

# ASI MAGAZINE

JULY 2022  
ISSUE #3



## SOMMELLERIE IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE



**ROBERT JOSEPH, CHEF ANA ROŠ,**  
**NATALIE VILINSKAYA: Women, War,**  
**Sommellerie, and a Gastronomic Revolution**



**HIGGO JACOBS,**  
**MICHÈLE CHANTÔME:**  
**Becoming a member of ASI**



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# ASI MAGAZINE

JULY 2022 | ISSUE #3

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# Welcome!



## Bringing Sommellerie to the World

As we have recently witnessed the world is constantly evolving. Never more so than in Eastern and Central Europe, where we have seen the both the worst and best of life. Indeed, Central and Eastern Europe has been evolving dramatically since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and subsequent decline of communism a little over three decades ago. In that time a wealth of nations has asserted themselves, developed strong economies, and in doing so welcomed a rise in gastronomic offerings, wine culture and sommellerie.

While politics and economics have played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of sommellerie in Eastern and Central Europe, we have also witnessed new economies emerge in Africa. Here, in a continent not devoid of its own political upheaval, there are burgeoning economies, bringing with them new luxurious restaurants and resorts, and world travellers accustomed to having the best of food, wine, and service. As Africa develops its gastronomic offerings, we as the ASI family are here to support them develop sommellerie. We, of course, already have Morocco, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mauritius as ASI members, but we also look forward to the day where we can welcome new associations from the African continent to our ASI family. Mikael Rodriguez and Spencer Fondaumiere, presidents of the Association des Sommeliers du Maroc (the Sommeliers Association of Morocco) and South African

Sommeliers Association share their thoughts on the challenges and opportunities of sommellerie in Africa. Keeping in this spirit, we asked ASI ByLaws Committee Director Higgo Jacobs and ASI Ambassador and vice-president Africa & the Middle East, Michèle Aström Chantôme, to discuss the process of becoming a member of ASI and the benefits that come with it.

In this edition of ASI Magazine, our guest editors Robert Joseph, Chef Ana Roš of Slovenia's celebrated Hiša Franko restaurant, along with entrepreneur and Vice-president of the Ukrainian Sommelier Association Natalie Vilinskaya share their thoughts on the evolution of sommellerie in Eastern and Central Europe. We will additionally place a spotlight on some of the unique wine regions and countries, such as Moldova, that have emerged, or in many cases re-emerged as important members of our global wine industry.

Finally, as ASI continues to build on its promise of new educational opportunities, we are pleased to share news about ASI Bootcamp in Malaysia, and our ASI Tutorials, with a step-by-step explanation of the key elements of required for a blind wine evaluation.

I encourage you to take the time to read this edition of ASI Magazine, share it with your friends and fellow sommeliers, and think about how you can support the development of sommellerie where you live and throughout the world.

Cheers  
*William Wouters,*  
*President Association de la*  
*Sommellerie Internationale*

welcome

ASI President William Wouters

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# WINES ON A MISSION

Photos: Oliver Holms

# California Wine's *Eureka!* London Impresses UK Trade & Wine Consumers

**California Wines introduced the U.K. wine trade and consumers to *Eureka!* last month in London — a sensory discovery of California's extraordinary viticulture, winemaking, and sustainable practices.**

The new approach is an exciting and innovative way to present the wines of the Golden State and go deeper into the roots of what makes California an interesting and progressive place to grow and make wines today. The three-day experience was highlighted by the Virtual Vineyard — a wine seminar led by Master Sommelier Will Costello featuring video graphics projected onto a curved 60-foot LED screen. The series of videos enabled viewers to virtually experience the collision of tectonic plates, formation of mountain ranges and dive below the surface of the Pacific Ocean. The seminar included a line-up of eight wines from different producers in different regions that highlighted specific characteristics such as the coastline, wind gaps, and mountain ranges.

More than **200 wines** were presented to the trade by a team of local sommeliers and importers. In addition, the Wall of Sustainable Wine featured an impressive 32-foot/10-meter wall lined with California wines from certified sustainable, organic or biodynamic vineyards and wineries. A team of falconers in the "Wines on a Mission" section discussed the role of birds of prey in sustainable California viticulture while attendees tasted certified sustainable wines in the adjacent self-pour area.



The indoor/outdoor space was transformed into a slice of the Golden State through monumental 20-foot-tall images of California, including a map of the state's wine regions and a timeline of California's environmental leadership. An outdoor Sensory Garden hosted by Jackson Family Wines tied flavors and aromas back to wine varieties. **Capstone California**, the online certification course for wine professionals provided live demonstrations to the trade and offered complimentary access to Level 1 and Level 2 certification modules.

For more information, contact [info@eurekacaliforniawines.com](mailto:info@eurekacaliforniawines.com).

To learn more about California wines, visit [DiscoverCaliforniaWines](https://www.discovercaliforniawines.com).



# Women, War, Sommellerie, and a Gastronomic Revolution:

A Conversation With ...

**Robert Joseph interviews Ukraine's Nathalie Vilinskaya and acclaimed Slovenian Chef, Restaurateur Ana Roš**



**Robert Joseph is an acclaimed British wine scribe, wine producer and consultant. Having consulted with wine marketing boards in countries such as Georgia and Moldova, amongst other clients, he is well-versed in the wine industries of Central, Eastern and Northern Europe. His Le Grand Noir, a wine brand that harmonizes New World philosophies with Old World (Southern French) terroir, is distributed in 60 countries, with the Baltic countries representing a key, and successful market.**

Of the Le Grand Noir's success in the Baltics and Eastern Europe, he says "I like to think our success in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is partly because we hit the spot between French and New World style: accessible style without the 'oakiness,' higher alcohol and concentration that is often (increasingly unfairly) associated with Australia and California, for example, and partly because these are countries with a tremendous openness to discovering new food and wine. Our success in Poland and the Czech Republic may be linked to a perception of our offering value for money. I'm not really sure. I'm just delighted to see people in those countries enjoying a taste of our glorious corner of France." While the brand originally met with skepticism from his Southern French counterparts, Le Grand Noir (black sheep) has been a booming success. Le Grand Noir has been served by the glass in Gordon Ramsay's Savoy Grill and the Mandarin Oriental in London, and can be found across the globe, from Australia to Vietnam.

