

■ Summerland winery's unique name, tasty product catch public's attention at People's Choice Awards

By J.P. SQUIRE
The Okanagan Sunday

Dirty Laundry proved to be a winner during the 21st annual People's Choice Awards at the Coast Capri Hotel Friday night.

Dirty Laundry Vineyards of Summerland took first place in the Chardonnay category with its 2004 vintage and second place in the Gewurztraminer category with its 2004 Madam's Vines Gewurztraminer.

The other multiple award winner was St. Hubertus and Oak Bay Estate Winery of Kelowna, which took first place in the Pinot Blanc category with its 2004 Vintner's Reserve Pinot Blanc and first in Gewurztraminer with its 2004 Oak Bay Grand Reserve Gewurztraminer.

Dirty Laundry Vineyards was a bit of a mystery for most guests since it isn't listed in the Okanagan Fall Wine Festival 2005 event booklet as a participating winery, it's not on the guide's Okanagan Valley map showing

winery locations, and no events are listed for it.

Owners Ron and Cher Watkins decided to air their new Dirty Laundry name at the last minute.

"We'd watch people stumble when saying Scherzinger (Vineyards). We were so late deciding that we haven't had time to finish the website," said Cher on Saturday.

"We can't believe the difference the name makes. It's a madhouse here today. We always love it when we win awards at the People's Choice; we've won something every year since 2002. It's a great feeling when people in the ballroom love your wine and a bonus to have a little award attached to it. It always helps."

As well, chef Rob Feenie of the upscale Lumiere Restaurant in Vancouver gave rave reviews to Dirty Laundry wines in a Lower Mainland newspaper this week, she noted.

The name came from marketing expert Bernie Hadley-Beauregard, who was responsible for the names of Blasted Church Vineyards and Therapy Vineyards.

The Dirty Laundry name has a historical relevance dating back to the late 1800s-early 1900s, when downtown Summerland was located on the waterfront and steamboats and paddle wheelers plied Okanagan Lake.

"It's a real cute story about a little Chinese man who apparently ran away from a

CP Rail construction project near Enderby and established Summerland's first laundry with the laundry on the first floor and a gambling den and brothel on the second floor," said Cher.

"It's Summerland's little bit of dirty laundry, hidden until we dug it up. And we have the Kettle Valley Railway nearby, so there's a rail connection."

Other award winners chosen by the 600 guests at the sold-out People's Choice event were:

■ Chardonnay: second place, Orofino Vineyards 2004 Canadian Oaked Chardonnay.

■ Pinot Blanc: second, Gray Monk Estate Winery 2004 Pinot Blanc.

■ Riesling: first, Lang Vineyards 2004 Farm Reserve Riesling; second, Sonoran Estate Winery 2004 Riesling.

■ Merlot: first, CedarCreek Estate Winery 2003 Estate Select Merlot; second, Summerhill Pyramid Winery 2002 Merlot.

■ Cabernet Sauvignon /Cabernet Merlot: first, Deep Creek Wine Estate and Hainle Vineyards 2001 Deep Creek Cabernet Sauvignon; second, Sumac Ridge Estate Winery 2002 Meritage Black Sage.

■ Pinot Noir: first, Quails Gate Estate Winery 2003 Family Reserve Pinot Noir; second, Hawthorne Mountain 2003 See Ya Later Ranch Pinot Noir.