



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Ontario Wine Awards 2008 Results
Wednesday, April 30, 2008*

A Record Year for Ontario Wine Awards Dan Aykroyd Winery takes home 'Wine of the Year'

Saturday, April 26, 2008 - Niagara-on-the-Lake – This year's Ontario Wine Awards showcased the exceptional growth and quality of wine being made here in Ontario. Tony Aspler, Founder of the Ontario Wine Awards and recent Order of Canada Recipient, is proud to say, "This has been a record year for entries both from the number of Ontario wineries in all four viticultural areas – 69 wineries – and the number of wines they submitted – 463. This is a testament to the significance of winning medals in the Ontario Wine Awards to spark consumer interest."

Tony welcomed everyone to the 13th Annual Ontario Wine Awards Gala at Queen's Landing and introduced the Masters of Ceremonies Angela Aiello & Paxton Allewell, two of Canada's hottest wine personalities and founders of iYellow Wine Club.com. Angela and Paxton led and entertained the audience through the awards ceremony with their vibrant and passionate personalities.

The Ontario Wine Awards recognize VQA varietal quality for categories such as Dry Riesling and Cabernet Franc, and acknowledge winners in Bronze, Silver and Gold Medal categories. There are also distinctive awards given out honouring the Winemaker of the Year, Wine of the Year, Wine Journalism Award, Sommelier of the Year, and Best Label Design.

This year's prestigious '**Wine of the Year**' award, sponsored by Savour Ontario a Program of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, went to **Dan Aykroyd Winery 2005 Signature Reserve Vidal Icewine**. Dan Aykroyd was not able to attend this year's event due to a schedule conflict, but had this to say:

"I am grateful but not surprised that the Icewine should get this recognition for the superior skills of my viticultural team, Tom Green, Murray Marshall, Murray Watson, Andrew Greene and Andrew Stodart. We are making wines genuinely enjoyed by ourselves and it's just the beginning. The entire Ontario wine industry...shares this award with us and it should make everyone in our Province proud that we are producing winning vintages which hopefully some day can be staples in our nation's export catalog."

The Vintage Hotels '**Winemaker of the Year**' award, the most honoured award of the evening, went to the deserving winemaking team of Rob Power and Craig McDonald. Rob and Craig are the brilliant minds (and hands) behind Creekside Estate Winery, Willow Heights Estate Winery and the celebrity wineries of Mike Weir Estate & Wayne Gretzky Estates. This award recognizes the winemakers' consistent quality production across their portfolio, their successes as demonstrated by additional wine awards, and contributions to the wine industry. The deserving duo made their way to the stage engulfed by a standing ovation and delivered heartfelt speeches. Robert Jackson of Vintage Hotels presented them each with the traditional gift, a Montblanc watch.

David Lawrason received the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation '**Wine Journalism Award**', for his article on The Grape's Progress published in the October 2007 issue of Toronto Life magazine.

JeanAnne Dubois, Angels Gate Winery, received the Savour Ontario a Program of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs **'Sommelier of the Year Award'** in recognition of her skills in a blind tasting of a selection of Ontario VQA wines against fellow sommeliers.

This year the Wine Council of Ontario sponsored a 5-minute video Podcast to highlight the Awards Gala (including exclusive interviews). The Podcast will be released in the very near future.

sip & Savour Ontario

In the traditions of all great culinary regions, there are strong ties between regional wines and foods. This year, we will be showcasing this great tradition here in Ontario with more emphasis than ever before. Sip Ontario has partnered with Ontario's culinary greats and Savour Ontario a program of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The public will be able to experience and celebrate the wines and food firsthand at **sip & Savour Ontario** on June 17th at The Distillery Historic District in Toronto. Acclaimed Savour Ontario chefs will bring the best and freshest foods Ontario has to offer and pair them with the award-winning wines announced at this year's Gala event.

Savour Ontario a Program of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The Savour Ontario dining program is part of Ontario's Pick Ontario Freshness strategy to encourage and assist consumers in choosing locally grown and produced foods. The Savour Ontario dining program promotes the fresh, high quality foods of Ontario by assisting consumers in identifying Ontario foods on menu. The Savour Ontario website at www.savourontario.ca promotes fine and vacation dining restaurants with a searchable index of restaurants from across the province that prominently feature Ontario foods on their menu.

