

COONAWARRA

Australia's *Other Red Centre*

FOR IMMEDIATE

RELEASE

Coonawarra wines headed for Rome in world-first event!

Coonawarra wines will soon be the toast of Italy at a unique event designed to give Europe a taste of our nation. Australia's Ambassador to the Holy See, the former deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, has given SA's world-famous wine region a leading role at his official January 26 celebrations on the left bank of the Tiber River, just near St Peter's Basilica.

The Coonawarra coup is part of a rotating program of feature towns and regions for Australia Day 2010, and the Coonawarra Vignerons Association says the opportunity to be involved in the event is "simply priceless".

"When dignitaries from Rome and the Vatican gather to celebrate Australia day next year, they will drink to the occasion with wines from Coonawarra," says CVA president Michelle Stehbens. "Despite its strong international profile, Coonawarra is a relatively small wine region, so this is a real endorsement of the wonderful wines which are being produced in this corner of South Australia."

Wines from Coonawarra's Zema Estate and DiGiorgio Family Wines have already been confirmed for the menu fit for papal palates. Zema Estate proprietor Nick Zema says his family is enormously proud to be one of two Coonawarra producers to have been selected.

"We are absolutely thrilled to be part of the Australia Day function in Rome," Nick Zema said. "Our family migrated to Australia in the 1950s and has built a successful Australian family business whilst remaining passionate about our Italian heritage. We are really looking forward to participating in this event and being able to showcase Zema Estate wines, and hope to also have a family member in attendance."

DiGiorgio Family Wines has previously exported very small quantities of wine to Italy and partner Frank DiGiorgio says his family's strong Italian heritage adds to the significance of the event.

"Certainly we've expressed our willingness to be involved...one of the issues is getting wine there at reasonably short notice, but hopefully that can be fast-tracked through diplomatic channels," he says. "It's a bit like taking ice to the Eskimos in a sense, but Australian wine is becoming more and more popular overseas - they look at us as leaders in the wine industry in many ways and are very interested in our wines, so this is a fantastic opportunity for Coonawarra."

Speaking from Rome, the Honourable Tim Fisher AC said it made a great deal of sense to select the Coonawarra wine region given the enormous work of Blessed Mary MacKillop in this area.

“It was at Penola and the nearby Coonawarra region that she began to devise her education templates and curricula that were later taken up by the SA State Government,” Mr Fischer said. “In a small way, this activity is a salute to a great Australian, at a very interesting time (and) it will greatly help that the terra rossa Coonawarra wine region has stepped up to the mark and will supply wine product from this famous region on the evening of the function; wine produced from the rich red soils of this part of South Australia and which has a worldwide reputation for excellence.”

SA Tourism Commission chief executive Andrew McEvoy said the announcement was “an honour for the Limestone Coast”, and Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith has also commended the promotion.

“Coonawarra and its famed strip of terra rossa soil produce some of Australia’s finest red wines,” she said. “The Ambassador’s decision to feature the region’s wine may well serve as an added enticement to those attending the celebration to come to the region, see for themselves where Mary MacKillop began her work and stay to sample our magnificent wine experiences.”

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