), which was chosen Best White, the 2020 Baron Herzog Lineage Rosé from Clarksburg (Best Rosé), the Chateau Cazeau Brut (Best Sparkling), Westport Winery (Columbia, WA) "Ancient Mariner" Pear Riesling (Best Dessert), and a Sangria from Barefoot (CA; Best Fruit Wine). The Primitivo took Best of Show over the Riesling, 6 votes to 5, awarding Sonoma Valley the top AVA prize.

This year's competition brought in a record number of entries from Chile, Argentina, France, Virginia, Oregon, Washington and Australia. As of today, there are 260 AVAs within 34 states in the US, with 142 of them located in California.

Best Sparkling came down to an 8 to 7 squeaker between the Breathless Late Disgorged Brut from the Russian River Valley, made from Chardonnay (75%), Pinot Noir (23%) and Pinot Meunier (2%), and the winning Chateau Cazeau Brut, which was comprised of Semillon (56%), Merlot (25%), Cabernet Franc (9%), Muscadelle (9%) and Ugni Blanc (1%).

Best White required a runoff between the 100-point 2020 Navarro Gewurztraminer (Best of Anderson Valley) and the 2019 Thirsty Owl Riesling (Best of the Finger Lakes), with the Riesling prevailing 10 votes to 5. In the first round, judges cast 4 votes for the 2020 Girasole Pinot Blanc (Best of Mendocino), 8 votes for the 2020 Whitehaven Sauvignon Blanc (Best of New Zealand), 10 for the Navarro Vineyards Gewurztraminer, 2 for the Effingham Viognier (Best of Virginia), 7 for the 2020 New Clairvaux Vineyard Moschofilero (Best of Tehama County, CA), 11 for the Thirsty Owl Riesling and 2 for the 2020 Sonoma Cutrer "The Cutrer" Chardonnay (Best of Russian River Valley White).

Best Red was a three-way dogfight between the winning Primitivo (7 votes), the 2019 Frank Family Carneros Pinot Noir from Napa (Best of Carneros) with 2 votes and the 2018 Frances Coppola Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Best of Alexander Valley) with 5 votes. Other contenders for Best Red honors were the 2018 Hoyt Family Vineyards Grenache Willow Creek, (Best of Paso Robles), 2019 Open Secret Pinotage (Best of South Africa), 2019 Mannaggia All'Alba Sangiovese (Best of Italy), 2018 Alamos Malbec (Best of Argentina), 2018 Garré Vineyards and Winery Cabernet Franc (Best of Livermore Valley), 2019 Ridge Crest Merlot Columbia (Best of Washington), 2020 JOLO Winery and Vineyards Jolotage Red Wine Blend (Best of

North Carolina: a blend of 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Franc, 13% Syrah and 8% Petit Verdot), 2019 Fortunati “Fortivo” proprietary Red Bordeaux Blend (Best of Napa: 45% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 10% Malbec), 2019 Notre Vue GSM Rhone Red Blend (Best Red of Russian River Valley: 51% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 29% Mourvèdre) and 2018 Rockpile Vineyards Rockpile Syrah (Best of Rockpile).

Two sweet wines had a sugarplum fistfight for Best Dessert, with the Westport Winery Pear Riesling winning over the St. Julien “Sweet Nancie” Traminette (Best of Lake Michigan Shore) 8 votes to 6.

The Harvest Challenge, owned and operated by Wine Competition Management & Productions, is judged by leading wine industry professionals who evaluate and rank wines based on terroir. The top scoring Best of Class and Best of Region wines are then sent to Sweepstakes, where Best Red, Best White, Best Rosé, Best Dessert and Best of Show are determined.

“The unique format of the Harvest Challenge competition is what attracts our judges,” says Debra Del Fiorentino, Competition Director. “They might judge a flight of wines from Virginia, then Dry Creek Valley, then New Zealand, then Mendocino. This competition welcomes, celebrates and recognizes the diversity of terroir in the wine world.”

Del Fiorentino notes that each year, the number of entries grows, and in 2021, there were many more wines from France, South Africa, Argentina and Chile. The quality continues to go up as well. “We had some impressive AVA showings this year, including a 17-wine flight from Livermore, where the judges awarded nearly half the wines scores of 93 points or higher, along with three double golds rated 97 and 99 points, and a 12-wine flight from Paso Robles with 5 wines scoring 92 or higher.”

Judges also appreciate the opportunity for discovery. “Every year at this competition, I’m introduced to a new grape or a new winery,” said wine judge and journalist, Laura Ness. “This year, it was both. I’d never heard of Moschofilero or the New Clairvaux Winery. Moschofilero is a Greek white variety that hails from the Peloponnese region of Greece. It’s known to be aromatic and spicy, and the one that showed up in the sweepstakes round, made by a community of Trappist-Cistercian Monks from the town of Vina, in northern California, was certainly that, almost like Gewurztraminer with a grapefruit edge. Intriguing and fun!” The winery planted Moschofilero vines in 2011 in Northern California and claims it’s the first American rendition of the grape.

Congratulations to all the Best of Region winners, and to all the Double Gold, Gold and Silver-winning medalists.

Specialty printer, First in Print, will again offer quality point-of-sale materials with discounted pricing for winners. See <https://www.winecompetitions.com/harvest-challenge> for details.

Winners will be listed on winecompetitions.com.

About Wine Competitions Management & Production (WCMP)

This organization owns and operates a variety of competitions including Sunset Wine Competition, East Meets West, International Women's Wine Competition, Harvest Challenge, Sunset Spirits Competition, the Craft Distillers Spirits Competition, Press Democrat North Coast Wine Challenge, Experience Rosé, West Coast Wine Competition, Sante' Wine Competition and International Eastern Wine Competition.

CONTACT:

Debra Del Fiorentino
Founder and President
Wine Competitions Management & Productions
415-640-6337
debra@winecompetitions.com