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"This Pinot Noir is a gentleman."

Diego Mathier from Valais was crowned 2007 Winemaker of the Year at the "Grand Prix du Vin Suisse" in Berne.

His Pinot Noir produced in Salquenen won gold in its category, and his Dôle Blanche was runner-up in the rosé category.

A profile by Alain Wey

"This is not a one-man show. It is a reward for the hard work put in by the whole team over the last few years," said Diego Mathier, 2007 Winemaker of the Year. "It is also a reward for the previous generations who bought the vineyards in the right location. The soil is very important." The title caps off an extraordinary year for the Adrian Mathier cellar of Salquenen, in the canton of Valais, which won more than 50 gold medal awards in 2007 at national and international competitions.

"In the spring," explained Diego Mathier, "after tasting and bottling, we thought that all of our wines had a chance of winning a gold medal, so we entered lots of them into competition." Six wines from the Adrian Mathier cellar made the finals of the "Grand Prix du Vin Suisse." The Pinot Noir Les Pyramides 2005 was awarded the gold medal, while the Dôle Blanche Frauenfreude 2006 picked up silver. The title of "Winemaker of the Year" is awarded to the producer who ends up with the best ratings for all the wines he has entered into the competition. Quality, expertise, passion, enjoyment and innovation are all part of the Adrian Mathier cellar's recipe for success.

A university-educated wine-maker

"I think about wine from the moment I wake up in the morning until when I go to bed at night. I'm sure I even dream about wine," confesses Diego Mathier. Born on 8 September 1970 in Salquenen, he graduated in economics from the

University of St Gallen. After working in a bank for two years, he took over the four family-owned distribution businesses in German-speaking Switzerland and then, in 2002, the cellar in Salquenen. The family cellar was established by Diego's great-grandfather in the 1920s during the depression. He explained: "As a child, I always worked in the vineyards. I learnt my trade step-by-step.

You have to work things out carefully in your head before you make wine. Then you can set about the task of producing this ideal wine. That is our philosophy."

Married to Nadia and a father of five daughters, Diego has two passions in life – wine and his family. "My parents are retired, but they help us out if we need them. My wife deals with customers who come to Salquenen. I manage the business as well as the blending and finishing processes. At the tastings you'll find the oenologists: my wife and I." Diego is a hedonist, but also a perfectionist, who lives life to the full. These character traits help him to produce high-quality wines that provide maximum pleasure. "When I do something, I give it everything I've got. I am quite extreme – at least that's what my wife tells me."

FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE ADRIAN MATHIER CELLAR



Nadia and Diego Mathier

- Area: 25 hectares between Chamoson and Tourtemagne, adjoining 75 hectares belonging to wine-makers that the family has worked with for generations.
- Quantity of wine: 750,000 to 800,000 liters of wine a year.
- Altitude of the vineyards: between 500 m and 750 m above sea-level.
- The wines: The Adrian Mathier cellar produces 40 different wines (Chasselas, Johannisberg, Muscat, Malvoisie, Ermitage, Gamay, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Amigne, Petite Arvine, Heida, Humagne Blanche and Humagne Rouge, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Cornalin, Merlot, Riesling, etc.).
- Employees: 25 people employed at the cellar, five permanent employees in the vineyards, rising to 13 with seasonal workers.
- Awards in 2007: Gold for the Syrah Diego Mathier 2006 in France. 14 gold medals at Expovina in Zurich, including the best speciality white (La Petite Arvine), the best Merlot and the best Swiss rosé.
- 12 gold medals at the Vins du Valais selections.
- "It was an extraordinary year. In 2006, we won 15 gold medals (50 in 2007) but we entered less wine in competition. We now have some 250 gold medals in total."

www.mathier.com

www.grandprixduvinsuisse.ch

Glacier wine and tasting

The Adrian Mathier cellar also produces a wine in the ice cave of the Rhône glacier, 2030 meters above sea-level. It was entered into the Guinness Book of Records as the highest and most extraordinary example of wine storage in the world. "To make a sweet wine, the first fermentation has to be stopped by the cold. The barrels are placed in the cave in the middle of the glacier during winter and springtime." The wine is also bottled in the cave at the end of June.

When it comes to tasting, Diego Mathier carries out a full study of the wine. "The aroma has to be characteristic of the type of wine, the region and the year. The palate must have volume and harmony. I feel a little bit like a chef looking for a balance between sharpness, sweetness and aroma. Our aim when tasting, blending and producing is to find a perfect balance between fruit, tannins, alcohol and acidity." Diego waxes lyrical when he talks about the Pinot Noir that won him gold. "It has finesse, elegance and an extraordinary balance. Wine is like people, and this Pinot Noir is a gentleman."