



Australian wine industry rallies behind flood victims

Flood ravaged vineyards, some of which have lost their entire crops, 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."

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.

Despite facing an estimated \$1.5 million loss over the next 24 months, Director Matthew Barry is philosophical, saying his problems seem trivial to others affected by the floods.

"It's not like losing your loved one, or your house .. sure economically we'll be hit very hard, but our family survived and we have our house."

He says the focus now needs to be on Melburnians 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."



Hanging Rock Winery in the Macedon Ranges also lost its entire crop for the year, and half of its crop in Heathcote, but Ruth Ellis says they didn't give a second thought to contributing to the cause.

"The floods were short and sharp and with the clean-up comes the need to get out and support each other."

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: <http://www.VisitVineyards.com/wineraffle>

For more information, high res images and interviews contact:

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

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