

CITY LIFE

Parties, Culture & Society



Osoyoos Indian Band councillor Charlotte Sanders and band member Derek Bryson.



Esther Seidel, Audrey Silbernagel and Nina Kleissen pour Inniskillin Winery's award-winning 2006 riesling icewine.



Chefs Dana Ewart and Cameron Smith of Joy Road Catering at the Red Rooster Winemaker luncheon in Penticton.



Apple d'Or B&B's Collin Moores and Holly Stevens and chef Thomas Render (centre) of Naramata Heritage Inn.

Okanagan cheers its wine industry

Fans of the grape turn out for 14th annual festival



FRED LEE

Several thousand wine enthusiasts from B.C., Alberta and Washington made their way to the Interior for the biggest tippelfest of the week, the 14th annual Okanagan Spring Wine Festival. It was the perfect marriage of wine and culinary tourism as 150 wineries in Kelowna, Peachland, Lake Country, Penticton, Naramata, Summerland, Okanagan Falls, Osoyoos and Oliver rolled out the welcome mat for the May 1 to 10 festival with its 100-plus wine events.

The Okanagan Wine Festival Society planned tastings, vineyard tours, seminars, winemaker lunches and dinners, awards competitions, red-carpet galas and more. Aficionados sipped and sampled some of the region's best grapes and barrel releases from some of the province's top wineries, including heavyweights **Anthony von Mandl's** Mission Hill, **Harry McWatter's** Sumac Ridge, **Ben Stewart's** Quails' Gate, **Donald Ziraldo's** Inniskillin Wines, **Jim Wyse's** Burrowing Owl and North America's first Aboriginal-owned and operated winery, Osoyoos Indian Band's NK'Mip (in-kameep) Cellars.

Twenty-two smaller boutique wineries also received their share of accolades, in-

cluding Laughing Stock Vineyards, Black Widow Winery, Marichel Vineyard, Red Rooster, Lake Breeze Vineyards, La Frenz and Township Seven.

There is no shortage of first-rate cuisine in B.C. wine country. Restaurants participating in the festival included Amante Bistro, Granny Bogner and Theo's in Penticton, Passa Tempo at NK'Mip Cellars, the Terrace at Mission Hill, Sonora Room at Burrowing Owl and Cellar Door Bistro at Sumac Ridge, to name a few.

Kicking off the wine extravaganza were two signature soirees: the Naramata Bench Winery Association's Best of the Bench Bacchanalia and the Great Estates of the Okanagan's Fire & Ice grazing at NK'Mip Cellars and Passa Tempo at Spirit Ridge Resort and Spa.

Naramata Heritage Inn and Spa executive chef **Thomas Render** fronted the sold-out Best of the Bench six-course dinner. Several hundred guests supped on a designer repast of Fanny Bay oysters, pan-roasted scallops, Dungeness crab and mascarpone risotto, Berkshire pulled pork, roasted beef tenderloin and braised short rib and crème fraîche panna cotta. Ice sculptures, fire dancers and a grand finale of fireworks heralded the Fire & Ice party. Featured wines were from See Ya Later, NK'Mip Cellars, Inniskillin, Sumac Ridge and Jackson Triggs.

"We are thrilled with all the activities and events that are happening in the Okanagan during the Spring Wine Festival," said **Kate Colley** of Tourism Penticton & Wine Country. "It's a great opportunity to showcase the enormous talent and enthusiasm of the region's winemakers, hotels, restaurants and food producers to locals and visitors so early in the season."

Weekend Post
bccitylife@nationalpost.com

PHOTOS BY FRED LEE FOR NATIONAL POST



Laughing Stock winemakers Cynthia and David Enns celebrate the success of their Portfolio 2005 wine.



Wine enthusiasts Global Television's Sophie Lui and Kristi Gordon.



Cellar Door Bistro executive chef Roger Planiden and Sumac Ridge's Christa-Lee McWatters.



Wine enthusiasts Liz Dryer and Kristen MacDonald raise a glass at the Fire & Ice party.



Tourism Penticton and Wine Country's Kate Colley in Ann Taylor; NK'Mip Cellars winemaker Aaron Crey served up the vineyard's winning Osoyoos wine; SNAP Financial CFO Lisa Stout at the Okanagan Spring Wine Festival opener; Albertan landscape architect Joanne Dafeo; wine enthusiast and writer Deana Maros.