

XCEPTIONAL

# GRAPES OF PURE DELIGHT

**The harvest festival** weekend at GranMonte sees guests enjoying a fabulous meal before bending to their grape-picking duties

THE NATION

**I**t seems the festivities never end at the GranMonte Vineyard, one of the most famous wineries in Khao Yai. Just as winter bid farewell, the vineyard kick-started its harvest season with a sunny celebration titled “The GranMonte ‘Pick of the Season’ 2012”, a weekend harvest festival that drew a record number of participants.

The vineyard welcomed more than 200 guests including friends, press members, colleagues and visitors, not only ushering in another successful harvesting year, but also celebrating the previous year’s success of its award-winning vintages.

On the eve of the harvest festival, excitement ran high as participants had the opportunity to enjoy Tina Term’s extraordinary feast at the vineyard Italian restaurant VinCotto, where the 2010 vintage of GranMonte’s Asoke Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah wine premiered with a bang. A live jazz band and a club dance DJ took turns to get everyone in the groove, powered by a free flow of GranMonte’s fine



wines including the crowd pleaser, 2011 Sakuna Syrah Rose.

Singers and guests alike belted out infectious songs from the 1970s like “Mama Mia!”. It was easy to hear a steady stream of approbations resonating from the restaurant, “wow”, “aroi mak”, “more

please!” and “you must try the roast calf”. One of the highlights was a live roti cooking station.

The delicious feast was Term’s way of representing the love of the family, vineyard terroir and world class wine making art, which the vineyard’s female oenologist Nikki Lohitnavy gifted around the wine world. The premier Asoke 2010 was poured and paired with crispy roast suckling pig with sweet pine apple-green mango and lemon grass slaw.

Then the Orient 2009 was matched with whole Argentine roast Calf with Chimichurri sauce. And the star of the night was a 19th century delight, home-made Milanese Ossobuco in Bianco (Sole 2010) which was accompanied with roti. The magical banquet ended with a rain-



KWANCHAI Papaspong rocks the night away.

bow of traditional Thai dessert in the cloak of GranMonte’s moon-lit night skies when guests sipped the limited edition Bussaba late harvest Chenin Blanc before taking a retreat.

Among the VIPs and paying guests were Excise Department (Korat region) director Winai Sudkaew, Thailand International Motor Expo president Kwanchai Papaspong, Jan Ganser and Benjawan Wisootsat of Fabulous is Needed wine importing firm, Chateau Pichon-Longueville Comtesses de Lalande former director Gildas d’Ollone,

Expression magazine editor Neetinder Dhillon and her family, WineSmart 101’s wine instructor Parani Chitrakorn, Coffee Beanery MD Akkaphan Leevutinun, freelance wine writer Laurence Civil; Nahm Restaurant manager Troy Sutton, The Nation wine columnist James Mullen, and wife Nueng, and World Taxpayers Association secretary general Bjorn Tarras-Wahlberg and wife Panchanok.

The nocturnal jubilations were followed by a bit of an early morning workout in the vineyard. GranMonte’s famous grape-picking competition saw 30 pairs of participants young and old racing against time to hand-harvest the greatest weight of Syrah grapes that will be put to good use: the 2012 Sakuna Syrah Rose. Other competitions included a Poron drinking challenge, and this year’s dark horse victors were recent graduates of Chulalongkorn University, who took home GranMonte wines worth over Bt20,000.

Throughout the weekend, glasses were raised to the new season and new surprises, which will enrich GranMonte’s endeavours and bring happiness to all wine lovers.



JAN GANSER and Benjawan Wisootsat during the grape picking competition.



WINEMAKER Nikki Lohitnavy and sommelier Tina Term.

COURTESY OF GRANMONTE