Joseph's own experience, from both the business development, marketing, and sales of his own brand in Eastern and Central Europe gives him

Women, War, Sommellerie and a Gastronomic Revolution



particularly keen insights. Perhaps it is the naivety of much of the world to try and group so many nations into a single pot or, using a wine analogy, to think that the wine culture of Central and Eastern Europe could be the result of a singular terroir as opposed to the complex encépagement of individual cultures, economies and historical influences each countries offers. Joseph says "I think it is as dangerous to lump these countries together as it would be to do that to Spain, Italy, France and Germany. Georgian cuisine has far more in common with Turkish and Greek than with Polish cooking, for example. What we do know, however, is that all these countries that were on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain have had to develop concepts of food and wine service over the last three decades that were almost unknown under the Soviet system. Another link that binds wine producing nations in this area has been the need to create a quality image for themselves ... with the exception of Tokaji ... But now, with every year, I am not only seeing more great wine from these countries, but also more recognition for it."

Joseph believes the comparative, and variation in, success of these countries can be attributed to a number of factors include the role membership in the EU has played, financial success and a rising middle glass in places such as Poland and the Baltics, tourism (Joseph points to Croatia as an example) but also suggests smaller nations including Moldova have had their share of success in developing wine

tourism, albeit on a smaller scale and appealing to a different market. Other contributors to success have been reestablishing historic connections (such as Slovenia and Eastern Italy) and revitalizing deep cultural winemaking roots as is the case of Georgia, although that has not been a guarantee of success as Joseph says "I'm not sure Bulgaria has benefitted as much as it might have liked and expected from its Roman viticultural roots."

Now with the war in Ukraine an undesired, tragic spotlight has been placed on Eastern Europe. While the situation is devastating, it could be argued it has shone a light on the region. Joseph says "I'd hesitate to conflate the two things, but there is no question that more professional tasters visited the Ukrainian stand at Prowein and the London Wine Fair than might have done a year earlier, and that the news coverage of the last few months has brought a number of Central and Eastern European countries to international attention. Apart from Ukraine, Poland — which now has an embryonic wine industry of its own, by the way — has won global plaudits for its readiness to welcome refugees, and Moldova, whose existence barely registered for most people outside the region in the past has also been described as the 'small country with the big heart' thanks to the fact that it has found more homes for desperate Ukrainians per capita than any other country ... I hope and believe this kind of coverage will have a long-term effect for the region as a whole."

**A Conversation With ...**

*Women, War, Sommellerie and a Gastronomic Revolution*



**Natalie Vilinskaya** Photo: Contributed



**Ana Roš** Photo: Suzan Gabrijan

A Conversation With ...

Women, War, Sommelierie and a Gastronomic Revolution

**ASI asked Robert to interview two influential women on their views of the current state of gastronomy in their countries. Natalie Vilinskaya is a Ukrainian sommelier and entrepreneur. Ana Roš is the celebrated chef, restaurateur, and owner of Hiša Franko, Slovenia's most acclaimed restaurant, about the past, present and future of wine, sommelierie and gastronomy in their respective countries.**

**Robert Joseph (RJ):** Looking back (and hopefully forward) what is the wine scene like in Ukraine?

**Natalie Vilinskaya (NV):** Since February 24<sup>th</sup> my and the life of many Ukrainian wine professionals have changed, both personally, and professionally. Many sommeliers have had to exchange their corkscrews for weapons, and others have had to leave the country to save their children. The result is that wine life in Ukraine has essentially stopped. Ukraine (pre-war) is home to some 500 wineries (with and without licenses), mostly in Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odessa and Zakarpatia, although other regions are developing wine industries. Most of that wine production is in southern Ukraine which has stopped production completely because of the war, in particular in the regions of Kherson and Mykolaiv that are now under the control of the Russian military. In Western Ukraine, in regions such as Bessarabia and Odessa, work in the vineyards is in full swing, even during shelling. Of course, it is very difficult to make wine when shells are flying into the vineyards or when the winemaking equipment is damaged by missile fire.

Of the potential of Ukraine's wine industry, we should remember Ukrainian winemaking isn't new. There is a thousand-year history of making wine here. Half a century ago, Ukraine was among the top ten wine-producing countries in the world.

Today, only about 20 per cent of the vineyard land remains. In Ukraine, prior to the war, the wine market was developing well, and with the interest in the world market for new producing countries, Ukraine has potential to regain market share.

**RJ:** What links have there been between Ukrainian food and wine professionals and their counterparts elsewhere?

**NV:** Taking the current situation in the country out of the equation, the gastronomic scene is very diverse. Over the past few years, many establishments have been opened, showcasing a breadth of wine and food selections. Enogastronomic evenings were held, and chefs and sommeliers worked in tandem. While we have seen a rise in gastronomic culture as a whole, we have also seen increased demand for local wines and local food specialties. This has all been supported by a rise in wine festivals such as Odessa Wine Week, The Glass by Silpo, Kyiv Food and Wine, Ukrainian Wines Festival, Kyiv Wine by Goodwine, Wine & Spirits. All these events have gathered a large number of sommeliers from Ukraine, along with winemakers, chefs and other professionals in our industry. Despite the war, this year we have been able to visit international fairs such as Prowein and the London Wine Fair, introducing Ukrainian wines to wine professionals from around the world.

This gives me hope, that we will be able to further develop Ukrainian winemaking and acquaint the world with our wines.

**RJ:** Ukraine also has a rich history of spirits, and you happen to own a bartending school. Do you see bartending and sommelierie as complementary fields?

**NV:** Speaking of my project (MrBar). It was initially a school only for bartenders. They studied spirits, and mixology. Over the past few years we have completely changed our concept. Now we also have a professional wine course, a course on sparkling wines and a wine course specifically designed for bartenders. Personally, I think that the sommelier must know what goes into a Negroni Sbagliato cocktail or into a Daiquiri, for example, and the bartender should be able to come out from behind the bar and recommend a wine. The bartender and sommelier are two key positions in a restaurant. With proper coordination, they can collectively increase the average beverage check by at least 30 per cent.

