



CARDINHAM ESTATE

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Cardinham Estate 2003 Riesling: Best Riesling in the World

Cardinham Estate, a third generation family winery in Clare with vineyards dating back to the 1860s, surprised the nation's wine industry by sweeping all the major trophies at the 2009 International Riesling Challenge, announced on October 16 in Canberra.

The Smith family, which bought established Clare vineyards in 1980 and has been making its own wines under the Cardinham Estate brand for the past decade, received three key trophies at the prestigious annual event – Best Museum Class Riesling, Best Riesling from Australia and New Zealand, and Best Riesling in the World – for Cardinham Estate Riesling 2003.

The accolades are a great reward from a difficult vintage, which winery co-director Shane Smith says is testament to good vineyard practise and winemaking by the Cardinham Estate team. "It was tough to hit the highs after the greatly heralded 2002 vintage – especially after black frosts wiped out more than 50 per cent of the 2003 vintage," says Shane. "Still, that light yield meant there was great complexity and intensity in the fruit that came in. Emma Bowley and my brother Scott "Scooter" Smith did a great job working with what our vineyard delivered."

Cardinham Estate 2003 Riesling is no stranger to show medals and is Cardinham Estate's most awarded wine; from earlier exhibits at the International Riesling Challenge, it picked up bronze and several silver medals. "We figured it would only be a matter of time before it won gold medals in its maturity," says Shane, "but picking up three trophies, and winning best Riesling in the world, sure came as a surprise to us."

Success stems from the rich pedigree of Cardinham Estate vineyards. Its Old Block vineyard that produced the 2003 riesling was planted in 1967 under the guidance of legendary riesling maker Mick Knappstein of the Stanley Wine Company, and it prospered despite being planted in the middle of a drought without the aid of irrigation. Curiously though, the Smith family's purchase of this vineyard in 1980 saved it from falling under the Vine Pull scheme – yet within a few years its fruit was being contracted to Wolf Blass for inclusion in his celebrated Gold Label Riesling, until the Smiths retained it for the Cardinham Estate brand.

Extremely limited stocks of the trophy winning Cardinham Estate 2003 Riesling remain, with the Smith family now figuring how to distribute limited allocation among long-time supporters and also stimulate increased distribution of Cardinham Estate wines across Australia. Fortunately, the trophy wins also draw timely attention to the recently released Cardinham Estate 2009 Riesling, which Shane believes is another potential trophy winner.

"I'd rate the 2009 vintage among the very best growing seasons we've seen," says Shane. "I believe it will be the vintage that sparks a real resurgence of interest in riesling among wine drinkers and buyers. It's the right time for people to start looking at smaller brands like ours, to see and taste just how good these wines are."

• For further information, contact Shane Smith on 0407 423 802, email cardvit@bigpond.com or visit the website www.cardinham.com

"Brand to watch. Excellent wines at excellent prices." Campbell Mattinson, Winefront.