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Villa Maria Reserve Syrah triumphs at New Zealand's oldest wine show

Villa Maria Estate, a 100% privately owned New Zealand winery, has picked up the Champion Wine of Show Trophy for its Reserve Syrah 2006 in New Zealand's oldest, most prestigious wine competition.

The Champion Wine award was accompanied by widespread achievement in five other categories including Champion Viognier, Champion Pinot Noir, Champion Merlot & Merlot Predominant Blends, Champion Syrah and Champion Export Wine with the Winemaker of the Year taken convincingly by Villa Maria's Alastair Maling MW.

The 2008 Royal Easter Show trophy awards included:

- Champion Wine of Show - Villa Maria Reserve Syrah 2006
- Champion Viognier - Villa Maria Cellar Selection Viognier 2007
- Champion Pinot Noir - Villa Maria Cellar Selection Pinot Noir 2006
- Champion Syrah - Villa Maria Reserve Syrah 2006
- Champion Merlot & Merlot predominant blends – Villa Maria Single Vineyard Omahu Gravels Merlot 2006
- Champion Export Wine – Villa Maria Cellar Selection Pinot Noir 2006
- Winemaker of the Year – Alastair Maling MW

For Villa Maria's owner and managing director, George Fistonich, the awards are a significant endorsement of the quality of Villa Maria wines. With a string of accolades to its name, Fistonich says, "I am so proud of the standard our winemakers and viticulturists have achieved with these wines. The results are absolutely stunning."

The Easter Show triumph builds on the winery's considerable success in the UK, Australia and Asia in 2007. This included the award of New World Winery of the Year by influential US wine magazine Wine Enthusiast and most recently an accolade by top US wine writer Michael Franz as worldwide 'Wine Producer of the Year'.

Villa Maria Group winemaker Alastair Maling MW comments "It is extremely exciting to see a very high number of gold medals being awarded to the ever increasing group of Syrah entries. This is a variety that has a big future with the best examples showing great intensity with flavour profiles that lean towards that of

the Rhone Valley. The number of awards suggest the 2006 vintage was the best group of Syrah wines ever judged at the Show and surely help in positioning Syrah as a high profile grape variety for New Zealand.”

Winning the Champion Export Wine Trophy for the Cellar Selection Pinot Noir 2006 is another great boost to both the winery and New Zealand’s reputation for producing top quality Pinot Noir. “It has only been in the last couple of years that New Zealand’s ability to produce Pinot Noir has been recognised on the international stage,” explains George. “This award reflects Villa Maria’s ability to deliver Pinot Noir of outstanding calibre.”

Judging of the 1334 wines entered in the wine show were under the guidance and supervision of long-serving chairman of judges, Bob Campbell MW, and as his deputy, the highly respected Australian judge, Mike DeGaris.

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