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Indy International Wine Competition uncorks a top ranking

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind - Indiana, not often thought of as a wine state, welcomed wine entries from Tasmania, Australia, and France this past weekend at the State Fairgrounds for the Indy International wine competition. Ranked among the top three competitions in the United States, based on the total number of entries, the Indy International has built quite a reputation among consumers and the international wine industry.

Over 2,500 commercial and amateur wine entries flowed in from 12 countries worldwide; to be tasted, analyzed and scored. Richard Vine, competition chairman and Purdue University enologist says, "The achievement of more than 2,500 entries reaches a milestone few other wine competitions have ever attained. Not only across America, but in Europe as well." The Indy International has grown from 484 entries to 2,500 in only 8 years. Vine continues, "I think this bodes high for the quality reputation we are building for Indianapolis as a center between American, European, and Southern Hemisphere vintners to go head to head with each other."

All entries are judged individually and are eligible to earn a bronze medal, silver, gold, or no medal. During the wine extravaganza, 265 gold medals were awarded, 888 silver, and 896 bronze. The best of show American Airlines trophy was awarded to the 1997 Haywood Winery Rocky Terrace Zinfandel from Sonoma Valley, California. Best red honors also went to a California vintner, Concannon Vineyard, for their 1997 Livermore Valley Syrah. The British Columbia winery, Wild Goose Vineyards, earned the best white wine with their 1999 Gewurztraminer.

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Each wine was scored by a panel of five judges. More than 50 judges from around the United States and Canada flew into Indianapolis to participate in this prestigious event. Wine writers, winemakers, and experienced wine enthusiasts tasted 120 wines per day during the competition. One judge summarizes, “Judging is an enjoyable job, but to get through 120 wines per day takes a great deal of concentration and attention to each grape variety. Compare it to tasting every type of fruit you can imagine in one day and judging each on its own merits.”

The Indy International is the most comprehensive wine competition in the country. Dan Archibald, anchor judge and editor of Fruit Winemaking Quarterly, states, “I choose to judge at this competition because it is the only one in the country that addresses the fruit wine industry at both the commercial and amateur level.” It is also the only wine competition of its size and stature to include an amateur wine category. The majority of successful wineries around the world were born when an amateur winemaker received praise for his/her wine. At the Indy International, amateurs have the opportunity to achieve success and move forward in their winemaking dreams. The amateur wines earned 485 medals at the competition this year.

Look for Indiana to continue to grow in reputation as a wine state. Not only through the success of the Indy International, but also by the number of awards earned by Indiana wineries. Out of 191 Indiana wines entered, the wineries came home with 142 awards; 20 gold medals, 49 silver, and 73 bronze. Indiana wineries are competing with the best wineries in the world and winning; proving the point that there is more than corn in Indiana.

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