**RJ:** Slovenia's wine producers have arguably been the most successful of the former Soviet communist states. How much of that do you (Ana) think this reflects the close relationship with your neighbours in Italy?

**Ana Roš (AR):** It's very difficult to say who influenced who, because the most famous white wine producing area in Italy, or one of the most famous ones, is of course Collio and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Not a lot of people know that Collio is cut in two parts by the border. So there is Goriška brda on one side, and there is Collio on the other side. And I think that everybody knows that most of the wine producers in Italy's Collio region, the famous ones, are actually Slovenians, and, in fact, they're very proud Slovenians. So I wouldn't say that we are influenced by Italian wine producers, as I cannot say that Slovenians influenced the Italian wine producers. I would say the political border doesn't matter. When I was a kid, I went harvesting in brda and the vineyards crossed political borders. There were no policemen who would stop a farmer passing from Italy to Slovenia, or vice versa. We have our common traditions and a common belief; that is producing an amazing wine.

**RJ:** We could not talk about Slovenia without raising the question of natural wines, orange wines and pét-nats. Do you see the emergence of these styles having any direct influence on the kinds of dishes you are preparing?

**AR:** Well, I have been married to sommelier Valter Kramar, for more than 20 years. When we began dating, he was already drinking just orange and biodynamic wines. At that time, orange and biodynamic were wild wines, sometimes made with mistakes, and sometimes not even drinkable.

Today, rarely do you drink wine with faults because they won't survive in the market.

These are wines that you can really compare to things that you find in the nature, like fruits ... Of course, since my food is so focused on nature, we serve a lot of these wines. They are also part of the tradition of Slovenia, which I emphasize in all my wine pairings. But, if someone wants to drink conventional wine at our restaurant there is a very rich wine list. We invested a lot of money this year to enlarge the list, especially that part, but the wine pairings, of course, remain according to our philosophy. Working so closely with small scale producers, farmers, foragers, there is a natural symbiosis with something that is so close to the nature as biodynamic wines are. I also want to say that despite this we (Hiša Franko) are far from being one of those hipster bistros in London or Paris. We have white tablecloths, and candles in the lobby. Hiša Franko is a serious, fine dining restaurant. We are 45 people taking care of every single detail we are doing. We are a fine dining place with a philosophy of being close to the nature.

**RJ:** Do you think that some of these new wave wines, especially orange amber, are now part of the mainstream, or are they still marginal and only found in the world of fine dining and trendy, metropolitan wine bars?

**AR:** That is a fun question because fine dining places often fear them. There is a lot of classic — I'm talking about 2 and 3-star Michelin — restaurants, that have a lot of very traditional guests that, who feel because they pay a lot, they don't want or need to be challenged too much.

I will never forget my visit to one of my favourite restaurants in Paris, a 3-star Michelin, where the sommelier was blown away that I was there. He just wanted to talk about Slovenian biodynamic wines and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then we looked at the wine list and there were none. I asked him, "all you wanted to talk about was orange and biodynamic wines. Why don't you have them on your list?" His response was "I cannot afford to because we may lose a star because of that decision."

This is going in the wrong direction. I will always respect a classical wine drinker and we should not make war between philosophies because no one is absolutely right. But I know I just like drinking wine, and the knowledge that I am drinking a healthy wine.



**RJ:** Historically, sommeliers were taught that there was a correct wine for a particular dish. Do you think modern restaurant diners are looking for the kind of advice as much as previous generations?

**AR:** Well, I think the sommeliers have a lot of tasks today, because more and more people are very knowledgeable about things. In the case of Hiša Franko we have three sommeliers. We might even have four soon. They are not there because, I would like to count how many people I have but because there is so much work to tell about the story of wine. There needs to be an explanation. As the chef wants their food to be understood, the sommelier should want their wine philosophy to be understood, especially when they are recommending a wine which is not mainstream, as some natural and organic wines are. Being honest. We have a lot of German, and Austrian guests coming to our restaurant. A lot of them simply like fresh light wines. And of course, when you give them something a little bit macerated or a little bit orange, there is a shock, so you need a sommelier to tell the story.

This young generation of service staff are going to be our future and hopefully they are ready as soon as possible, because the guest today needs a lot more attention. The guest today needs a knowledgeable person with whom to talk to. The guest needs passion, and that passion cannot just be in the kitchen. The passion in the front of the house, and in the wine service, must be the same as in the kitchen. Here at Hiša Franko we have worked a lot in the past two years on developing the knowledge of the front of the house. And believe me, it is an exhausting story. We were taking in more and more staff, more sommeliers, more people interested in fermentation, more people interested in coffee, water, whatever. And then, when you have this treasure of passionate people, you really need to take care of them.

As the chef who is going out to eat and try different restaurants, or maybe go to the markets, to the farms, to forage, to learn every day more, this is the same way it should be for the front of the house and sommeliers. Go to producers. Go to crazy cocktail bars. Try to understand where trends are going, not just in the metropolitan areas, but also on the countryside.

# Leading Women of Gastronomy

Both Vilinskaya and Roš. are also leading women of gastronomy. Vilinskaya says “every year year more and more women in the Ukraine are becoming sommeliers, winemakers, and wine experts of large wine trading companies. From my experience, I can say that we as women have been very open to learning from colleagues from other countries, talking about our experiences and exchanging information.” Of the need for gender equality Ros says, “I’m fighting for it because I think that when you do your work well, your gender doesn’t matter. Of course, for women, it’s more difficult. We are mothers. We are housewives. We are housekeepers. We are really

multitasking the way men rarely can do it. We are maybe even less supported in what we do, but that said, I don’t think I would pick a wine because it’s produced by a woman, or I would go to the restaurant because it’s run by a woman. I would, to be honest buy that wine because it’s amazing. And then of course I’m happy if it is a woman who made it, and I will go to the restaurant because that chef is incredible. And if that chef is a woman, I’m proud. To be honest, I’m not willing to spend a lot of money on eating or spending time in a restaurant just because there is a girl cooking. That girl needs to be an amazing chef, and that is the best fight for the gender.”



A Conversation With ...

