



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Ontario Wine Awards 20th Anniversary
Wednesday, January 29, 2014*

Cheers to 20 Years!

January 29, 2014 - Toronto – It's time to roll out the red carpet, dust off that tuxedo and prepare the acceptance speeches as the Oscars of the wine world, the Ontario Wine Awards, celebrates its 20th Anniversary.

Founded in 1995 by Order of Canada Recipient and internationally renowned oenophile Tony Aspler, the Ontario Wine Awards has steadfastly maintained its priority of showcasing the best of Ontario VQA wines. From Niagara to Prince Edward County, Ontario's rich and fertile terrain lends itself naturally to be some of the best earth to grow incredible grapes, resulting in some of the best wines in the world.

In April, a panel of accredited tasters will select the winning wines of 2013. On May 9, all wineries and industry leaders will attend the Ontario Wine Awards Gala at the Queen's Landing in Niagara-on-the-Lake where the award winners will be unveiled and feted with a medal. There are 25 medal categories and a gold, silver and bronze awarded for each of those 25 categories. In the course of the past 19 years, that would amount to more than 1,500 awards handed out. Every winery vies for the ultimate prize of Winemaker of the Year, evoking standing O's every year for the winner.

Tony says, "If a winery wins a medal, it's an invaluable merchandising tool for them. This competition reflects the best of what Ontario VQA wineries are doing. Over the past 20 years, Ontario wines have been recognized on an international level. I'd like to think that the Ontario Wine Awards were instrumental in educating the world about the quality of our homegrown resource. It has been an honour and my pleasure to be on the forefront of this surge in Ontario wine's popularity."

Shari Mogk-Edwards, Vice-President, Products, Sales and Merchandising at the LCBO, reiterates this by saying, "With Ontario wines getting more international acclaim than ever before, it's so important to celebrate our local wines here at home. The Ontario Wine Awards, now in its 20th year, has been a driving force not only for recognizing the achievements of the industry, but also for bringing these amazing wines to new audiences every year at sip & Savour Ontario."

How much has the industry changed in the past twenty years? From the beginning of the VQA appellation system in 1988, annual sales have grown to \$350 million. Winery tourism has jumped from barely any 20 years ago to more than 1.8 million tourists last year. Grape growers have also benefited with only 24,000 tonnes of wine grapes grown 20 years ago to over 66,000 tonnes harvested in 2012.

Join us in celebrating 20 years of the Ontario Wine Awards, where our glass is always half full!

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For further information, please visit us online at www.ontariowineawards.ca

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