



**Press Release: 12 NOVEMBER 2008**

**Topic: NEW LOOK FOR CLASSIC COMPETITION**

Prepare for one of the biggest and best International Chardonnay Challenges ever. The 2009 event has attracted a stellar judges' panel, headed by the only onshore female Master of Wine in New Zealand, Jane Skilton.

She's joined by some of the greatest wine characters from both sides of the Tasman – Aussie-based Mike DeGaris and Bill Hardy are two, along side pioneer John Hancock, the very versatile and colourful Kim Crawford, Steve Voysey, Simon Nunns, Chris Scott and Dave McKee.

Skilton juggles motherhood with wine, teaching, writing and judging all over the country and around the globe.

"I was thrilled to be asked to chair the judging panel for 2009 and am looking forward to working with such a fantastic line up of judges," says Skilton, who has been part of the ICC every year bar one since 2001.

"I love the challenge and its focus on a single grape variety – it is an excellent opportunity to benchmark the best from New Zealand with other Chardonnays from the rest of the world."

Over the years the competition has attracted entries from France, South Africa, Australia, Argentina, Chile, Canada and even India.

Hardy comes from blue blood of the Australian wine industry, as a fifth generation descendant of Thomas Hardy, founder of the self-named company.

DeGaris has spent time on both sides of the Tasman and now works as a freelance wine consultant.

Scott has guided Church Road to a string of medals and trophies, including plenty for Chardonnay, while Voysey, Montana Wines' regional winemaker, has also had his fair share of success with Chardonnay, among others.

McKee, who is winemaker and viticulturist for Black Barn Vineyards, jumped from engineering to wine many years ago and has never regretted the move.

And finally there's Crawford who has a penchant for reading the taste buds of the nation and creating 'the' wine to match.

Still to be announced is another guest international judge.

ICC director Prue Younger is also looking forward to an exciting competition next year. She strictly keeps ratios tight, with judges tasting no more than 100 wines a day, keeping their palates fresh and open.

Everything competitors and interested parties need to know about the competition can be found on the event's website – [www.internationalchardonnaychallenge.com](http://www.internationalchardonnaychallenge.com).

Entries can also be done completely on line.

Entries open for the ninth challenge in December, with judging underway May 27 next year. The gala awards dinner is scheduled for May 29.

The competition is run in Gisborne, a city known as the Chardonnay Capital of New Zealand.

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