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International acclaim for Australian organic and biodynamic wine helps industry defy surplus crisis

Tipped as one of the fastest growing trends in Australian wine, demand for Australian organic and biodynamic wine continued to increase in 2009/10 despite the Australian wine industry facing one of the largest surpluses in history.

As wine industry bodies declare the current crisis the worst in two decades, many organic and biodynamic wine producers have reported increasing sales in the past year and have received international acclaim from the world's top wine critics and wine shows.

Hart of the Barossa, the oldest certified organic vineyard in the Barossa Valley, was awarded a highly coveted gold medal at the prestigious International Organic Wine Award in Germany last month, placing the Barossa Valley and Australian organic winemaking in the global spotlight.

Vintners Michael and Alisa Hart, custodians of the winery, received the esteemed honour for their 2008 Limited Release Certified Organic Shiraz in a field of over 411 of the world's top organic wine makers representing Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy, France, South Africa, Greece, Argentina, Australia and Switzerland.

"We are passionate about our organic point of difference and so are our growing number of customers worldwide," says Alisa Hart. "The recognition of our wine at international level confirms our commitment to producing premium wine, using sustainable farming practices."

"Our aim is to produce the best nature can offer using old-fashioned farming principles blended with modern winemaking techniques."

Rod Windrim, vigneron and owner of Krinklewood Biodynamic Wines in the Hunter Valley says that despite raising their bottle prices in 2009 sales have continued to grow, with record sales recorded in November and December.

"We have a strong domestic base that continues to grow both direct and via our distributors in Victoria and NSW. Victoria is a relatively new market for us and it is proving hugely successful," Rod says.

Although not actively pursuing export in 2009, Rod says demand from the international market saw Krinklewood secure two new export deals. Krinklewood received a number of awards in 2009 including a Blue-Gold award for their 2008 Francesca Rose at the 2009 Sydney International Wine Competition in an open class of both conventional and organic wines. Rod was also shortlisted as Viticulturist of the Year.

"It is extremely important to us to receive recognition at conventional wine shows as it reiterates that we are not just hippy winemakers avoiding chemicals and riding a trend – we're serious about making great wine."



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Australian critics are also supportive of the strength and reputation of the organic industry, with renowned wine columnist and wine editor for Australian Gourmet Traveller, Max Allen, labelling organics and biodynamics as one of the fastest growing trends in Australian wine.

Vanya Cullen of Australian Certified Biodynamic Margaret River winery - Cullen Wines - was recently named 'Winemaker of the Year' by the Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide and was listed as one of 2009's 50 most influential people in wine by Wine Business Magazine.

The Penguin Guide's author, award-winning wine writer and critic Nick Stock, also selected the Cullen Kevin John Chardonnay 2007 as 'Wine of the Year' and 'Best Chardonnay'. The vintage was the highest-rated chardonnay of 2009 by Wine Business Magazine's Wine 100, highlighting the first-class quality of Australian biodynamic and organic wine.

Vanya says the success of biodynamic wine can be attributed to the methods of production which emphasise the flavour of the region. "Biodynamic grapes are a great expression of terroir and a sense of place," she says.

Holly Vyner, Biological Farmers of Australia General Manager says the increasing recognition of Australian organic and biodynamic wines is a great indication of the future of the industry.

"Despite the wine industry suffering surpluses and declining value, growing international acclaim and reports of increasing sales and for the organic wine industry are signs that consumers and critics alike are valuing both the taste and quality of wine that is produced with the health of consumers and the environment top of mind."

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