



Bob and Elaine de Brueys display tropical fruit wine bearing their family crest at their boutique winery near Mareeba on the Atherton Tableland in Queensland.

## de Brueys produce history in a bottle

**W**HEN tropical fruit winemaker Bob de Brueys chose the name Flagship for his coffee elixir, it was not his intention to single it out as the finest example of his range of 12 tropical fruit wines.

He wanted to honour his forebears by labelling the bottle with an image of the flagship L'Orient, which led Napoleon's fleet in the ill-fated Battle of the Nile in 1798.

Mr de Brueys is a descendent of Vice-Admiral Francois-Paul Brueys d'Aigalliers, Comte de Brueys, the French commander of the battle who lost his life when his ship was blown out of the water by Admiral Horatio Nelson's fleet off Alexandria in the Egypt campaign.

Perhaps prophetically, the Flagship Coffee Elixir has since earned its stripes among the de Brueys' selection, sailing home with the trophy for the Best Liqueur at the recent Australian Fruit Wine Show in Cairns. It tied with de Brueys' other entry in the liqueur category, Tropical Temptation, which contains secret ingredients of exotic fruits and is reminiscent of an Irish cream liqueur.

Chief judge Brian Wilson described the winning Flagship Coffee Elixir as "a good drinking coffee liqueur made from local coffee beans that held the enjoyment of soft coffee with chocolate overtones".

Visitors to de Brueys Boutique Wines on the Atherton Tableland – inland from Cairns – or the winery's online shop can judge for themselves whether the award-winning coffee liqueur with the distinctive label is the finest of the selection of wines and ports made from mango, jaboticaba, lychee, passionfruit, bush cherry, mulberry and strawberry, as well as coffee.

They can also steep themselves in the de Brueys' proud history. The family crest is emblazoned on their wine labels, they have a comprehensive history link on their website, and they

soon hope to adorn their new winery convention centre with a wall-size print of the Battle of the Nile sourced from the Greenwich Maritime Museum.

By paying tribute to his forebear, Mr de Brueys has lighted upon a novel marketing ploy for his boutique wines.

"I just had an Italian couple buy a bottle of Flagship on the strength of the story, and four Japanese women – who found the history fascinating – recently asked me to pose for a photo with them after each buying a bottle of the coffee elixir," he said.

**Details: de Brueys Boutique Wines [debrueys.com.au](http://debrueys.com.au)**

## Fruit wines blossom

**A**USTRALIA'S fledgling fruit wine industry is making impressive progress in both technical improvements and marketing, according to wine consultant Brian Wilson.

Chief judge at the recent Australian Fruit Wine Awards in Cairns, Mr Wilson said he had travelled extensively and tasted many fruit wines in the course of his overseas consultancies this year, and found the Australian product far superior to anything in Asia or Europe.

"The industry is maturing and we are seeing a trend towards more table wine with lower alcohol content so the fruit is shining through," he said. "They are definitely now easier to drink and more consumer friendly."

Staged in conjunction with the Cairns Show Wine Awards, the AFWA was introduced in 2006 to encourage the region's emerging tropical fruit wine industry to attain medal standard. A former award-winning winemaker with Orlando and Mildara Blass, and consultant to the grape and fruit wine industry, Mr Wilson helped the Queensland Government nurture the industry from its early beginnings in 2000.

He was particularly impressed by the strong local showing of tropical wines at the awards, and the local industry's resilience in the face of the global financial crisis.

"Tourism has definitely dropped in Cairns because of the GFC, and the local industry is looking elsewhere to survive," Mr Wilson said.

"There's been a few at the fringes who have left the industry, but other producers are significantly increasing their production and marketing efforts.

"My spin on the GFC is 'Go Find Customers', and that's what they are doing. They have got sufficient product and a lot of capacity with excess fruit and fermenting space in this region.

The future for this industry is in marketing."

The AFWA attracted more than 60 entries from throughout Australia, including 41 entries from the tropical north. However, it was the temperate fruit wines that took out the major prizes.

Thieves & Duffers from Victoria's Goulburn Valley won Best Fruit Wine of the Show and Best Dessert Wine for its Dare Devil Jack Apricot Port, as well as the Best Dry Wine trophy for its George's Club Blueberry Wine. Among the tropical entries, Murdering Point Winery took out the sweet wine trophy for its Pinnacle Sweet Passionfruit, and de Brueys Boutique Wines was awarded the Best Liqueur trophy for its Flagship Coffee Elixir and Tropical Temptation Liqueur. Rebello from the Mornington Peninsula snared the Best Sparkling Wine for its Charlotte Strawberry Spark.

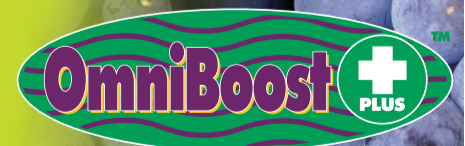
More than 250 people voted with their palates to make their own judgments on the exotic line-up of tropical mango, ginger, jaboticaba, passionfruit, Davidson plum, mangosteen, black sapote, apricot, blueberry, strawberry and kiwi fruit among many others at the public tastings.

The judges informed their choices with suitable praise for the one gold, 17 silver and 20 bronze medals across the seven categories: light flavoured dry, full flavoured sweet, fortified, sparkling and liqueur. Their tasting notes included such comments as "fresh, fragrant and balanced", "classy, showing great varietal character with complex structured palate", "good intensity of fruit, with balanced structure and good length", "good technical wines" and "elegant flavour with wonderful persistence of bead".

**Details: Brian Wilson [brian@winesolutions.com.au](mailto:brian@winesolutions.com.au)**

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