



FINE WINE  PARTNERS *Court of Master Sommeliers*

Australia's Sommeliers Set for Masters

The world's most highly regarded sommelier accreditation – Master Sommelier – is now within reach of over 40 of Australia's finest sommeliers who achieved 'Certified Sommelier' status last week.

There are 170 Master Sommeliers in the world, yet only two are Australian - neither of them living or working here. This is all set to change according to Rob Hirst and Fine Wine Partners, who facilitated The Court of Master Sommeliers visit to Australia for the second time this year.

"With our winemakers producing some of the world's finest wines, it is more important than ever for our sommeliers to have the opportunity to achieve a world class qualification that reinforces the strength of our wine and hospitality industry, both here and in a global context."

Rob Hirst, Chairman, Fine Wine Partners

The top ranked graduate of 2009 and Petaluma Scholarship winner was Quay sommelier, Banjo Harris Plane. As Dux of the 2009 class, Banjo will be assisted in his quest for the ultimate goal of 'Master Sommelier' with a scholarship provided by Petaluma Wines and Fine Wine Partners. This will fund his trips overseas to try for the final two levels of the Court of Master Sommeliers: the Advanced Certificate, and ultimately the Master's Diploma.

Banjo, who participated in the three days of coursework and exams with more than 100 sommeliers from leading restaurants including Est, Glass, Ivy, Press Club, Quay, Rockpool, and Vue de Monde, had his first taste of the business in his parent's Adelaide restaurant. He worked for Christine Mansfield in London and Sydney and is now with Quay Restaurant in Sydney.

"Completing this course arms you with the confidence to walk into any restaurant, in any country, anywhere in the world and know what you are talking about".

Banjo Harris Plane, 2009 Petaluma Scholarship winner.

The Court of Master Sommeliers was established in 1969 to encourage improved standards of beverage knowledge and service in hotels and restaurants. Education was then, and remains today, the Court's charter. By April 1977, the Court of Master Sommeliers was established as the world's premier examining body. In the service of wine, spirits and other alcoholic beverages, the Master Sommelier Diploma is the ultimate professional credential anyone can attain worldwide.

There are four stages to attain the top qualifications of Master Sommelier; with the first two now being hosted annually in Sydney and Melbourne by Fine Wine Partners. This year's program was conducted by four visiting Master Sommeliers: Brian Julyan (UK), Evan Goldstein (US), Matthew Citriglia (US) and Cameron Douglas (NZ).

106 candidates participated in the 2 day Introductory Sommelier Course, with a pass rate of 90%. A further 68 students went on to do the challenging Certified Exam, with 41 achieving the highly regarded accreditation of 'Certified Sommelier'.

The Top 10 students have been invited to attempt the next level – Advanced Certificate – in the US or UK next year. Six of the top ten were from NSW, three from VIC, one from QLD and one from New Zealand (11 in all due to an equal 10th placing):

1. Banjo Harris Plane – Quay Restaurant, NSW
2. Bengt Baumgartner – The European, VIC
3. Matthew Swieboda – Quay Restaurant, NSW
4. Sebastian Crowther – Merivale Group, NSW
5. Amanda Yallop – Quay Restaurant, NSW
6. Dennis Roman – Merivale Group, NSW
7. Ashley Boburka – Rockpool Bar and Grill, VIC
8. Jeremy Ellis – VBG, NZ
9. Mauro Bortolato – Glass Brasserie, NSW
- 10. Alan Hunter – E'cco Bistro, QLD**
10. Mark Protheroe – Charcoal Grill on the Hill, VIC

Top students by state / country:

NSW Banjo Harris Plane, Quay Restaurant

VIC Bengt Baumgartner, The European

QLD Alan Hunter, E'cco Bistro

WA Matthew Bell, Star Anise

NZ Jeremy Ellis, VBG

Korea Corrine Eom, Grand and Coex Intercontinental Hotels

Graduates from the inaugural event in Australia last year are also one step closer to the elusive and often lucrative title of 'Master Sommelier', with Franck Moreau from the Merivale Group (Establishment, Ivy, Ash Street Cellars) having just passed the Advanced Certificate in London in July. The 2008 Dux and Petaluma Scholarship winner Ben Moehtar (Delicardo Foods and Co-President of Sommeliers Australia) departs for Las Vegas in October to sit his Advanced Certificate along with other 2008 graduates David Lawler (Rockpool Bar and Grill Melbourne), Ben Knight (benandwine.com.au) and Michael Watts (Astral).

"The future of the sommelier profession in Australia looks bright indeed",
Evan Goldstein, Master Sommelier