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BEST IN SHOW: SCHUYLKILL COUNTY VIDAL BLANC TAKES HOME TOP HONORS IN ANNUAL PENNSYLVANIA WINE AWARDS *Lower Susquehanna region wineries grab 18 medals, including 2 golds*

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (March 23, 2009) — The Vidal Blanc grape is a hybrid bred for its winter hardiness, so it's no surprise that Schuylkill County's 2008 Benigna's Creek Sunshine Vidal outshone 361 other Pennsylvania wines to win Best in Show honors at the Pennsylvania Winery Association's (PWA) annual Pennsylvania Wine Competition in State College, Pa.

The Lower Susquehanna wine region took home 18 medals, including two golds. Nissley Vineyards of Bainbridge, Pa., in Lancaster County led the region with nine medals, including a gold medal for its 2007 Niagara white wine. Nissley Vineyards, with nine medals, was tied for the most wins in the state.

"The diversity of wines in this year's competition was what impressed me the most. We saw outstanding Merlots, Chardonnays, Rieslings and Cabernet Francs from all regions of the state," said PWA President Bob Mazza. "It's proof that no matter what your taste in wine is, chances are there's a winery in Pennsylvania that's not only making it, but making it well."

Benigna's Creek and its winning white wine faced strong competition from Flickerwood Wine Cellars in Kane, Pa., (McKean County), whose 2006 Flickerberry Dew was named the state's best fruit wine. Best red wine honors went to a 2007 Greendance Barbera from Greendance, The Winery at Sand Hill, in Mount Pleasant, Pa., (Westmoreland County). It was the second Best in Show win in the last four years for Benigna's Creek, whose 2005 Grandview White also nabbed top honors in the 2006 competition.*

The 362 wines entered for consideration were judged by Amenti Del Vino, a Mystic, CT-based regional wine society, on February 8 in Cromwell, CT.

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Pennsylvania is the nation's eighth largest wine producer, with approximately **NUMBER** gallons produced in 2008 by more than 130 wineries throughout the state. In 2008, wine sales and winery tourism contributed \$**NUMBER** million to Pennsylvania's economy, a number expected to rise in 2009 as Pennsylvanians and residents in neighboring states opt for vacations closer to home.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For a complete list of award-winning wines or interviews with winery operators in your region, please contact Jennifer Eckinger at 717-234-1844 or info@pennsylvaniawine.com.

The Pennsylvania Winery Association (PWA) is a non-profit agricultural trade association that represents more than 90 of the state's wineries. For more information about the PWA and each of Pennsylvania's wineries visit pennsylvaniawine.com. The website offers information about statewide festivals and events, award-winning wines and links directly to winery web pages.

* **CORRECTION NOTE:** Benigna's Creek 2005 Strawberry also nabbed the Double Gold for "Best Overall Fruit Wine" in the 2006 competition.