



## ***MAJOR WINE COMPETITION HELD IN COLUMBUS; 2008 Columbus Food & Wine Affair Wines Featured***

*Columbus, OH*--It may surprise you to learn that one of the largest wine competitions in the country isn't held in San Francisco or New York City. This year's competition held in conjunction with the Columbus Food & Wine Affair took place August 9 at the Columbus Fish Market on Olentangy River Road. Approximately 40 judges gathered to weigh in on the color, aroma, taste, texture and overall appeal of more than 400 wines—the same wines that will be featured at the ***Columbus Food and Wine Affair***, September 5 at Franklin Park Conservatory.

The *Wine Competition* has been an integral part of the Columbus Food & Wine Affair since it began in 2003. Rob Somers, Ohio Manager, Limestone Estates Division, Foster's Wine Estates Americas co-chairs the competition with Ryan Valentine, Director of Beverage, Cameron Mitchell Restaurants. The competition was started to add a level of excitement not only to the *Columbus Food & Wine Affair* but to the local wine industry itself.

The competition is unique in that it is only one of two competitions in the country that require judges to be trained. Somers shares, "We want every judge to be on the same page when it comes to criteria for evaluation. The competition isn't about personal preferences, it's about objective standards. Objective standards can change and evolve over time; we address this in the training."

Judging is based on a modified version of the 20-point system developed in the 1950s by Maynard Amerine, a professor in viticulture at the University of California Davis. The scoring structure puts in place a system to objectively analyze the wines.

Somers explains that wines were arranged into flights with an average of 10 wines per flight. Each wine was judged blind and by two separate tables of four judges each. When the competition ended, judges had tasted and evaluated about 100 wines in a span of about 3-1/2 hours.

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Judges included a unique balance of wine experts and enthusiasts from the community. Taking part are local retailers, restaurateurs, wine suppliers, distributor personnel, wine writers and wine enthusiasts.

Categories for judging are not determined until entries are received. Wines are judged in peer groups with type and style. That is, Chardonnays are judged against Chardonnays and Cabernets against Cabernets. The number of categories is based upon the number of entries and, as entries warrant, new categories are named.

In 2006, the "value" category was added to include wines that are very high in their category and retail under \$15. Somers expects the competition to grow each year and looks forward to adding more categories including "Best of Class."

Somers says the contest for the best wines creates a little more competition as well as exposure for those who enter. "This ensures that we get some really good wines," he says. "And, I think one of the greatest benefits is that these wines are available at the Columbus Food & Wine Affair. Those who attend taste the wines that local experts and enthusiasts have said are great wines. They don't have to rely on a wine magazine or the opinion of a New York writer. These wines are favored by those who live here and they are available here."

Proceeds from the Columbus Food & Wine Affair benefit the WBNS-10TV Family Fund, Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital, United Way of Central Ohio, Adventures for Wish Kids, the Ian Adams Van Heyde Memorial Scholarship Fund and the Central Ohio Restaurant Association.

The event is sponsored by the Central Ohio Restaurant Association, WBNS-10TV and Mix 97.1. Additional support by Cameron Mitchell Restaurants, Heidelberg Distributing Co., American Express, Giant Eagle, S. Pellegrino, Southwest Airlines, SYSCO Central Ohio, Franklin Park Conservatory, and Madison & Fifth.

Tickets for the September 5<sup>th</sup> Grand Tasting are \$100 and can be purchased online at [www.foodandwineaffair.com](http://www.foodandwineaffair.com).