

The Stodart Trophy

Kate Stodart, daughter of Toby and Kay Stodart, shares the history of the Stodart Trophy and where her family's love of wine began.

In the 1960s, Brisbane was considered a country town. It didn't have the sophistication of its southern counterparts and the young up and coming people struggled to find the finer things in life, like a meal which was a bit more adventurous than meat and three veg or wine rather than beer.

Not daunted by this lack of fine dining and wine establishments, some Brisbanites established their own food and wine clubs to explore new and emerging food styles and wines. These clubs enabled them to explore a wider range of culinary and alcoholic beverages and create happy marriages between the two.

Toby Stodart was a Brisbane businessman, as well as the Honorary Swedish Consul and a contributor to his community through official positions with the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade (now known as the Queensland Ambulance Service) and RACQ. He and his wife Kay were also busy raising a brood of six children. Kay had a strong interest in good food, wine and entertaining and Toby's role within the community meant that there was a flow of people (both local and international) through the house to be wined and dined. All the comings and goings enabled Kay to experiment with recipes and improve her culinary skills and allowed Toby and Kay's wine knowledge to progress.

As part of the food and wine journey, family legend goes that Kay was experimenting with a recipe which required a small amount of wine. Kay rang Toby and asked him to pick up some wine on the way home. Toby arrived home with a flagon of wine in which only a tiny amount was used in the cooking. The question was asked, "What do we do with the rest of it?" Drink it was the joint decision, which they did, found it to their liking and so their interest in wine began.

As part of the busy social scene in the 1960s, memorable wine tastings were convened by the late Len Evans and it was at one of these gatherings that Len had a discussion with Toby and Kay about the lack of wine awards presented to encourage the fledgling industry.

In 1970 Kay and Toby established the Stodart Trophy for the best one year old dry red table wine to be awarded at the Royal Queensland Wine Show; and the trophy has been awarded continuously since then. Toby and Kay took great pleasure in providing this award and in the later years, their children were encouraged to attend the prize ceremony to ensure the growing importance of the trophy was realised by the next generation.

Perhaps it was one of the Stodart Trophy winning wine makers who best provided the understanding of the importance of the award by stating that it was "...a trophy for winemakers".

The Stodart Family have a very strong desire to continue Toby and Kay's legacy and take great pleasure that in recent years the trophy has been presented by one of their grandchildren ensuring that the Stodart Trophy will endure. The Stodart Trophy will be awarded at the 2014 Royal Queensland Food and Wine Show.