

Our wine a winner with French expert

SYDNEY: It might seem like trying to sell refrigerators to Eskimos, but French wine expert Corinne Gaudron loves the challenge of promoting Australian vintages in her homeland.

Corinne, 25, is the sommeliere (wine expert) at the luxurious hotel Chateau de Marceay at Chinon, in the Loire Valley.

She is responsible for selecting the 32,000 bottles in its cellar, preparing the wine list of 500 different labels and suggesting wine and food combinations for customers.

As one of only six women holding such a lofty position in France, Corinne has just won champagne-maker Veuve Clicquot's inaugural Woman In Wine award.

Her prize was a five-week tour of Australian and New Zealand vineyards — and she is using her trip to acquire more Australian wines for her restaurant.

Chateau de Marceay, a four-star hotel whose restaurant boasts a coveted Michelin star, has long featured wines from California, Portugal, Argentina, South Africa, Hungary, Romania, Spain, Italy and even England.

But it was devoid of Australasian vintages until Corinne read a magazine article praising WA's Cape Mentelle and New Zealand's Cloudy Bay wines.

She tasted them, liked their quality and value for money compared

with French products and introduced them to Chateau de Marceay.

Now the restaurant has six Australian and New Zealand wines and Corinne is keen to add more — especially liqueur muscats from north-east Victoria's Rutherglen area.

"French people don't know much about Australian wines but I overcome that by offering them a glass," Corinne said.

"I never tell them what it is. I just ask them to allow me to serve them something different."

"The reaction is usually very good and in this way I can expand their knowledge of Australian and New Zealand wines."



TESTING TASK: Corinne Gaudron with an array of Australian wines that might make it to one of France's best restaurants.