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Anthony Gismondi: B.C. stands out in national awards

ANTHONY GISMONDI Updated: March 20, 2017

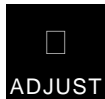


143 B.C. wineries entered the 16th WineAlign National Wine Awards of Canada in 2016.



Just in time for B.C. Day next week come the results from the 16th WineAlign National Wine Awards of Canada.

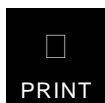
Full disclosure: I am a co-head judge at the weeklong blind tasting with Toronto-based wine writer David Lawrason.



The competition alternates tasting venues between east and west, and this year the judging was held in Penticton, in the heart of the Okanagan Valley.



There were 1,525 entries from 230 wineries in six provinces; and B.C. led all regions with 143 wineries. Ontario was next with 65, followed by Quebec 13, Nova Scotia 6, New Brunswick 4 and P.E.I. 1.



On this long weekend we celebrate those B.C. wines recognized as the best in the country, beginning with the one per cent of wines awarded platinum

medals. Ten of 16 platinum medals went to B.C. wineries, and two producers — [Spierhead Winery](#) (East Kelowna) and [Road 13 Vineyards](#) (Oliver-Golden Mile Bench) grabbed an amazing two each.

Two fabulous value buys come from veteran producers: **Lake Breeze 2014 Semillon, \$19**, and **Gray Monk 2013 Riesling, \$14**. If you have never heard of the **Montakarn Estate 2013 Angels Share, \$23**, it's a red blend from [new winery](#) along Oliver's Black Sage Road.

Kelowna was front and centre with **CedarCreek 2014 Platinum Chardonnay Block 5, \$26**, pointing to the future of Chardonnay, while nearby in East Kelowna winemaker Bill Pierson grabbed two platinums for two Pinot Noirs (an amazing feat given the size and strength of that category) for his **SpierHead Winery 2014 Pinot Noir GFV Saddle Block, \$32**, and **SpierHead Winery 2014 Pinot Noir Cuvée, \$40**.

Hatch Black Swift 2013 Long Road Syrah, \$62, took platinum — shining a light on the West Kelowna winery. Staying with the Rhone theme, the **Le Vieux Pin 2014 Syrah Cuvee Violette, \$31**, was recognized for its sheer deliciousness, while Road 13 rang the platinum bell twice for its **Road 13 Vineyards 2014 Syrah Mourvèdre, \$35**, and a new, knockout wine, **The Similkameen Collective 2013 Syrah Viognier, \$40**. As you may have guessed by the label it comes out of the stony, mineral, extreme Similkameen Valley.

One of my favourite reports out of the nationals is the performance report that ranks the best wineries in the country. Niagara-based [Tawse Winery](#) returned to the top of the heap in 2016 with a solid performance that included five gold medals. The commitment to biodynamics and organic agriculture has not hindered its performance, and more than likely is responsible for its success. Congratulations to owner Maury Tawse and winemaker Paul Pender for another outstanding performance.

Back in B.C., Naramata-based [Lake Breeze Vineyards](#) took home Canada's Small Winery of the Year and top winery in B.C. Winemaker Garron Elmes has been making the wine at Lake Breeze since it opened in 1995. The family-owned winery was purchased in 2001 by Albertans Drew and Barbara MacIntyre, who have steadied the course since.

Second in B.C. and third in the country was Oliver/Golden Mile Bench-based Road 13 Vineyards. Number three in British Columbia and 5th in Canada was Okanagan Falls' [Meyer Family Vineyards](#). Look for more on this groundbreaking Pinot Noir and Chardonnay producer in the coming weeks.

Number 4 in B.C. and 6th in Canada was Spierhead Winery and its one/two Pinot Noir platinum performance. Rounding out the top five, and 9th in the country, was [Black Swift Vineyards](#), now better known as The Hatch.

All medals were well deserved and even tougher to get, so check out the full results at winealign.com/awards.

Correction: An earlier version of this story misidentified Drew MacIntyre as Drew McIntyre.

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