Inspired to plan an Ontario getaway that indulges your taste for delicious diversions and unforgettable wine and culinary adventures in Ontario's wine country? The Wine Council of Ontario provides online winery maps that clearly indicate wine-tasting routes throughout all of Ontario's wine regions. Visit www.winesofontario.ca for further information.

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

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About Tony Aspler

Tony Aspler has been active in the international wine world since 1964. He received his basic wine education in London, England at Grant's of St. James' Wine School. As a consultant and wine judge, he makes frequent trips to the vineyards and wine fairs of Europe and the new world and is recognized as the leading authority on Canadian wines.

Tony wrote for The Toronto Star for 21 years and is now concentrating on writing for various magazines and is the author of nine novels. He is also the co-founder of the charitable foundation Grapes for Humanity - www.grapesforhumanity.com. Tony may be reached at tony.aspler@sympatico.ca, or visit www.tonyaspler.com for further information.

About The Forefront Communications Network Inc.

Forefront Communications is an acknowledged full-service marketing and communications company dealing exclusively in the alcohol beverage industry. Established in 1979, Forefront has excelled within the industry by offering its clients superior expertise in; strategic planning, creative development, promotion, media planning and placement as well as POS and exhibit design.

By developing successful marketing programs for many domestic and international clients, Forefront's proven track record has earned them the reputation of being one of Canada's premier advertising agencies in the alcohol beverage industry.

Ontario Wine Week Related Events:

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

'sip & Savour Ontario'

The Distillery Historic District - Fermenting Cellar

55 Mill Street, Toronto

7:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Ticket Price: \$50.00

For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit www.ontariowineawards.ca

Complimentary shuttle is available from approximately 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm between The Distillery and Union Station. Bus departs from the clock tower located in front of Union Station on Front Street.

– *sponsored by Niagara Airbus.*

2008 Ontario Wine Awards Sponsors

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ONTARIO WINE AWARDS 2008 – BACKGROUNDER

Judging of the Wines

Each entry is assessed blind by panels of accredited wine judges from the wine writing and teaching community. The criteria for judging the entries not only involve having an appreciation for wine, but also include a knowledge and expertise of wines from the Ontario region. Included amongst the winning categories; Ontario Wine of the Year, Ontario Winemaker of the Year, Ontario Sommelier of the Year and the Ontario Journalism Award, which recognizes the best article published in 2007 on the Ontario wine industry.

How does the judging occur?

The 13th Annual Ontario Wine Awards wine judging, with the exception of Icewines, was held over two consecutive Saturdays - March 22nd and March 29th, 2008 at Brassaii Bistro Lounge and was not open to the public.

Icewine Judging took place on Sunday, March 30th, 2008 at Jacobs & Co. and was not open to the public.

Sommelier of the Year Award Competition

The Sommelier of the Year Award, sponsored by Savour Ontario a Program of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, is open to professional sommeliers who are members of CAPS (Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers).

The competition was held at Brassaii Bistro Lounge on Saturday, March 29th. Contestants had a blind-tasting of Ontario VQA wines and were asked to identify each as closely as they could - grape variety, region, vintage and, if possible, producer. They were also tested with a written component.

Wine Tastings

Since its inception, the awards have grown in both size and stature. This year the Ontario Wine Awards and Savour Ontario a Program of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs are proud to recognize 'sip & Savour Ontario'. Taking place during Ontario Wine Week award winners will present their wines, alongside acclaimed Savour Ontario chefs, to the public on the evening of Tuesday, June 17th at The Distillery Historic District in downtown Toronto. To find out more or purchase tickets to this event please visit www.ontariowineawards.ca.

History

Tony Aspler, one of Canada's most acclaimed wine writers, founded the Ontario Wine Awards in 1995. His vision was to catapult Ontario VQA wines into the most successful, most revered wines available to domestic and foreign markets by recognizing and promoting the top Ontario wineries for the quality product they produce. "Our mission is to provide recognition for outstanding Ontario wines and to the men and women who are dedicated to producing a superior product," explains Tony Aspler. "These awards enhance the profile of Ontario wines in the world market, opening doors to new opportunities for Ontario wineries."