

Wine Australia

Media release

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‘New Australia’ challenges perceptions of Australian wine in Japan

Japan’s first Japanese-based Master of Wine Kenichi Ohashi shared his enthusiasm for the ‘New Australia’ with influential trade and media in Tokyo at a sold-out Wine Australia master class on 23 May.

The dynamic New Australia master class and networking event made a pivotal statement in one of Australian wine’s key markets, presenting new and unexpected elements of Australian wine to challenge perceptions and build enthusiasm for all Australian wine.

Last year, as a guest of Wine Australia, Kenichi Ohashi MW explored first-hand the new trends in Australian wine and met with Australian wine figures. His experience inspired him to convey the vision, dynamism and creativity of Australia’s wine community back to the Japanese wine trade.

Kenichi Ohashi MW said, ‘My visit to Australia last December was an eye-opening experience, which excited me but also humbled me about the need to always keep up with the fast changes that occur with Australian wine.’

‘I led the New Australia master class based on my convictions that understanding Australian wine is key for Japan’s wine professional community to become more international – a transition which many of us in Japan feel we need to achieve rather quickly.’

Guests said:

Hiroshi Ishida – Vice President of the Japan Sommelier Association, Best Sommelier Asia Oceania 2015 and recent participant in the Sommeliers of the World program

‘Today’s master class was a perfect follow up to the amazing experience I had in Australia recently. Ken kept calling Australia “dynamic” and I wholehearted agree after having also visited California and Portugal after the Australian program. I think that Australia can boast its dynamism and diversity like no other.’

Koichi Fukukita, Director of Wine Marketing at Asahi Breweries

‘It was as if Ken took us on a rollercoaster ride, with some wine styles provoking thoughts, yet landing firmly on the ground with a very clear message. It was the best presentation of Australian wine in recent years, and in fact a clear stand out among all the other seminars I have attended of late. I feel two hours sitting in today’s master class were worth several years of studying.’

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Wine Australia Head of Market Asia Pacific Hiro Tejima said, 'Looking at what has been happening in recent years, the tide is quietly rising in Japan. The new generation that is happy to discard preconceived ideas about specific countries of origin as superior is particularly exciting. If we continue engaging with our best foot forward while recognising Japan's unique market reality and sensitivity, and with a willingness to work closely with our partners in market, we should – finally – be able to find a natural position in this market.'

'This master class was both timely and pivotal in stirring up excitement around Australia's regional, stylistic and philosophical diversity and in suggesting something more interesting is on the way. It was a bold statement of "watch this space".'

The New Australia master class was Wine Australia's first paid-admission trade event in Japan and was sold-out with 100 wine trade and media guests in attendance.

Held at Claska in Tokyo, the event space was custom styled to provide a comfortable and distinctive setting, in contrast to formal wine events held in Tokyo.

The wines presented at the New Australia master class:

- Clonakilla Canberra District Riesling 2008
- Express Winemakers Great Southern Tempranillo 2016
- Jauma McLaren Vale Pet Nat Chenin 2016
- Jilly 'Big Cats' New England Touriga blend 2016
- Koerner 'Rolle' Clare Valley Vermentino 2016
- Mayer Yarra Valley Cabernet 2016
- Rockford 'Basket Press' Barossa Valley Shiraz 2010
- Swinging Bridge '#003 by Tom Ward' Orange 2016
- Thomas Wines Cellar Reserve 'Braemore' Hunter Valley Semillon 2010
- Tolpuddle Vineyard Tasmania Pinot Noir 2015
- Vasse Felix 'Heytesbury' Margaret River Chardonnay 2014
- Yarra Yering Yarra Valley Pinot Noir 2015

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About Kenichi Ohashi MW

Kenichi (Ken) Ohashi MW is the first Japanese-based Master of Wine. In addition to being the president of his family sake retail business, Yamajin Co. Ltd., Ken consults and advises his clients in wine education, purchasing, sales, distribution and market entry strategy. He is the Managing Director of Somersault Co. Ltd., a wine, sake and liquor wholesale group, where he buys wine and sake for wholesalers, wine bars and specialist retail chains. He is a highly sought after speaker and presents to attentive audiences both in Japan and around the world.

About Wine Australia

Wine Australia supports a competitive wine sector by investing in research, development and extension (RD&E), growing domestic and international markets and protecting the reputation of Australian wine.

Wine Australia is funded by grapegrowers and winemakers through levies and user-pays charges and the Australian Government, which provides matching funding for RD&E investments.

Wine Australia is the trading name of the Australian Grape and Wine Authority, a Commonwealth statutory authority established under the *Australian Grape and Wine Authority Act 2013*.