Women, War, Sommelierie and a Gastronomic Revolution



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# THE ASI FAMILY IS STILL GROWING

## WITH HIGGO JACOBS AND MICHÈLE ASTRÖM CHANTÔME

ASI counts 63 member countries and is set to welcome more at the next General Assembly, to be held this July in Japan. ASI's quest to increase membership is rooted in a desire to expand sommellerie to all corners of the globe, a desire to create community, support educational development and promote the importance of the sommelier position to the global hospitality and retail industries. To understand the process of becoming an ASI member association and what a member association can expect from ASI, we asked Higgo Jacobs, Director ASI ByLaws Committee, and Michèle Aström Chantôme, ASI Vice-president for Africa & Middle East and ASI Ambassador.

**Higgo Jacobs'** own journey in ASI began with the same passion that makes him the ideal person to lead the ASI ByLaws Committee. Although Jacobs studied and qualified to become a lawyer, the wine industry drew him into a life of sommellerie. As Jacobs says "I don't see myself as a legal person. I am wine lover." In 2010 Jacobs, along with others representing mostly internationally trained and qualified sommeliers working in Cape Town and a few in Johannesburg, formed the South African Sommelier Association (SASA). Higgo explains "we wanted to formalize our profession. At the time, even winery owners and agents didn't know what a sommelier was. We needed to come together to create a platform for networking amongst the sommeliers of South Africa." Five years later, they began their own journey towards ASI member association status.

**Michèle Aström Chantôme**, needs little introduction to the ASI community. Chantôme simultaneously holds the titles of Vice-president for Africa & Middle East and ASI Ambassador. Chantôme has been working with ASI since the 1980s, working with members of the ASI team to develop sommellerie in Europe and elsewhere. In the context of her public relations activities, she has created and organized numerous sommelier contests and encouraged the creation of many sommelier associations. Of her ambassador role with the ASI "my role as 'godmother', with its protective guide aspect, suited me very well and I consider that my role as ambassador follows quite naturally from it. An ambassador must not only promote the organization he/she represents in its best light. He/she must also participate in perfecting the image of the organization by working closely with its president, for whom he/she is a sort of spokesperson, and the marketing committee. It is in fact a job of public relations ... And it is a field I have known well for many years!"



Michèle Aström Chantôme  
Photo: Contributed

Our Team

The ASI Family is Still Growing

**Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI):** Why should a sommelier association become a member of the ASI?

**Michèle Aström Chantôme (MAC):** ASI is a framework that offers a real guarantee of seriousness and professionalism to a national sommelier association, especially since only one sommelier association can become a member of ASI in each country. It gives it weight in relation to the country's authorities and other possible sommelier groups. The ASI has been a reference in the world for more than 50 years. It should be noted that it is the only one to be recognized by the OIV (International Organisation of Vine and Wine). Numerous opportunities are offered to our 63 members who want to help their sommeliers improve their skills. The ASI Guidelines and ASI Tutorials, the various levels of certification exams, the bootcamps, the international contests and the world contest are all means of motivation and progression. Not to mention that our champions are role models for young people who are attracted to sommellerie. But even before becoming a member of the ASI and taking advantage of these benefits, it must be emphasized that new associations benefit from the advice of our by-laws committee. It guides them on the conditions and documents required, on the legal form that must be in line with our own objectives and ethics. And this is all the more important as the laws are not the same in all countries. Thanks to Higgs Jacobs who accompanies them with efficiency and benevolence!

**ASI:** Can you describe the technical process of becoming an ASI member association?

**Higgs Jacobs (HJ):** The start of the process begins with the introduction of the potential member association. This typically happens via a member of the ASI community, a regional vice-president, and often via the encouragement of a neighbouring country's ASI member association. Case in point is Vietnam, who are applying to be an Observer Member this year. They were introduced to us by Saiko Tamura-Soga (vice-president Asia & Oceania). Marc Almert (reigning ASI Best Sommelier of the World) recently introduced us to Congo. While Congo isn't quite ready, these examples illustrate the beauty of the organization they are seeking to join. Post initial interest, it is important for the continental vice-president or sponsor country to be involved in the guidance process, as soon as possible, and during the application process, to make valuable contributions to assist the applicant association.

In terms of the process itself, the first step is always to apply for Observer Membership. Any candidature for becoming an ASI Observer Member can only be decided upon during the ASI General Assembly (GA), which takes place yearly. The candidature must be presented personally during the GA by the applicant national association. To apply, a potential member must be registered as a NPO (non-profit organization) in their country. That's something we insist on. We also ask for a copy of their by-laws, ensuring the majority of their board is made up of professional working sommeliers and ensuring only professional sommeliers have voting rights. We also want to make sure there is a democratic process for the election of their president and board members.

It's worth adding that once we receive the bylaws/constitution of the new applicant country, in either French or English, I share the documents with the rest of the ASI ByLaws Committee (Gérard Devos, Michel Hermet, Georgios Kassianos) for everyone's input. There are always things that you miss as an individual, so it is great to have the committee to lean on to point out irregularities. I then reply to the applicant pointing out the missing or problematic content and advising them on suggested edits or corrections. We have had scenarios where this is a barrier to entry, and we don't hear back again. But mostly, applicants are accommodating as they really want to join the ASI, and they vote in and apply amendments in their associations.

**ASI:** When we (ASI) internally talk about our association, we often use words like joining a family and community. Can you explain?

**MAC:** When I first became involved with ASI, I was struck by the friendly atmosphere. At the time, the small number of associations that were members were, in a way, a group of hedonists with a common curiosity and passion: the world of wine. Their objective was largely to promote the knowledge and service of wine in conjunction with gastronomy. All of this is part of “making customers happy”, the very goal of every sommelier and restaurant owner! It is, I think, this spirit of conviviality and sharing that creates an almost family-like atmosphere among all these associations representing so many different countries, speaking so many languages. One thing is certain: the message of wine, like music, is universal. It doesn't need to be translated! And it is part of the good life and even of a certain art of living ... It is a very strong link between the members of our group which favors sharing and maintains the family spirit.

**ASI:** When a member association is officially welcomed into ASI, what can it expect in terms of opportunities for its association and its members?

