

— News Release —

Mission Hill Family Estate named Winery of the Year

First ever Canadian Wine Awards announced in Toronto

Westbank, British Columbia – Sunday, November 4, 2001: British Columbia's Mission Hill Family Estate has been named Winery of the Year at the Canadian Wine Awards. The top award was presented to chief winemaker John Simes during a ceremony in Toronto on Saturday evening, part of the festivities of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. The inaugural Canadian Wine Awards, presented by Air Canada, are the brainchild of Wine Access Magazine and its founder and editor-in-chief David Lawrason.

"This is such a proud moment for everyone associated with Mission Hill Family Estate," says chief winemaker John Simes. "Being chosen Winery of the Year means a great deal to me personally and it's a welcome endorsement of our approach to grape growing and winemaking."

A panel of eight wine judges from coast to coast, all of who have broad domestic and international tasting experience, determined the winners. This past August, over 500 wines were blind-tasted, scored and ranked. The Winery of the Year is awarded to a recipient, based on the number of medals as a percentage of submissions. In addition to receiving a host of medals, Mission Hill Family Estate also won the trophy for Best Value (Red) for its 1999 Cabernet-Merlot blend.

"I'm honoured and excited by last night's results," says proprietor Anthony von Mandl. "I always knew it was possible to make great wines in the Okanagan. Now, after years of



investment and patience, it's really starting to happen. It's a great anniversary present."

Twenty years ago, von Mandl purchased a rundown Okanagan Valley winery and set out to make his dream of making world calibre wines, come true. Initial progress was slow but steady until he managed to convince one of New Zealand's most respected winemakers to join him.

In 1992, John Simes, formerly chief winemaker at Montana Wines, arrived and went to work on his first vintage. Two years later, in 1994, that Chardonnay stunned the wine world when it picked up the trophy for

Mission Hill Family Estate chosen Winery of the Year • *cont'd*

best Chardonnay at London's prestigious International Wine & Spirit Competition. The judges were so shocked with the result, they insisted on re-tasting everything. Mission Hill still won.

That pivotal win, just seven years ago, was responsible for putting British Columbia's Okanagan Valley and Mission Hill on the international wine map for the first time. It also gave von Mandl the confidence to undertake an unprecedented investment in vineyards and winemaking.

Simes and von Mandl insist that great wines are made in the vineyard. That belief has led them to carefully expand the family's estate holdings to take advantage of the distinct microclimates throughout the valley. Vines from France were imported to plant the new vineyards. A combination of intuition and science guide the selection of grape varieties. Strategic investments in irrigation systems, wind machines and weather stations assist with the production of premium fruit. Both insist there is no room for shortcuts in the vineyards.

With the best possible technology employed from the vineyards to the cellar, von Mandl

began the five-year reconstruction of his winery. An extensive international search for a lead architect with museum and gallery experience, led von Mandl to Tom Kundig, ironically he found him next door in Seattle. For Kundig, it was the project of a lifetime. Now complete, the winery is a tribute to the art of winemaking. As visitors pass through the welcoming arches, they descend into an inner courtyard and experience a panoramic view of Lake Okanagan. A Vineyard Terrace, outdoor Roman-inspired amphitheatre and loggia run the length of the winery grounds. The centrepiece of the courtyard is a 12-storey bell tower with four bronze bells, cast in Annecy, France, each dedicated to a member of the von Mandl family.

The starting point for tours is the Wine Education Centre, which houses a teaching kitchen for culinary professionals and a small theatre. Underground, barrel aging cellars, blasted into volcanic rock, mature the wine.

With a new destination winery and a portfolio of award winning wines, the von Mandl family has begun a journey to establish the Okanagan Valley as a sought after producer of distinctly-styled wines .



MISSION HILL FAMILY ESTATE