

Down Under wines come out on top

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The annual Wines of Australia Tasting, held in Shanghai last Friday, was a feast for both tastebuds and eyes. More than 70 Australian Brands — including over 300 wines — were brought to the event.

Wine maker and taster Ben Edwards, also president of the Australian Sommeliers Association, especially recommends wines from the Victoria region because they “speak of their origins, their people and, above all, their place.”

“The cutting edge of Australia’s finest wine, the best of the best, is alive in Victoria’s vineyards and wineries,” Edwards says. “In Australia, there is no other state beside Victoria that boasts a collection of wine this colorful or compelling. The diversity of Victoria’s wine is striking.

“Across the 21 wine regions that span the state from east to west and north to south, Victoria produces wines in every conceivable style,” Edwards says.

“A long-established history of grape vine cultivation, wine making and export success underpins the contemporary brands of Victorian wine producers,” Edwards continues.

Some have dramatically transformed. The carefully considered paring of the right regions underscores the evolution of precisely refined wine styles, informed by world experience and internationally seasoned palates, according to Edwards.

“Cast an eye around the state including the state’s capital Melbourne, a wine for every occasion and flavor can be discovered, from cool-climate sparklings to the rich opulent fortified styles and all that’s in between,” he says. “The most contemporary cool-climate style, from Riesling to chardonnay, pinot noir to shiraz, cabernet and beyond all stand tall on the world wine stage among the icons of Europe, New Zealand and the United States.”

At the wine-tasting event, the 2007 De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate Grown Pinot Noir brought some surprises. Full ruby red in appearance, it had an elegant pinot noir fruit aroma with red currants, a cherry and raspberry bouquet with a subtle spice and forest floor nose. It has a medium body but defining tannins.

“The 2007 growing season in Victoria was warm and dry, giving early development of fruit flavor at balanced alcohol levels,” Edwards says.

The 2003 Heathcote Estate Heathcote Shiraz also left a deep impression. In bright purple-black, the ripe and powerful nose of prunes, liquorice, plums and chocolate with nuances of spice was quite attractive.

These flavors follow through on the palate, lovely supple soft tannins and a seamless oak integration with a long, lingering finish.

Women might prefer sweet wines, and the 2008 Brown Brothers Special Late Harvested Orange Muscat & Flora is one of the best.

It is a blend unique to Brown Brothers. Orange Muscat forms the backbone of the blend providing aromas of orange blossom to the nose and a fresh citrus hint to the palate, while the flora contributes color, texture and body to the palate.