

Tipple topples rivals

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GRIFFITH'S oldest winery and a boutique winery from Leeton were the headline acts at Friday night's Riverina Wine Show and International Sweet Wine Challenge presentation dinner.

McWilliam's Wines waltzed away with the most successful exhibitor crown for the second straight year while Leeton's Lillypilly Estate claimed the prestigious 2008 International Sweet Wine of the Year title.

Other local wineries to share among the 20 trophies were Westend Estate with three trophies and Casella Wines and De Bortoli, both with one.

But it was the effort of Lillypilly's 2002 Noble Blend to win top international sweet wine for the second successive year which was the talk of the show.

"Lillypilly would only crush a couple of hundred tonnes a year, compared to a Casella which crushes nearly 200,000," show manager Stuart McGrath-Kerr said.

"Sweet wines can be very fiddly and Robert Fiumara is particularly good with them.

"2002 was an excellent year and he had an enormous production and took a bold gamble by putting it under a screw cap.

"It really was cutting edge at the time but it's paid off in spades and has kept the wine fresh and appealing."

The wine beat a field of 97, including 19 overseas entries.

Chief judge of sweet wine challenge Huon Hooke lauded the overall quality of entries, with 63 medals handed out overall, ten of them gold.



WINNERS TOAST: Representatives from all the winning wineries toast to their success at Friday night's Riverina Wine Show and International Sweet Wine Challenge. Joining in the celebrations are (from left) show manager Stuart McGrath-Kerr, Russell Cody, Stephen Cook, Julie Mortlock, Bryan Currie, Randy Herron, Robert Fiumara and Riverina winemakers president Les Worland.