



## PENNING GOLD

A mixture of awe, envy and despair from reading too many legendary tasting reports prompted Graeme Gee, recipient of the 2009 New Writer Award, to write his Wine Show to End All Wine Shows article on page 38. Plying a financial trade in the pharmaceutical industry hasn't stopped him indulging in his "legal drug of choice" at other times, nor dreaming of attending some tasting where fabulously improbable bottles are opened. His \$2000 prize will be spent on "wines too expensive to afford any other way"; intended to be shared among like-minded friends and a regular wine-dinner group when they finally mature (the wines, not Gee or his friends). He wants it known that he will make diary space to attend any pre-war tastings of legitimate offerings.

The New Writer Award is held annually by *Gourmet Traveller WINE* and Wine Communicators of Australia to showcase the work of a promising up-and-coming wine writer who has not previously been published. Gee received his accolade at the Sydney Royal Wine Show Lunch held in February. At the same event, we also applauded the chairman of *Gourmet Traveller WINE*'s tasting panel, Peter Forrestal, who deservedly received the 2009 Australian Wine Communicator Award, judged by club president Darren Jahn, Jancis Robinson MW and James Halliday.

*Barack Obama raises a glass to his predecessors*

## WHITE HOUSE BACK ON THE BOTTLE

America's presidential mansion had been dry since George W. Bush was elected in 2000. He decreed that he would have no white wine – or red for that matter – at the White House. But that came to an end when Barack Obama was swept to the presidency on a tsunami of change this year. Now wine consumption is back in fashion on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The new president's preferred drops, however, are for the most part politically correct domestic wines. At the inauguration lunch for example, 237 guests downed a Napa Valley 2007 Duckhorn Sauvignon Blanc paired with a pastry crusted seafood stew, and 2005 Goldeneye Pinot Noir from Anderson Valley served with duck and pheasant, sour-cherry chutney and molasses sweet potatoes. For dessert, diners washed down their apple cinnamon sponge cake and sweet cream glacé with Korbel Special Cuvée sparkling wine. Russian River-based Korbel Cellars was recently named American Winery of the Year at the 2008 Wine Star Awards ceremony.

Obama's wine picks for subsequent events have been more catholic. At a dinner attended by ex-presidents Bush and Clinton, proceedings began with Prosecco Cogliano Valdobbiadene followed by 2006 Barboursville Cabernet Franc Reserve and a 2005 Barboursville Bordeaux blend known as 2005 Octagon. This is named after the octagonal estate house at the Barboursville winery in Virginia designed in 1814 by America's third president and wine aficionado, Thomas Jefferson. He was also responsible for installing a 20,000-bottle wine cellar at the White House during his term. Today there is no wine cellar there so wines are hand picked for state functions according to their gastronomic and political affinities.

The return to wining and dining at the White House has been greeted with heady excitement by America's winemakers. "I can't help but think that after eight years of no wine drinkers at the White House, Obama will have a felicitous effect on Americans' drinking habits," said John Gillespie of the Wine Market Council.

One tippie unlikely to be given the presidential seal of approval is Palin Syrah. This is an obscure boutique Chilean wine which sprang to prominence during the election when wine-loving supporters of John McCain's vice-presidential running mate Sarah Palin hailed it for what they perceived as flavours of moose meat and Alaskan wild salmon touched with a hint of gunpowder. Their political opponents claimed it tasted more like lipstick on a pig.  
**ANTHONY MANIFOLD**

