
Power Vintage: 2007 Reds Flex Muscles at Wine Competition

For once, Michigan's red wines stole the spotlight.

Fourteen powerful reds from the atypically ripe 2007 vintage grabbed gold medals at the 2009 Michigan Wine and Spirits Competition on August 4 in East Lansing.

Fifty wines took double gold (14) or gold (36) medals. This included seventeen dry reds, all but three from 2007. Among them: two Pinot Noir, four Cabernet Franc, one each Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, and a surprising six Meritage-style blends. Six dry and nine semi-dry whites struck gold.

Leelanau Peninsula's tiny Longview Winery walked away with the most gold in the state: two double gold and three gold medals, including a Best of Class for its Reserve Cherry -- the fourth straight year that Longview's team of owner Alan Eaker and consulting winemaker Shawn Walters have grabbed a top trophy.

Almost overshadowed by the reds' tide:

- Record-setting numbers of wineries participating (42) and wines entered (395)
- A near-sweep of trophies and double gold medals by northern wineries
- Michigan's first-ever trophy for Best Rosé, won by Forty-Five North
- Two trophies apiece for perennial-winner winemakers Bryan Ulbrich and Shawn Walters; the tenth straight year a wine made by Ulbrich has taken at least one Best of Class
- For the second year, no sparkling wine trophy and no gold medals for semi-dry reds

Overall medal numbers dropped to 67% of entries from last year's 73%, after some rule tweaks and a pre-judging admonition by competition superintendent Chris Cook. A total of 267 wines received medals, of the 395 wines entered.

Gill's Pier co-owner Kris Sterkenburg, whose Cab Franc / Merlot blend earned the winery its third Best of Class trophy since 2003, said, "We've had an amazing relationship with (winemaker) Bryan Ulbrich from the get-go. But we're also very proud that the fruit for this wine came from our own vineyard and our next door neighbor's."

{xtypo_alert}2009 TROPHY WINNERS:

DRY WHITE: 2008 Left Foot Charley Pinot Blanc, Island View Vineyard

SEMI-DRY WHITE: 2008 Bel Lago Gewurztraminer

ROSÉ: 2008 Forty-Five North Pinot Noir Rosé

DRY RED: 2007 Gill's Pier Cabernet Franc / Merlot

DESSERT: 2008 Fenn Valley "42" Vidal Blanc Ice Wine

FRUIT: Longview Reserve Cherry Wine

JUDGES' MERIT AWARD: 2008 Black Star Farms Arcturos Dry Riesling

SPARKLING: No Best of Class, by vote of the judges

SEMI-DRY RED: No Best of Class, due to no gold medals awarded

(Sharp eyes will notice Longview's Cherry missing from the photo.)

View or download the complete list of medal winners here.{/xtypo_alert}