



B.C. WINES TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT 2009 PLAYHOUSE WINEFEST

Festival features 183 wineries, 1600+ wines, from 15 countries, in 61 events

Vancouver, BC, Canada (September 18, 2008) – **The 31st annual Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival will feature 183 wineries from 15 countries at the 2009 festival, including 56 wineries from theme region British Columbia.** Winery selection committee chair **John Schreiner** announced, “This is an unparalleled opportunity for British Columbia to show their place among the best in the world.” BC will be represented by wineries from the **Okanagan Valley, Similkameen Valley, Fraser Valley, Gulf Islands and Vancouver Island.** A complete list of the participating wineries is attached, which includes first-time representation from **Israel and China.**

More than **1,600 wines** will be poured at a record **61 events** to a projected **25,000 attendees** (17,500 consumers, 7,500 trade) at Canada’s premier wine show, which takes place **March 23 to 29** in Vancouver. The 2009 Playhouse Wine Festival will feature **Celebrate British Columbia** as the regional theme and highlight the many facets of **Pinot(s)** as the global focus, including **Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris/Grigio, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Auxerrois,** and even **Pinotage.** Patrons can Celebrate British Columbia through 19 BC-specific events, as well as in a dedicated section of the International Festival Tasting Room, during the annual weeklong love-in with the grape.

“This will be the largest showcase of BC wines ever assembled at an international wine festival,” says **Harry Hertscheg**, executive director of the Playhouse Wine Festival, “and we’re looking forward to telling their story to wine enthusiasts throughout the Pacific Northwest, trade professionals across Canada and the wine industry globally. And with a focus also on Pinot(s), you can expect many food-friendly wine discoveries from Burgundy, Oregon, California, New Zealand and the Okanagan Valley.”

“We’re excited to partner with the Playhouse Wine Festival in 2009 and to share with Festival patrons the exciting developments in the BC wine industry,” said **Scott Fraser**, chair of the British Columbia Wine Institute. “The quality of British Columbia wines has increased dramatically over the last two decades and it’s time for consumers and trade to see just how well our product stacks up against the rest of the wine world.”

Festival week begins on Monday, March 23 as guests **Get Uncorked** at Earls on Hornby, where they will mix and mingle with Earls head chef **Reuben Major** and **Inniskillin Okanagan Vineyards** winemaker **Sandor Mayer**, while exploring his Discovery Series wines. Tuesday is the **Celebrate BC Kick-Off Wine Party**, offering cool BC wines and food in a funky, high energy setting with chef **Rob Feenie** at the Cactus Club downtown. On Wednesday, **Mission Hill Family Estate** proprietor **Anthony von Mandl** and winemaker **John Simes** conduct an epic vertical tasting of their flagship **Oculus** over ten vintages (1997–2006) at the Vancouver Club. On Thursday, a component and vertical tasting of the **Vincor-Groupe Taillan’s** joint venture **Osoyoos Larose** will be hosted by senior winemaker and vineyard manager **Pascal Madevon** and consulting viticulturalist **Alain Sutre.** Saturday midday is the **BC Food and Wine Celebration** where your plate will overflow with BC’s finest wines and dishes. Later that afternoon, **Icon Wines of BC** features a tasting of benchmark examples of BC’s venerable wines, exploring such questions as, “Is there such a thing as BC terroir?” and “Is there a definitive BC style?” Other BC events include a variety of BC winery dinners to be announced in early January.

British Columbia will also be showcased at four exclusive events for trade professionals at the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre on Thursday, March 26 and Friday, March 27. On Thursday, the **Wines of BC: Our Land, Revealed** opening plenary will identify the various ways BC wineries coax the distinct and unique flavours inherent to BC wine regions. Friday morning, the **BC Reds Reach for the Top** seminar will showcase the best of BC's highly sought-after red wines. Midday Friday is the **6th Annual Awards Lunch** celebrating excellence in the wine industry and offering trade buyers a chance to experience the vibrancy of BC's wines matched with an assortment of fresh, local cuisine. On Friday afternoon, **20 Things to Know for 2010** will see renowned wine personality **David Scholefield** lead a seminar for food and beverage servers, including a tasting and discussion enchainning the front line's ever-developing passion for the grape.

The hub and heart of the weeklong festival is the **International Festival Tasting Room** at the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre, which hosts three evenings of public wine tastings and two afternoons of trade tastings; all 183 selected wineries will be there. The other 56 events range from winery dinners to wine seminars to lunches, brunches and parties and take place at over 30 of Vancouver's leading restaurants, hotels and other unique venues. The **International Festival Tasting** public events offer over 700 wines for sampling on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings; the **Trade Tastings**, which include an extra hour for trade buyers, serve all those plus over 160 others on the Thursday and Friday afternoons; special events feature another 700-plus wines, most of which are not available in the Tasting Room. The festival's crown jewel is the **Bacchanalia Gala Dinner and Auction** at The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver on Wednesday, March 25; last year's dinner and auction raised \$559,500 for the **Playhouse Theatre Company**, the festival's designated charity.

Early bird tickets to selected events, including the International Festival Tastings, go on sale from November 18 to January 15 through the **Playhouse Box Office, 604-873-3311**. Tickets to all public events go on sale January 27. Tickets to trade professionals for the Trade Days conference go on sale February 3. A complete list of festival events and their descriptions will be available in early January. The most current information available is always at www.playhousewinefest.com.

The winery selection committee members who chose the 183 participating wineries for the 2009 festival are **John Schreiner**, a Vancouver based wine journalist and author of numerous books on wine; **Tony Beatty**, vice-chair of the Playhouse Wine Festival; **David Hoggood**, senior portfolio manager at BC Liquor Distribution Branch; **David Scholefield**, noted wine judge, speaker and consultant; **Brian Berry**, a wine consultant and food and beverage manager; **Mark Davidson**, one of North America's leading wine educators; and local wine authority **James Robertson**.

The Vancouver Playhouse International Wine Festival Society has three mandates: to provide an informative, educational and entertaining wine experience for wine enthusiasts and trade professionals; to offer a premier marketing opportunity for the wine industry and festival partners; and to raise funds for the Playhouse Theatre Company. Since its inception in 1979, the festival has raised over \$6.3 million to enable western Canada's leading theatre company to mount 209 productions and develop extensive community outreach and educational programs for school children. The Playhouse Theatre Company opens its 46th season with the Canadian premiere of **Frost/Nixon**, Sept. 13 to Oct. 4; it also marks the inaugural production with **Max Reimer** as the new artistic managing director.

The Playhouse Wine Festival is sponsored by the British Columbia Wine Institute, BC Liquor Stores, *The Vancouver Sun*, Global TV, *Vancouver Magazine* and *Wine Access*.

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