



Australian wine industry rallies behind flood victims

Flood ravaged vineyards in Queensland have joined the Australian wine industry in an unprecedented show of generosity by the industry for victims of the floods.

Three hundred vineyards and wineries have donated more than \$240,000 in exclusive wine, memberships, books and travel packages to the Australian Wine Trade Flood Relief Raffle – which is aiming to raise one million dollars for flood victims in Queensland and Victoria.

Launched by Brisbane based wine writer and author Tyson Stelzer with support from Australia's leading online wine and food travel guide, VisitVineyards.com, wine has been donated from almost every corner of Australia; with wineries from Europe and New Zealand also contributing.

Two hundred prizes are up for grabs – including three boxes of Wild Duck Creek Duck Muck Shiraz 2007 valued at \$1320 each, six three litre double magnums of Cullen Diana Madeline 2007 valued at \$500 each and an imperial of Kalleske Eduard Shiraz 2008 (retail price \$900).

Stelzer says since putting out the call to the wine industry for support just weeks ago, he can't believe the generosity that has been shown, particularly given they've faced such tough times themselves.

"It hasn't been an easy year, as winemakers face widespread crop damage due to mildew and disease from the humidity, let alone direct damage to vineyards from rain and floods, all in the midst of a particularly challenging time in the market for everyone, so to see this kind of support is simply overwhelming."

Jason Kaeser who owns Kaeserberg Vineyard and Winery on the bank of the Lockyer Creek has had to replant three times in four years, and lost most of his vineyard to the Queensland floods - but was one of the first to donate.

He was forced to evacuate and on returning to his property found many sentimental items destroyed from flood waters which ravaged his property.

He says returning to his property was devastating, with dead animals strewn across the vineyard and having to trudge through the stench of the mud to salvage what he could - but he's just grateful he and his wife, and their three dogs, made it out alive.

"It is absolutely devastating, but it is phenomenal that everyone has chipped in, and people you don't know are coming up to you and offering to help out, it restores your faith in humanity."

Ewen Macpherson, owner of Symphony Hill Wines, who offered a piece of Queensland wine history for the raffle in a bottle of its 2003 Reserve Shiraz (awarded the State's first gold medal at the renowned Sydney Royal Wine Show and the highest scoring red wine of the show) says there's no doubt of a tough 12 months ahead

"With restaurants going under our revenue streams are affected and with roads cut off there will be fewer visitors to the cellar door, not to mention people suffering economically and therefore not having the income to spend on luxury items."

He says to compound this; grape supply in the region will be severely reduced because of the number of times it has rained since winter".

Macpherson estimates sales revenue will be down at least 50 per cent over the next few months alone.



VisitVineyards.com founder and CEO Robyn Lewis who is providing backend support, online raffle ticket services and donating memberships to its own online wine and food travel guide, which has 30,000 subscribers, hopes it will go some way to help drive visitors to cellar doors.

“Working in the wine industry and owning our own vineyard, we feel deeply for those affected by the floods and hope our involvement can in some way not only support flood victims, but go some way to assisting the wine industry through these trying times.

“But most of all, it’s about being part of the community and showing those affected that they are not alone.”

Tickets are \$30. For more information and a list of where tickets can be purchased via retailers (all States except TAS) see: www.winefloodrelief.com.au

For more information and online and phone sales (including Tasmanian sales), see: www.VisitVineyards.com/wineraffle

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