2021 Australian Pinot Noir Challenge

One of the first wines to release from Tasmania's OSSA Wines has won the 2021 Australian Pinot Noir Trophy and Best Region Trophy for Tasmania at the Australian Pinot Noir Challenge. Announced last night (November 25) at one of Melbourne's first wine events since restrictions eased, the 2020 OSSA Pinot Noir scored the highest of all 230 entries with 96 points.

Chief judge of the Australian Pinot Noir Challenge David Bicknell said the OSSA wine stood tall above the strong cohort of pinot noirs despite it being largely unknown. "It was a remarkable, head-turning wine. A bit of a 'wow' moment for the judging panel assessing this class of wines," David says.

Winemaker Liam McElhinney of Tasmanian Vintners is behind the wine, after being approached by owners Rod and Cecile Roberts to bring his cool-climate winemaking expertise to their new operation. Liam says the duo was elated to hear about the win.

"They really can't believe it. From the outset, OSSA Wines has been focused on achieving the absolute pinnacle of Tasmanian wine. We didn't think we would achieve the absolute pinnacle of Australian pinot noir wines on our first release."

Located in Cranbrook, Tasmania, this is the first vineyard for the Roberts family. It stretches across the ancient landscape of the region, where the family has worked to restore the site's biodiversity and health before planting 20 hectares. Their varieties include pinot noir, chardonnay, shiraz, grüner veltliner, pinot gris, riesling and sauvignon blanc.

Liam describes the pinot as an "absolutely seamless wine with stunning perfume, layers of exotic fruit and spice, and with a real depth of charm and pinosity."

The Australian Pinot Noir Challenge is organised by the Mornington Peninsula Vignerons Association, showcasing the quality and expression of pinot noir from around Australia. Submissions are judged in regional brackets, with one trophy awarded within each region, and the overarching winner is determined from those standouts.

Regional trophy winners:

Western Australia Best of Region Trophy: 2020 Lonely Shore Pinot Noir

This small-batch pinot noir producer based in Denmark makes 200 cases a year, which winemaker Liam Carmody releases each spring. The fruit comes from the DeiTos Vineyard in Manjimup.

Mornington Peninsula Best of Region Trophy: 2020 Paringa Estate Robinson Vineyard Pinot Noir

Lindsay McCall is a stalwart of Mornington Peninsula and pinot noir in Australia. This wine is produced from a small block in collaboration with McCall and Dr Hugh Robinson, a highly respected viticulturist on the Mornington Peninsula, from a small block. Only 128 dozen were made.

Yarra Valley Best of Region Trophy: 2020 Giant Steps Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir

Giant Steps is one of the Yarra Valley's best-performing wineries. Steve Flamsteed created this wine from fruit grown in the cool Upper Yarra at Giant Steps' own Applejack Vineyard.

Geelong Best of Region Trophy: 2019 Bromley Pinot Noir

Darren Burke is the owner and winemaker of Bromley Wines. This wine is created from select vineyards in the Bellarine and Moorabool Valley near Geelong.