**MAC:** ASI makes its experts available to national associations through its various committees: Education, Exams, Sommelier Contests, Marketing, Ethics & Compliance, Diversity & Inclusion, ByLaws. All of our members can benefit from them. Only sommeliers who are affiliated with it can participate in exams, training camps and competitions. This is a huge advantage. Moreover, whether they have been in existence for a long time or have just been created, associations often need guidance and advice. That's what we're here for too! Life is not always smooth, and it is not unusual for specific problems to arise. It is also in these special cases that the help and support of the ASI family comes in handy.

**ASI:** The ASI family has grown significantly over the years. Where do you see ASI growing in the future? Are there any specific regions or countries where you see potential for growth?

**HJ:** With the coming GA we have Colombia, Vietnam, and Ecuador seeking to become Observer Members, while Kazakhstan is applying to become a full member. Specifically for the future, I see the greatest potential in the sub-Saharan (Africa).

**MAC:** The first core of ASI was purely European, I would even say Western European. Then, mainly thanks to sommeliers from France and Italy who settled abroad, but also to foreign sommeliers who came to Europe to do internships, and competitions such as the Ruinart Trophy for



Eastern and Northern Europe, associations were created in the Americas and Asia. Then in Oceania and Africa. The greatest potential for growth is currently in Africa. It is the continent of tomorrow. At the moment, we have only four sommelier associations: in Morocco, South Africa, Mauritius and Zimbabwe. As ASI ambassador and vice-president for Africa & Middle East, my goal is to make our international association known in this area and to motivate the restaurant industry by making them aware of the advantages that a sommelier brings to their establishments. Tourism, which was booming before the pandemic, is finally picking up and places are demanding quality service. This is obviously easier in wine producing countries like South Africa and Morocco where wineries can support the training of local sommeliers, but wine importers also have an important role to play. Expats (sommeliers recruited abroad) complete the catering teams and are often responsible for training a team of waiters interested in the world of wine and gastronomy. They represent an excellent relay, but these contractual workers generally stay two or three years in the country. This is not enough! It is imperative to create sustainable structures. South Africa has understood the problem and created the Sommelier Academy which offers training for sommeliers within the reach of all. However, most African countries do not even have a hotel school. And when they do exist, religion is an obstacle to the teaching of everything related to alcohol. The integration of African countries will therefore take time. We are currently studying the situation in Congo and Ivory Coast. A club of sommeliers is being studied in the Seychelles. This would be a first step towards an association. As for the Middle East, I am hopeful that Lebanon and Israel will create an association. In Israel, the first steps have just been taken. We follow their progress with Higgs Jacobs and Georgios Kassianos, their Cypriot neighbor. In the Gulf countries where only foreign sommeliers operate, we need to be very convincing. For the other continents, there is a good potential for progress in Latin American countries (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru ... ) and also in Asia & Oceania (Vietnam, India ... ). The ASI family is still growing.

Our Team	
The ASI Family is Still Growing	
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# Wine, the wall and **SOMM**

The rise of sommelier culture and gastronomy

Feature Article

Wine, the Wall and Sommelier



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## in Eastern Europe



**In 1989, when the German wall was torn down, it was a symbol of the fall of communism, and ushered in a new era of independence. At the time, the number of sommeliers in Eastern Europe could be counted on one hand. A little more than 30 years later, Eastern Europe is experiencing a renaissance of food and wine with sommeliers acting as leaders of the movement.**

While transition times have varied, as a collective the rise of local wine production, based on traditional varietals, is supporting the evolution of gastronomy and sommelierie. New, resurrected, and refurbished wine industries, often reflecting a return to winemaking traditions of past generations in conjunction with modern winemaking techniques, are at the heart of the movement. The rise in wine culture is thanks in part to developing economies, an emerging upper class, and with it sommelierie has pushed many of the previous Soviet states into leadership roles of the gastronomic movement of Eastern Europe.

Robert Joseph, guest editor of this issue of ASI Magazine, who has seen the rise via the regional success of his own wine brand Le Grand Noir, Languedoc-based varietal wines with a New World attitude, also points to wine tourism, even in countries such as Moldova, with whom he consults, as a key development in the rise of wine culture. He also points to some ambitious winery projects leading to increased overall quality of wines. Recently, the 2017 Fautor Negre, a Moldovan red wine made from a blend of Fetească Neagră and Rarău Neagră, earned the honour of being selected the best red wine at the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles. At the awards Moldova won 53 medals in total, while the Czech Republic collected 43, followed by Bulgaria with 38 and Romania with 36. In all, 12 Eastern European nations were awarded medals, signifying the rise of winemaking in the region.

**ASI asked four sommeliers to discuss the evolution of wine and gastronomic culture in their countries.**

Photo: Kelly Franz

Feature Article

Wine, the Wall and Sommelierie



Slovakia Winery  
Photo: Contributed

## SLOVAKIA: after the Velvet Revolution



Photo: Memo Photo Agency

By **BEÁTA VLNKOVÁ**

During the communist era, in Slovakia, there were only big co-operatives which produced two types of wine: white and red. It was an unfortunate reality. All the white grapes were mixed in white, and all the reds in red. At the time, when I was attending hospitably school, we were drinking red wine with Coca Cola as otherwise it was undrinkable. Following the Velvet Revolution, in 1989, a fantastic, adventurous time began. New small family wineries started, and we learned there was such a thing as a professional sommelier. The freedom gained in the wineries, which led to new varieties, new ways of wine production, also led to new styles of restaurants and bistros, and subsequently sommellerie.

