

## *Impressed with the New World wines*

**The cleanness and organisation of local vineyards immediately impressed visiting French wine sommeliere Corinne Gaudron, recipient of the inaugural Veuve Clicquot Woman in Wine award.**

She was in town last week visiting wineries as part of a five-week tour of Australia and New Zealand which was her prize in the award.

Corinne arrived in Perth on February 2 and spent three days touring wineries and vineyards in the area, including Cape Mentelle, Leeuwin Estate, Moss Wood, Vasse Felix and Cullens.

Accompanying her on the tours were French winemaker Christophe Chauveau, of Domaine Daniel Chaveau, and Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin's Commercial Director for France, David Cobbold.

At 26, Corinne has been working with wine for 10 years and is now Head Sommeliere at Chateau Marceay in Chinon, France, which has a one-star Michelin restaurant and is a member of the Relais and Chateaux luxury hotel group.

Her position includes responsibility for the hotel and restaurant wine list, which boasts 550 wines from 14 countries, including Australia and New Zealand, and the 12th century Chateau cellar, which houses 36,000 bottles of wine.

Corinne's interest in New World wines, such as those she has selected from Australia and New Zealand, is rare in France.

Her interest in local and New Zealand wines

was sparked about a year ago after she read an article on Cape Mentelle and Cloudy Bay in Paris Match.

She wrote for samples, bought some of the wine and hasn't looked back since, saying now that convincing French guests to drink wines from the New World is a challenge she enjoys.

She also takes great pleasure in making her local Loire winemakers blind taste unfamiliar wines.

"If a wine is good, it has a place on my list, no matter what its origins," she said.

One of the benefits of the tour, according to Corinne, is the chance to get information first hand and prove to her colleagues that Australia makes fine wines.

She is also able to compare the differences between the two country's winemaking industries and conditions.

"There is a totally different vegetation around the vines here, and a respect of that vegetation," she said.

"There is very little spraying and more respect of nature, it seems to be a more holistic approach."

The team spirit, diversity of vineyard sizes and the capacity to innovate of local operations have also impressed Corinne.

"In France we are very tied by tradition, but here you can try different ways of doing things," she said.

"The amount of work that has been done here in a short time is impressive.

"What has taken 1000



years in France will take about 20 to 30 years in Western Australia.

"This seems partly due to the technology and easier exchange of information, but also because winemakers here seem to have a more adventurous spirit.

"Tradition has advantages and disadvantages."

Following tradition in France, wine service has been a male-dominated profession and Corinne acknowledges that at first she found it difficult.

She worked in a lot of different restaurants to gain a wide variety of experience.

"Now I am totally accepted and have no problems in the profession," she said.

"There are more and more women working in this area and many are being encouraged by seeing women like myself in the profession."

Corinne maintains that the secret to her professional success is dedication and hard work.

"It's the only way to achieve a competitive edge," she said.

The Veuve Clicquot Woman in Wine award was set up to recognise the achievements of

young women in the wine trade in France.

It seeks to continue the traditions set by Madame Clicquot, the company's founder, who was widowed at just 26 years of age.

Madame Clicquot's dedication to fine wine, her relentless energy and quest for perfection, epitomised in her motto: "Only one quality...the very finest", provides an admirable role model for young women in the wine industry and the Woman in Wine award celebrates that legacy.

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