



Thai Wine Has Come to Australia!

With Thai Airways International



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Thai food? Well, many Australians regard themselves as 'experts' on this subject. But Thai wine? That's a **big** surprise for Australians. So the official launch of Thai wine in Australia last week created quite a stir among the open-minded folk who attended.

The launch was held on 26th and 27th of October, at Sailors Thai Restaurant, at 106 George Street in The Rocks, Sydney. Anybody serious about Thai food in Sydney knows about this restaurant, so it was the logical place to launch Thai wine in this market. To make it a more special occasion, the wines were paired with a profile of superb Thai cuisine created for the occasion by Sailors Thai proprietor and Thai food icon in Australia, Peter Bowyer. The event was supported by Thai Airways International, with a keen eye on the tourism potential of the emerging wine industry in Thailand.

On both evenings there were 30 guests: consisting of representatives of the major Thai organisations in Australia, representatives of the media and the travel industry as well as curious wine lovers.

Amongst distinguished guests were Consul General of Thailand in Sydney, Mr Kiattikhun Chartprasert, THAI General Manager Australia, Mr Korakot Chatasingha, Director of Tourism Authority of Thailand for Australia and New Zealand, Ms Numpfhon Boonyawat and Director of Thai Trade Center for Australia and New Zealand, Ms Saowanit Pongsai.

Seven international award-winning wines produced by one of Thailand's most impressive wineries, GranMonte, were presented to guests by the winery's founders, Visooth and Sakuna Lohitnavy. Visooth is also the co-founder and President of the Thai Wine Association.

Visooth and Sakuna have had a long association with Australia, kept fresh by having their two daughters attending high school in Australia. The older of the two, Nikki, progressed on to the University of Adelaide to study winemaking. She is now the

winemaker in the newly established GranMonte Asoke Valley winery on this fabulously exotic vineyard; her brother, Sanya, is responsible for marketing. Both were present at the launch.

Nikki is Thailand's first female internationally qualified local wine maker and comes to the task with outstanding academic credentials (oenology degree with honours in viticulture on sensory research with Semillon grapes), including winning the Fosters Prize for Excellence in Winemaking at Adelaide University. As part of the prize Nikki did a vintage at the Wolf Blass winery in the Barossa Valley in 2008, adding to practical experience gained in her first vintage, in 2007, at Brown Brothers, in Central Victoria.

Nikki also did the 2009 vintage during September-December 2009 in Europe with Chateau Angelus of Saint-Emilion and La Fleur de Bouard in Lalande de Pomerol, France and Anwilka of Stellenbosch, South Africa. She has just recently returned from working the 2010 vintage with Quinta de Roriz of Douro Valley, Portugal.

One of ten contemporary wineries in Thailand, GranMonte launched its first wines in 2001. It is now producing around 70,000 bottles of GranMonte wine each year - principally from Chenin Blanc, Viognier, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes grown in meticulously manicured vineyards at an altitude of 350 metres in the Asoke Valley, adjacent to the Khao Yai National Park, 160 km north-east of Bangkok. The vineyard is managed with a precision farming 'Smart Vineyard' system for micro-climate tuning of the vines. And it is obviously working well: GranMonte wines have won medals in open international competition in the UK, France, Austria, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

At the launch, seven carefully thought-out dishes were presented to guests. As they arrived, the visitors were served the GranMonte 2010 Sakuna Rosé Syrah (medium-dry), to freshen the palate. The first two dishes were matched with GranMonte's 2010 Spring Chenin Blanc, and the 2010 Sole Chenin Blanc/Viognier.

A very appetizing smoked pork sausage with salmon roe, oysters and eschallots was then served to match the 2010 Z Rosé (completely dry, with the Z indicating zero sugar) and the 2009 Asoke Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah. The Asoke is a breakthrough into a new horizon for the Thai wine industry which has, until this release, been without a majority Cabernet blend red.

GranMonte's flagship reds, Heritage Syrah (2009) and The Orient Syrah (2009), were served with a very robust red duck curry, salted duck eggs and grilled squid in a tamarind and coconut relish with witlof, as well as deep-fried fish and green mango salad. The palate was then finally cooled off with a mango and white sticky rice desert.

The GranMonte wines are imported to Australia by Sydney-based prime wine merchant, Quality Estate Distributors.

November 1, 2010

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