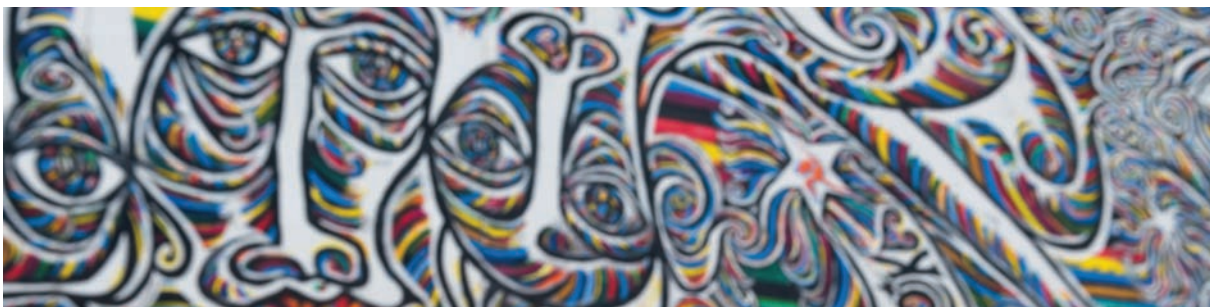
Today, a second and third generations of winemakers are developing their own small wineries. Many experiments have been done over the year. We have grown some international grape varieties, but we also seeing how a long-term vision

toward sustainable development in the vineyards is taking hold. Many winemakers are devoted to organic wine growing, and a new wave of young winemakers producing orange wines, made in kevre and concrete eggs has arrived. These wines are now being served in the best restaurants in the world. The only thing, we as sommeliers and winemakers do not appreciate is the lack of proper support from the Slovak government. There are almost no subsidies, and if there is then the procedure is too long and complicated.

In terms of the style of wines, we are benefiting from our northerly latitude. While some wine countries in the south of Europe suffer from high temperatures in summer our white wines have the ability to retain their acidity and they will enchant you by their freshness and juiciness. We have world class wines made from Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, and Pinot Blanc, but I also recommend trying new Slovak grape varieties such as Devín and Hron. We also can see good development in red wines, from Frankovka Modrá (Blaufrankisch) and Cabernet Sauvignon, that are getting are riper and more mature these days. The success of these local varieties is also a credit to our sommeliers whose wine lists are often mainly comprised of Slovak wines. We, as sommeliers, are very proud of our local wine production. There is a bright future for both sommellerie and Slovakian wine.



**Slovakia Rebela Rosé**  
Photo: Contributed

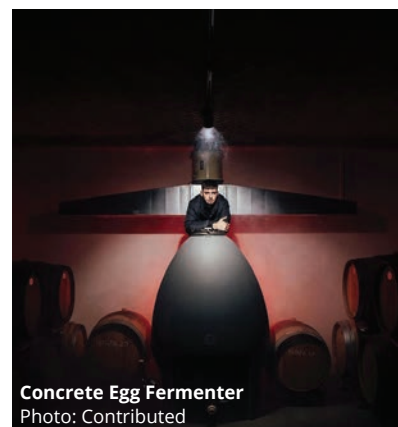


**BEÁTA'S LOCAL DRINK DISCOVERY: Rebela Rosa Rosé**

My last discovery is Rebela Rosa Rosé wine in Slobodné Vinárstvo. It is a cuvée comprised of 70 per cent Blaufrankisch and 30 per cent Cabernet Sauvignon fermented in clay amphoras, then some weeks in vats. The wine was bottled before fermentation completely stopped and not filtered. It is a wonderfully textured rosé, and one of the most exciting skin-contact wines around today. It is perfect for summer drinking. Just imagine you are drinking a refreshing glass of pomegranate juice.



**Slovakian Gastronomy**  
Photo: Contributed



**Concrete Egg Fermenter**  
Photo: Contributed

Feature Article

Wine, the Wall and Sommellerie



Romania trout with  
'Rhein Extra Impérial Brut'  
Photo: Contributed

# The State of ROMANIA'S WINE INDUSTRY



By **JULIA SCAVO**

Currently Romania is home to 8 wine-producing regions, 33 DOCs (which will become 38 PDOs under European law) and 12 PGIs, which are home to a diversity of styles and qualities. Romania ranks 5th in Europe and 10th in the world in terms of surface under the vines and has the 6th largest wine production in Europe as of the 2021 vintage with 189,000 hectare planted. Despite its large production, Romania still has an immense potential for growth as only half of this area is used for commercial purposes, the rest composed of yet un-approved plantings or unapproved grape varieties. For instance, an incredible area of 83286 hectares is planted with hybrid varieties and therefore remains unapproved.

As a country, Romania relies almost entirely on itself as a customer for its wines (Romanians drink 27 litres per capita, per annum). With a mere 5 to 6 per cent exported, and only some acceptable to good, inexpensive wines reaching a handful of clients abroad, usually through retail, 'buyers-own' brands, or bulk sales. However, 2021 was a good vintage (16 per cent increase) both in terms of production and export. Not only did production increase, but it also showed a very consistent level of quality all over the country, and is one of the top vintages over the last five years.

With the development of both the domestic and the export market, tremendous evolutions of the sector, have happened over the last couple of years. There are 541 entities approved as grape growers, wine producers or both, but half of the wineries and other facilities belong to the largest producers such as Recaş, Jidvei, Cotnari, Alexandrion Group, Beciul Domnesc, Crama Ceptura. Out of the approximately 250 registered producers or "crame" even fewer commercialize bottled wine in accordance with legal sanitary standards. As a result, despite all these developments, many local wine authorities are rather skeptical for the export situation, only estimating a maximum of 7 per cent for the 2021 production. Not only does Romania export few wines compared its capacity reported to its capacities and compared to its neighbours, but the exported wine continues to be very inexpensive

(1.5 to 2 Euro per litre), which dilutes the identity of the national Brand. That stated, it is, however, encouraging to see that exports have increased continuously since 2018.

To get to this point, the path has been marked by many challenges. After the fall of communism in December 1989, the first difficult step former proprietors had to overcome was obtaining their land back. Most people submitted requests to reinstate property deeds on their former vineyards that had been confiscated by the communists, which proved to be extremely difficult and often lasted for a decade. After the 1989 revolution, Romania unfortunately experienced a whole decade of retro-pedaling due to the unwillingness of the post-communist administration. At the time, with almost no investments made by the Romanian state, the huge former state- farms were entirely privatized giving birth to new colossus that were not ready to adapt to the new and free market economy system. Since Romania had been isolated for 50 years from the all the viti/vinicultural progress and developments happening around the world wineries mostly continued to produce wines in the 90s from the same exhausted vines and with the same old communist facilities. Only a few pioneers arrived with own funds, that decade, namely Guy de Poix (SERVE), Sergio Faleschini (Vinarte), Karl Reh (nowadays Crama Oprişor) and John Halewood (ex- Halewood Romania, currently The Iconic Estate member of Alexandrion Group).

