



## Edwards, Escalona, Pamo wines take the gold

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Wine and conversation flowed abundantly in the Sizzler Banquet Room at the 2009 Lum Eisenman Ramona Valley Wine Competition last week.

More than 50 wine makers, wine grape growers and judges gathered to honor and thank Eisenman for all he has done over the years to encourage the production of quality wine in San Diego County. It also places a focus on the potential of the Ramona Valley Viticultural Area (AVA) for the production of quality wines, and provides constructive feedback to all wine makers who are making wines from Ramona Valley grapes.

To be eligible for entry into the third annual competition, the wine must qualify for Ramona Valley AVA labeling, that is at least 85 percent of the grapes used to produce the wine are sourced from vineyards in the AVA. A map of the area can be found on the Ramona Valley Vineyard Association's Web site at [www.ramonavalleyvineyards.org](http://www.ramonavalleyvineyards.org). Wines may be made by either amateur or commercial wine makers, and those vintners need not be located in the AVA.

The panel of judges reads like a Who's Who of wine industry leaders in the San Diego and Riverside areas. Aside from Eisenman, judges were Mike Menghini of Menghini Winery in Julian; John Alongé, proprietor of the San Diego Wine & Culinary Center; and Gus Vizgirda, wine maker at Maurice Car'rie Winery in Temecula. Also judging were Pete Anderson, wine grape grower and Dominic "Dick" Colangelo whose 44-year wine career has spanned all levels of the wine industry. Both Pete and Dick are also Associate Professors at Mira Costa College's Horticulture Department, which offers a Certificate program in Wine Technology. The judging format was double blind to insure the judges did not know whose wine they were tasting, and they were urged to provide confidential comments or suggestions on each wine.

Prior to the announcement of the medal winners, wines were sampled, and dinner, which was organized by event hostess and Sizzler of Ramona co-owner Joyce Kohorst, was served. Conversations at each table ranged from how to start grape vine cuttings to removing bees from barn owl boxes. Another benefit of the evening was that grape growers came face-to-face with wine-making grape buyers, sales were made and potential harvest dates discussed.

The main event, of course, was the award of medals, which sported the new RVVA logo designed by graphic artist Beth Edwards, co-owner of Edwards Vineyard & Cellars. The judging of local wines was based on a modified version of the University of California Davis scoring system.

Don Kohorst of Pyramid Vineyard, who started the competition three years ago, said, "I felt we needed to honor Lum, who has given so much to our local industry, but a by-product of the competition has been the improvement in the quality of wines."

Indeed, in the three-year history of the event, gold medals were handed out for the first time. Bill Schweitzer, past president of the Ramona Valley Vineyard Association, stated, "We are honored to recognize the people who have produced great wines from Ramona Valley grapes."

The first gold medal was presented to Edwards Vineyard & Cellars for their 2004 Estate Syrah. Larry Escalona, a rookie wine maker, took home a gold medal for his 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon made from Adobe Vineyards grapes.

Pamo Valley Winery collected two gold medals, one for their 2006 Estate Syrah and another for a Syrah blend called "Seduction," made from grapes from both Pyramid and Pacciolo vineyards.

To order these fine wines, find out more about the wine and grape industry in Ramona, join wine clubs, find out where to taste the wines when most wineries don't have a tasting room, or to buy local wines, go to [www.ramonavalleyvineyards.org](http://www.ramonavalleyvineyards.org) and follow the links.