

Sommelier News

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Moorilla Estate in Tasmania (pictured above) is featured in this Issue

The First Press

By David Wilkening

Focus on Tasmania

Tasmania, a country of less than half a million people whose most famous resident may have been Errol Flynn, has long been associated with the Tasmanian Devil. The black-colored nocturnal creatures about the size of a small dog known for their horrible screeches have become extinct everywhere else but here.

But perhaps Tasmania today is more often relishing its association with fine wines. "Tasmania is putting out some incredible cool

climate wines that are such a welcome departure from the Australian stereotype 'kick in the head reds,'" says Michele Anderson, owner of The Wine Angel. Anderson, who owns a New York City-based wine import company, has been an integral part of the boom in Tasmania, often referred to as "Australia's island state." But Anderson has also been a key to promoting wines throughout Australia.

Discover Tasmania termed last year a "record" for its own wine industry. There were about one million more barrels of wine produced in 2004 than the previous year." The leading variety is Pinot Noir, which accounts for 40%

of this year's crop, followed by Chardonnay," said Discover. There are 13 major and 15 smaller commercial wineries in Tasmania, with about 900 hectares planted.

Moorilla Estate is the birthplace of Tasmania's modern wine industry. Earlier pioneers had attempted to grow grapes and make wine, but Italian business immigrant Claudio Alcorso is credited with establishing the first successful combination of viticulture and marketing at Moorilla Estate in 1958. His winery started out as a hobby but went commercial in the 1960s.

Moorilla products include in the Black Label Range: un-wooded

Upcoming Events

September 9—11, 2005
Greve Chianti Classico
Wine Festival
Greve in Chianti, Italy
<http://www.greve-in-chianti.com/>

September 13—16, 2005
Congress on Health & Wine
Stellenbosch, South Africa
<http://www.sasev.org>

September 15—18, 2005
Colorado Mountain
Winefest
Pallisade, CO, USA
<http://www.coloradowinefest.com>

September 16—25
54th Niagara Grape & Wine
Festival
Niagara region, ON, Canada
<http://www.niagarawinefestival.com>

September 30—October 9, 2005
Okanagan Fall Wine
Festival
Okanagan Valley, BC, Canada
<http://www.thewinefestivals.com>

September 15-22, 2005
Wines of Chile Tour
Winnipeg, MB—Sept 15
Vancouver, BC—Sept 20
Calgary, AB—Sept 21
Edmonton, AB—Sept 22
Email:
winesofchile@plantvancouver.com

Chardonnay 2003, \$18; Chardonnay 2003, \$20; and Pinot Noir 2003, \$22. In the White Label Range, Pinot Noir 2003, \$34; and Cabernet Sauvignon 2003, \$30. In the Reserve Range, there's a 2002 Chardonnay for \$30. They are increasingly available in the United States.

A leading spokesman person for Australian wines, Anderson's love of wine goes back to her days studying law in Sydney, Australia. She worked part-time at Sydney's The Regent (now the Four Seasons) restaurant. Here, she often sat in for the regular sommelier.

An Italian businessman would regularly order a bottle of 1966 Grange, then a second bottle. He would only drink half of the second bottle, leaving the rest for Anderson." It was the first wine I had ever tasted which just kept singing."

She went on to work in public relations for Booz Allen Hamilton and started her wine importing business in late 2002. In addition to the Tasmanian winery of Moorilla, she represents more than a dozen Australian brands. "They're a flagship producer from every key region," she says.

In Tasmania, The Moorilla estate is perched on its own peninsula on the Derwent River just west of Hobart, which is Australia's capital and second oldest city. Moorilla is often described as one of the most beautiful wineries in the world. It also has Tasmania's first five-star accommodations. Many tourists stop to see the Moorilla Museum of Antiquities, which focuses on artifacts from ancient civilizations. The winery's restaurant and vineyard grounds are the backdrop for fine dining, weddings, and world-renowned international events that include concerts by Jewel and Elvis Costello.

In Tasmania itself, visitor counts are rising each year. A recent figure was more than 170,000.

Bathed by the pristine waters of the Southern Ocean, the island of Tasmania lies 42 degrees south of the equator. Over 30% of the state is a National Park and over 20% is listed as a World Heritage Area.

Long-time traveler John Humphries in The Sunday Times of London wrote: "If there is a more magical and wonderful place on earth, I haven't seen it." And it has Tasmanian Devils.



The First Press will feature monthly clips from breaking news stories related to wine, selected by David Wilkening, our roving wine correspondent.