



***Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Bob McDonnell***

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**Governor McDonnell Announces Revamped and
Enhanced Governor's Cup Virginia Wine Competition**

*~ New Judging Standards Will Make Event One of the Preeminent Wine
Competitions in the Nation ~*

RICHMOND - Governor Bob McDonnell announced today major changes to the Virginia Governor's Cup competition that, once implemented, will make it one of the most stringent and thorough wine competitions in the United States. The revamped contest is a result of a partnership amongst the gubernatorial-appointed Virginia Wine Board (VWB), the Virginia Wineries Association (VWA), which owns and manages the competition, and the Virginia Vineyards Association (VVA). Virginia Wine Board-authorized marketing and education grants from the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund will help to fund the enhanced competition.

Speaking about the competition, Governor McDonnell said, "Virginia wines have been gaining acclaim here at home, around the nation, and in key markets around the world. Given this, we

need to make sure that we have a competition that recognizes and promotes the best that we have to offer. The revamped competition will do just that. I'm excited about this new investment in the Governor's Cup competition to further enhance the growing reputation of Virginia wines."

Competition discussions amongst leaders of the Virginia Wine Board, VWA, and VVA took place this summer and fall and were facilitated by Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Todd Haymore. Governor McDonnell asked the parties in late spring to come together to find ways to improve the competition. Raising the profile of Virginia wines and winery tourism are key components of the Governor's economic development and jobs creation initiatives. First Lady Maureen McDonnell has also incorporated the wine industry promotions into her First Lady Initiative Team Effort or FLITE.

Governor McDonnell continued, "I applaud the VWB, VWA, VVA, and Secretary Haymore for working together to make this happen. In addition to the national and international notoriety that Virginia wines are receiving, sales of our wines reached an all-time high last year and more and more people are visiting our wineries. I believe a top notch competition to showcase our best wines is essential for maintaining this positive growth."

As part of the enhancement, the competition will again be a single event for all Virginia wines. Recently the Governor's Cup had been broken up into two competitions, one for red wines and one for white wines. The judging of both red and white wines will be divided into preliminary and final rounds to be held in January 2012. The announcement of the Governor's Cup award winner will be held the evening of Thursday, February 23rd in conjunction with the Virginia Wine Expo, which runs February 24-26, 2012 in Richmond.

Any wine made from 100% Virginia fruit will be eligible for the Governor's Cup Competition. Ciders and fruit wines will have their own category and medals. Entries must include an affidavit with a certification of 100% Virginia fruit and vineyard particulars, including grower names and location, as well as information on alcohol, acidity or basicity (pH), and residual sugar.

One of the most important aspects of the revised competition will be the educational component of the judging. After the competition, regional forums for the winemakers will be held with the head judge. Notes with the judges' blind comments will be shared with individual winemakers, so that they will get direct feedback on how their wines were received.

Jay Youmans, one of only of 31 Masters of Wine (MW) in the U.S., will be the head judge of the competition. Youmans, who is also a Certified Wine Educator (CWE) and the owner and educational director of the Capital Wine School in Washington, DC, will recruit the wine judges from the professional wine buying and wine media community. The judges will be compensated for a rigorous schedule of judging ensuring the competition will have the highest level of professional evaluation of the wines.

"The new format for the Virginia Governor's Cup will make it one of the preeminent wine competitions in the U.S today", said Yomans. "It will become the benchmark with which all other wine shows will be measured, not simply because of the quality of the judges, or the rigorous selection process, but because of the critical feedback given to each participating

winery. The competition will serve notice to the industry that Virginia is serious about producing high quality wines."

"We are thrilled to have Jay Youmans lead the judging of this competition, elevating both the caliber of the judging process and the respect the competition receives. That coupled with what will not just be a competition but a learning experience for Virginia winemakers is the next step in encouraging, supporting and advancing the appreciation of Virginia wines," said Mitzi Batterson, President, Virginia Wineries Association.

Created by the General Assembly in 1984 as part of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the VWB promotes the interests of vineyards and wineries in the Commonwealth through research, education and marketing. The VWB receives funding from the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund through Virginia winery excise taxes and dispenses it for wine-related projects and initiatives. Per the request of Governor McDonnell, the Virginia General Assembly recently dedicated all funds from winery excise taxes to the Virginia Wine Promotion Fund. The fund, which supports marketing, promotion, education, and research initiatives, has approximately \$1.6 million this year.

The Virginia Wineries Association has owned and organized the Governor's Cup since 1982. VWA's mission is to actively encourage and support the production, quality, promotion, and appreciation of Virginia wines. The VWA, representing all Virginia's farm wineries, is the top resource and focal point within the wine industry for local, state and national issues that affect its members. For more information, visit www.vawine.org.

The Virginia Vineyards Association, incorporated in March 1983, originated in 1979-80 as a joint effort for information exchange and cooperation among viticulturists, wineries, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University. The VVA works to increase awareness and recognition of the quality and diversity of Virginia's grapes and wines. For more information, visit www.virginiavineyardsassociation.com.

Sales of Virginia wine reached a record high in fiscal year 2011 with more than 462,000 cases sold during the fiscal year. This figure marked a sales increase of more than 11% over the previous fiscal year. Virginia is now the nation's fifth largest wine producer and seventh largest wine grape producer. According to the most recent economic impact study, the Virginia wine industry employs approximately 3,000 people and contributes almost \$350 million to the Virginia economy on an annual basis. The study reflected the impact of 120 wineries in 2005; today, there are nearly 200 farm wineries in the state. A new economic impact study is planned for fiscal year 2012. For a complete list of previous winners and further information about events, tours and tastings, please visit the Virginia Wine Marketing Office's website at www.virginiawine.org/ or call 804-344-8200.

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