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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture

### **B.C. wine and food ambassadors at your table**

VICTORIA – Restaurant servers and retail staff throughout B.C. are using the skills from B.C. Wine Institute-led training to help diners pair the right BC VQA wine with local meals, through \$50,000 from the B.C. government’s Buy Local program.

Servers completing the BC Wine Institute’s specialized ambassador program receive training and knowledge of BC VQA wines, varietal characteristics, the wine regions of British Columbia and wine and food pairing. Certified sommeliers are delivering two levels of ambassador training, one providing the basics of wine serving and pairing, and a second advanced level emphasizing the attributes and differentiation of BC VQA wines, and more detailed B.C. food pairing recommendations.

B.C. wine and food ambassadors will be better equipped to make BC VQA wine recommendations and sales to consumers. The BC Wine Institute is hosting ambassador training sessions in the Okanagan Valley, Thompson Valley, Lower Mainland, Kootenays and Northern B.C. for both restaurant servers and retail workers. Notable restaurants participating in the program include JOEY, Chambar, CinCin, Edible Canada, Hawksworth, Italian Kitchen, L’abattoir and Tap & Barrel.

The Buy Local program offers successful applicants matching funds up to \$100,000 to launch or expand local food marketing campaigns as part of a \$2-million B.C. government effort to promote B.C. foods.

Building the local market for B.C. foods is a key commitment of government’s Agrifoods Strategy, a component of the BC Jobs Plan, to lead the agrifoods sector growth into a \$14-billion-a-year industry by 2017.

#### **Quotes:**

#### **Minister of State for Tourism and Small Business Naomi Yamamoto on behalf of Agriculture Minister Pat Pimm –**

“B.C. produces such a wide range of high-quality wines and foods, getting advice and tips about the perfect pairing can really add to the enjoyment of the meal. This project will help diners with those choices, and spread the word about B.C.’s great tasting products.”

## **British Columbia Wine Institute president and CEO Miles Prodan –**

“We are thrilled to bring the BC Wine Ambassador program to our restaurant and retail partners across the province. Mainstream wine education programs provide very little content on the Wines of British Columbia and local pairings, so we are excited to be able to share our abundance of local knowledge to promote a truly local farm-to-table experience.”

“By providing attendees with in-depth information about B.C.’s wine regions, BC VQA wines and local food pairings, we anticipate that the overall program will help generate awareness of our vast industry and provide economic and social benefits to all local B.C. producers, restaurants and wineries, including homegrown BC VQA wines.”

## **Wine buyer/beverage purchasing manager for JOEY Restaurant Group Jessica Bryans –**

“I can't say enough about the value this program brought to our staff at The Wine Room, JOEY Bentall One and BottleJockey. Regardless of the level of knowledge going in, in only a few hours, each of our staff came away with a greater understanding and appreciation of the Wines of British Columbia. The sommelier/educator's knowledge and enthusiasm is contagious and I would highly recommend this program to anyone working in any capacity of B.C.'s wine industry.”

### **Quick Facts:**

- More than 70 different grape varieties are produced in British Columbia. The top ten grape varieties include: Pinot Gris, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah (Shiraz) and Cabernet Franc.
- The B.C. wine industry's \$2 billion economic impact is a significant driver to the provincial economy. For every bottle of wine produced in B.C., there is \$42 of economic impact generated.
- B.C. VQA-designated wines are guaranteed to be made with 100 per cent B.C. grapes.
- The provincial government's Buy Local program is administered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C.

### **Learn More:**

- B.C. Buy Local program: <http://www.gov.bc.ca/agri/buylocal.html>
- Wines of British Columbia: <http://www.winebc.com>
- Keep up to date on the latest in B.C. foods and beverages: <https://www.facebook.com/FoodsBC>

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