During the 2000s, plots, equipment, and techniques improved considerably with the arrival of more private investors and EU funds (especially the SAPARD programs). Owners of the new estates uprooted and replaced the old, exhausted vineyards, planted selected clones with an adapted choice of rootstock, replaced the moldy and musty oak casks with new French and Romanian barriques or Italian wooden barrels, and changed the concrete vats to shiny, temperature controlled, stainless-steel tanks. As such, 2000 was a turning point for the Romanian wine business, even more so than 2007 when the country entered the European Union, although this did bring even more positive development in the industry.

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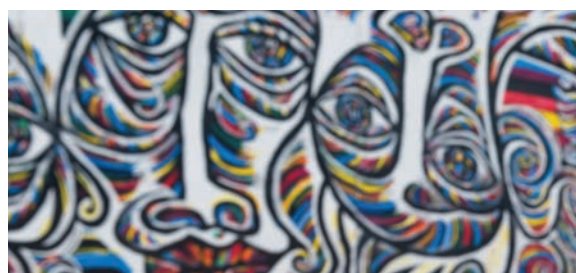


Romanian sparkling wine cellar Photo: Anca Lupusavei

Feature Article

During this period, Romania was of course helped by means of European funds and programs, but more than everything, by the strong will to bring it back the glory of yesteryears. Firstly, Romanians chose to promote international grape varieties to somehow change from the communist era. Little by little they managed to better understand the strength comes from having an amazing wealth of indigenous grape varieties, if well selected and adapted to the climate and rootstock with the best clones possible. I am very confident in the potential of our local grape varieties. As we better understand their varietal definition and capabilities to better adapt to certain terroirs, we are paving the way for introducing signature wines with a sense of the place to the export markets.

In terms of these indigenous varietals, the most planted white grape varieties are local, such as Fetească Regală and Fetească Alba with more than 12,000 ha under vine each (12216 and 1203 hectares respectively). Some point to the red Fetească Neagră as a possible Romanian flagship grape, but plantings are still diminutive with 3176,22 hectares. What is still difficult in Romania is there is still over 160 local and international grape varieties which are approved for winemaking which makes it complicated to understand the industry, as a whole. However, each producer now tries to extract the maximum potential of every variety that they label, and some really push them to be their best either as mono-varietals or in blends. There is a clear rise of premium wines made of indigenous grape varieties and the trend no longer exclusively Fetească Neagră which somehow opened the path to the premiumization of the local grapes.



**JULIA'S LOCAL DRINK  
DISCOVERY: Fetească Regală**

I really am fascinated by the Fetească Regală grape (a cross of Fetească Alba and Frâncușe) as it multifaceted and terroir sensitive. It can show a reductive, more neutral nature in the south, with fuller body and serious structure despite a moderate acidity or a semi- aromatic character in Transylvania, where the important day to night thermal shift preserves its aromas and acidity. It can offer a good sparkling wine base or compound when early picked, if matured for some time on the lees, after the second fermentation. Less aromatic versions can also be compatible with barrel and, or lees maturing, while punchier styles can stand some residual sugar. Since Fetească Regală has a high phenolic content both in the skin and in the pulp, therefore residual sugar, lees, and oak maturing can be interesting. It can age graciously and pairs well with a large range of traditional and contemporary dishes.

Wine, the Wall and Sommellerie

# Estonia's GASTRONOMIC EVOLUTION



By **KRISTJAN MARKII, ESTONIA,** 5-time winner (Best Sommelier of Estonia), President of the Estonian Sommelier Association and lecturer at the Estonian Sommelier School.

The world may not think of Estonia as a wine nation, but Estonia had its own wines and international wines back in the days of independence between 1920 and 1940. Even during the Soviet times, before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Estonian wine selections came mostly from Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, etc.

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the economy of Estonia was strongly linked and limited to goods from the Soviet Union countries and all that was regulated by Moscow and the best wines were reserved for the bosses of the communist party. That meant, during this period, wines from France, Italy and Spain were not available at our shops and restaurants. Not to mention information from western countries was not widely available, and strong restrictions on travelling made it almost impossible to visit western countries, let alone their wine regions.

That said during the Soviet era, we had one of the strongest economies of the USSR, largely a result of the Olympic games in 1980, which left a strong mark on our gastronomy and architecture. So as the Soviet Union collapsed, while had some turbulent times, with difficult economic and social issues, we recovered fast, and Western trends and work methods were applied quickly. Had the fall of communism not happened it would have been very difficult to achieve the level of gastronomy that we enjoy today. It required international contacts, travelling and learning, which was not possible for us in the conditions of communism. The strongest impact came from Finland and Sweden, as international hotel chains entered the market and tourism became one of the most important sectors of the economy. Thanks to that the education for the chefs and waitstaff became more important as well which caused a positive effect on the sector overall. Many went to practice and train at the top restaurants in Scandinavia and other countries and when they returned to Estonia, these chefs, sommeliers, and managers started new trends and a new approach to gastronomy. Different competitions, campaigns, good economic conditions, and big international events brought

attention and our gastronomy developed with them. Restaurant guides, like White Guide, TOP 50 Restaurants and Silverspoon brought public attention to this sector and kept them motivated. This year, finally, the Michelin Guide arrived in Estonia, and we got our first restaurants with a star. The development has been fast and hopefully, we will not stop.

Of course, there was a period of transition in terms of wine quality and styles. After the gain of our independence, we kept for some time the nostalgic wine trend for semi-sweet and sweet wines from ex-Soviet countries, and later from Germany, Spain, and Italy. The first wines were not very high in quality, so it was more important, at the time, for them to be affordable. But slowly, over time, internationally famous wines started to arrive from France and other wine countries and some few enthusiasts organized the first wine tastings.

In terms of what was driving the change, when the turbulent times of the 90s passed, tourism started and quickly became one of the most important sectors of the economy. Our other sectors needed more time, but when they started to develop, then they brought many international business events and all of them were looking for good food and beverages, including wine. It was rather common then, at a business dinner, for the local host to ask the guest to choose wines, with the excuse that they do not know anything about it. With the development of gastronomy, the fine wine market started to exist, and our restaurants needed new professionals, called sommeliers, who are today equally important as chefs. The Estonian Sommelier School, founded in the year 2000 by the Estonian Sommelier Association, had and still is playing a huge role in the evolution of gastronomy. As an association, we could not do it without our members, sponsors, and supporters. Today our guests, locals, and those from abroad, are trusting our sommeliers and asking for advice and recommendations thanks to our school and its graduates.

