

Worldwide wine recognition

GranMonte outshines at international wine competitions despite being up against established vineyard heavyweights

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Visooth Lohitnavy has had a good year, to say the least. GranMonte's CEO and president of the Thai Wine Association has been fighting an uphill battle the past few years, what with the high luxury taxes, a ban on advertising alcohol and the ongoing efforts to educate local wine drinkers that local wine is not necessarily lower in taste and quality than the established wines.



Visooth Lohitnavy with his family, (from left) Sakuna, Nikki and Suvisooth, showing off their trophies.

But this year he's had help from his daughter, who recently graduated from Australia as Thailand's first female oenologist. As a start, she has certainly helped to raise the profile of the Khao Yai vineyard among the media.

Furthermore, Visooth's GranMonte wines have begun to gain recognition at various international wine meets. At the "AWC Vienna International Wine Challenge 2009" of Austria, which is held annually in September, three GranMonte wines won a silver medal: The 2009 Sakuna Rose Syrah, the 2009 Spring Chenin Blanc and the 2007 Primavera Syrah.

Moreover, GranMonte wines were recognised for their quality during the "Food & Hotel Thailand 2009" or FBAT 2009 wine competition, which also took place in September, earning gold medals in both the "blended whites-premium" and "blended whites-super premium" categories.

"Most of the wines in the competition were imports. In my opinion, these importers had an advantage over us, local wine producers, in their vast selections of wines to choose from to send in to compete. But we beat many of them. How about that?" beamed Visooth.

More significantly on a more personal level, his 2009 Sakuna Rose Syrah, named after his wife, Sakuna, also won a silver medal at the "Wine Style Asia Awards 2009" competition held in Singapore, while another of his wines took the bronze.

GranMonte ended the year 2009 with two more awards from the "Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair 2009" in November, with the 2009 Sakuna Rose Syrah taking the bronze medal, alongside another GranMonte wine.

All in all, the most successful year for Visooth and his wine label since the company was established just over 10 years ago, with a total tally of two golds, eight silvers and seven bronzes, as well as three more awards from various competitions in countries as diverse as Austria, Britain, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Thailand.

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