



Australian wine industry rallies behind flood victims despite economic blow

The Australian wine industry, many of whom are facing a year of economic uncertainty as a result of the recent floods - on top of increasing costs and international competition - have banded together in an unprecedented show of generosity by the industry for flood victims.

More than three hundred vineyards and wineries have donated \$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."

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.

Owner and winemaker of Hay Shed Hill in Western Australia, Michael Kerrigan, who donated dozens of its award winning wine for the raffle says it's devastating for the industry and the impact will be far reaching.

"Even here in WA, we are expecting a big financial hit, we'll lose up to four months sales in Queensland, bills won't be able to be paid by our distributors and that has serious ramifications down the line. It's a huge blow to the industry."

Mount Avoca in Victoria, which donated a selection of its award winning wines, lost its entire crop to floods which affected one third of the State.

Director Matthew Barry expects a loss of \$1.5 million over the next 24 months.

He says the focus now needs to be on Australians supporting local vineyards.



“Taking a visit and purchasing wines at cellar door can really make a difference to smaller vineyards. It will help ensure they survive and without that, the future is grim.”

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.”

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

For high res images and interviews contact:

Kirstie Bedford
KDJM communications
T: 0437 455 001
E: kirstie@kdjmcommunications.com.au