

## Aussie wines lead biggest wine competition in Asia

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Wines from Australia may be most suitable for Asian palates, says the results of a blind wine competition billed as the largest of its kind in Asia.

Because after taste testing 2,000 wines submitted in the second annual Decanter Asia Wine Awards (DAWA) in Hong Kong, a panel of about 40 importers, wine journalists, retailers, sommeliers and restaurateurs handed out 18 gold medals to wines produced out of Australia, the most of any country represented.

In other terms, 5% of Australian entries earned a medal, more than double the average of any other country.

Judges were either Asian or had worked in the area for years, a strategic move meant to reflect Asian palates for Asian consumers, said Steve Spurrier, co-chair of the event.

After Australia, the second highest medal haul went to Italy, which took home 12 gold medals -- eight of which came from Veneto -- followed by Spain and France.

The second annual competition also saw a strong contingent of Asian wines represented, added DAWA co-chair Jeannie Cho Lee, with notable entries coming out of challenging tropical climates like Thailand and Indonesia.

"It may not be that far off when we are able to easily identify distinctive wines like Koshu from Yamanashi, Japan or Cabernet Gernischt (Carmenere) from Yantai, China," she wrote in a tasting debrief.

Of note, a white wine from Japan made with Koshu grapes, identifiable by its pink, purplish skin, won the regional trophy for Asia. Produced about 100 km out of Tokyo in Yamanashi, the Gris de Koshu by Grace wines -- a fourth generation winemaker in Japan -- is described as bright, brisk, evocative of Asian pears, mineral and savoury characters.

As for what judges were looking for, Lee said experts made an effort to "lead" and to refrain from following the mass palate and popular styles.

"It's not always the obvious wines that we would reward. In fact, we are definitely looking for restraint, we're looking for elegance, balance, finesse, not all the expressive, obvious or easy to understand wines."

Meanwhile, in an interview with trade publication The Drinks Business, international wine buying director and Master of Wine Alun Griffiths said softer, sweeter reds from Spain and the south of France also hold strong appeal for the Chinese market. - AFP Relaxnews, October 24, 2013.



Jeannie Cho Lee, co-chair of Decanter Asia World Awards. - AFP Relaxnews pic, October 24, 2013.