

JC EVERSOLE

BOTTLES & BANQUETS

NAVIGATING AN OCEAN OF WINE CHOICES

With more than 100,000 wines in the global marketplace, it's small wonder that consumers are daunted. It's tough enough to select from wine lists containing 50 or 60 options, let alone the hundreds of labels lining the shelves of Villa Market's second-floor wine room at 33 Sukhumvit.

A partial solution for many is reading reviews in publications, as well as noting awards presented at various competitions.

Bangkok's annual effort to help steer befuddled consumers in the right direction took place last month – the Food & Beverage Association of Thailand's International Wine Challenge.

Held as part of Bangkok Exhibition Services' annual show at Siam Paragon, the competition attracted about 100 entries from a dozen import companies and domestic producers.

Twelve judges rated the wines in categories according to grape varietal and price.

Association president and long-time hotelier Sanjog Mogdil was cautiously pleased with the results.

"While participation was up over last year, we're still eager to bring in more of the large distributors. We know that sales increase once the public becomes aware that a wine has won awards, so we've got to do more intense pre- and post-event promotion to get this information out."

Here are a few of the competition winners that might point the way for a few lost wine adventurers.

Wine Dee Dee Co, which sells through major supermarket retail shops, swamped other entrants with 14 medals in both premium (under Bt600) and super-premium (over Bt600) categories.

It took gold for its '06 Stonefish cabernet and '07 Swagaroo shiraz, both Australian, and silver for the '08 Sensi Saffiolo Bolgheri and '08 Hugo Casanova, both Italian.

Thai winery GranMonte, having racked up 20 international awards in the past year, continued its winning ways with a sweep of the super-premium syrah category.

Its '05 Fiori unfiltered, '08 Fiori unfiltered and '09 Orient syrahs impressed the judges and offered a welcome note of optimism for Thai red wines.

GranMonte is available through Central's larger Tops Supermarkets.