

# Central wineries exhibit at Hong Kong expo

By YVONNE O'HARA

**SURVEYOR** Thomson and Misha's Vineyard were the only two Central Otago wineries to be part of the 20-strong New Zealand Winegrowers (NZW) contingent that attended the VinExpo Asia Pacific 2012 trade show in Hong Kong recently.

It was the first time New Zealand had participated in the event, which is held every two years.

Both wineries were delighted with the event, and both got leads and contacts for potential business.

The event showcased wines from 28 countries to Asian and Pacific trade buyers, many of whom were from mainland China and Hong Kong.

New Zealand Winegrowers marketing manager Asia Monty James said about 15,000 trade buyers from 24 countries, including many from China and other Asian countries, visited the exhibition centre, and attendance was up about 25% on the 2010 event.

"It is the only trade event I have been part of where all the wineries were happy with the results," Mr James said.

The NZW stand was beside one of the entrances and had high traffic volume.

"It was our first time at the event and we negotiated to get a fantastic spot," Mr James said.

The NZW stand featured images of New Zealand vineyards and landscapes.



**Spreading the word:** Misha's Vineyard co-owner Andy Wilkinson talks to potential customers about the vineyard and its wines during the VinExpo in Hong Kong recently.

PHOTO: MISHA'S VINEYARD

"It really stood out," he said.

"The stand was built to communicate the premium position of New Zealand wines.

"A couple of the New Zealand wineries walked away with distribution deals and others took home leads to follow up.

"We had some really great trade interest from Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore as well," he said.

Each of the 20 wineries paid \$6000 to participate and among them more than 1000 bottles of New Zealand

wine were available for tasting.

NZW also hosted masterclasses looking at the regional complexities of New Zealand pinot noirs with top wine experts Gerard Basset, of Britain, and New Zealand's Bob Campbell.

A recent export report said that, at the end of May, pinot noir was the second-fastest-growing wine variety going into China, with cabernet and cabernet blends the top of the list, Mr James said.

The Chinese were fast developing

sophisticated wine palates, he said.

"Pinot noir has great growth potential in that market."

Misha Wilkinson, of Misha's Vineyard in Cromwell, said the NZW contingent was impressed with opportunities VinExpo offered.

"Since Misha's Vineyard has a distributor who represents us in Hong Kong and China, our focus was to meet sommeliers and decision-makers from hotels and premium restaurants in these markets and we certainly were able to do that," Mrs Wilkinson said.

"We came away from the show with some good leads for potential distribution in Taiwan, Indonesia, Abu Dhabi, the Philippines, India and Azerbaijan — and we definitely weren't expecting that.

"We were also lucky that Gerard Basset, a master of wine, a master sommelier, a wine MBA [Hons], an OBE and the reigning world champion sommelier, selected our Misha's Vineyard "The High Note" pinot noir 2008 at his masterclass to over 100 sommeliers at the show.

"That definitely created some excitement around our wine."

Claudio Heye, of Surveyor Thomson, said the event was "very successful" for the winery, and he also returned home with a list of leads.

"It was only for trade customers and we had three very busy, productive days," Mr Heye said.

"We had the ability to sell and create our own contacts, promote brands and generate sales through that."

"Surveyor Thomson was the smallest producer on the New Zealand stand and it was good to see some of the bigger wineries, like Villa Maria, working alongside the smaller ones like us," Mr Heye said.

Surveyor Thomson is one of the region's wineries that will host 17 wine buyers from Australia, Europe and Asia who are visiting Central Otago as guests of Central Otago Pinot Noir Ltd at the end of this month.