In terms of the style of wines our sommeliers are gravitating to, we have a very wide selection of wines and wine countries from all over the world represented. Today, more and more, smaller boutique wineries from both, the New and Old World are listed, as the expectations from the guests are developing and they are searching for a unique

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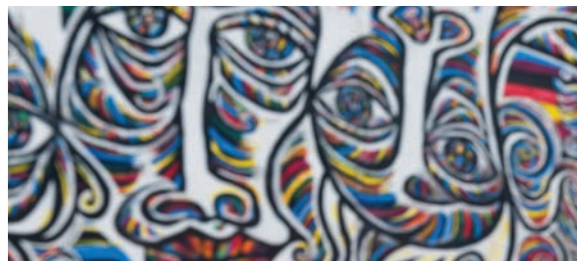
*Wine, the Wall and Sommellerie*



Estonia Gastronomy  
Photo: Karl Markus Antson



**Estonia Modern and Old**  
Photo: Contributed



## KRISTJAN'S LOCAL DRINK DISCOVERY: Vana Tallinn Elegance

Choosing just one local product to recommend is difficult. For beers, a few of my favourites are Purtse Brewery Sour Ale Bloody Mary Gose, made with tomato and spices, along with Põhjala Brewery Kosmos Northeastern IPA and A. le Coq Brewery Especial Lager. For ciders I recommend Brut Cider 36 from Jaanihanso cider farm, which is made traditionally by bottle fermentation and with extended aging. As for wine, I'd suggest a Uue-Saaluse Solaris, a dry white wine and Valgejõe Veinivilla "Eric Menved" which is made from lingonberries and offers a similar taste experience to Pinot Noir. That all said, a traditional Vana Tallinn liquor is must-have. My preference is a Vana Tallinn Elegance, as it is a little drier than usual and has more Martinique rum in the mix, which gives a spicier character to it. We have many great gins, and thanks to the quality of all sorts of local products, this list could be much longer.



**Estonia Gastronomy**  
Photo: Karl Markus Antson

and authentic experience. More and more guests and sommeliers are paying attention to biodynamic and natural wines. In

terms of local products, we have a little production of our own fruit and berry wines, as well as a small amount of grape wines, all which has its positive effect. Thanks to the craft-beer movement that proved that small production with high quality is possible and pays off, local beverages are booming. Following the beer revolution, other styles of beverages followed, including interesting fruit and berry wines, and ciders. They used to be sweetish and not fashionable. Today they are made in a gastronomic, international style. Many sommeliers today are experimenting with local products in their drink programs, matching them with dishes. They are well-received by tourists and locals, alike. Our spirit production is also booming today, and many small-scale distilleries are opened. As we have a strong history and heritage with that, it is a kind of natural thing to happen. Most of them are producing gin and vodka, next to them, the first batches of our local whisky's and apple brandy's have been released.



Winnica Wonak Vineyard  
Photo: Sergiusz Sawin

Feature Article

## Exciting Time POLISH WINE CULTURE



By **PIOTR KAMECKI**,  
ASI Vice-president Europe

It is exciting times for Polish wine culture, as we see in Poland and in many of our neighbouring countries a rise in gastronomic offerings that has grown in parallel with our growing economy. It is a similar story elsewhere as we have witnessed a growth and development in restaurant and sommelier culture throughout Central and Eastern Europe. We have been beneficiaries here in Poland, but so too have the Baltic countries, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and others.

In terms of Polish wine culture, although our vineyards were largely abandoned for a time, we never lost touch with wine, even during the communist era. When I was young, you could find, albeit only a few examples, wines from classic regions such as Barolo, Brunello di Montalcino, Chablis and Châteauneuf-du-Pape, for example. So as quickly as communism fell, there was an equally quick rise in wine production. Other nearby countries were also able to rebound. Places like Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary regained their industries, as winemakers who previously worked for the Soviets making mass produced wine, used their talents to craft more artisanal wine.

More recently in Poland, we've seen a growth in our own winemaking industry. We now count 376 producers and more than 600 hectares of vines. The investment mostly coming from over the last seven to eight years from investors who made their money in other sectors. The success of these wineries is being supported by our restaurants and sommelier culture. It is creating a very symbiotic, mutually beneficial ecosystem as sommeliers and local wineries become integrated. While Poland will never be a competitor to classic Western European wine nations, the development of our wine industry is not just decoration. It is backed by legitimate business, and as a result of the commitment to quality we can see the pride our local restaurants have when putting Polish wines on their wine list. As a sommelier association we are doing a lot to support the local trend. We are heavily involved in an important local wine festival. We hold a blind wine tasting competition, which has grown from 20 or 30 submissions to now over 300. The event has become a real fiesta, and even has a wine train taking attendees from Krakow to wine country.

All of this combined with our present access to a world of wine, means Polish sommeliers have access to an amazing amount of quality wines from Europe, the Levante, the Americas, and our local wineries. Combined with all the success of top sommeliers from Poland and around the region such as Raimonds Tomsons, Piotr Pietras, and Jakub Přebyl means its an exciting time for Polish, and Eastern European wine culture.

Wine, the Wall and Sommellerie



Winnica Wonak Vineyard  
Photo: Sergiusz Sawin



## PIOTR'S LOCAL DRINK DISCOVERY: Solaris and New Potato Vodka

We have some good examples of wines made from the Solaris varietal. The grape provides a Muscat, Riesling-like aroma and flavours and is supported by ample amounts of acidity. When combined with a little residual sugar, these wines make very good pairings to substantive dishes. I would also be remiss not to point out the evolution of vodka. There are now some amazing super premium vodkas available, made from a variety of grains and fruit, that can be enjoyed like eau de vie. Some of the best, and most in demand, are made with new (young) potatoes, which offer a lot of flavour. There are even some producers making different vodkas from different potato varieties, and even vintage dating them.



Winnica Wonak Vineyard  
Photo: Contributed



Mickiewicz  
Photo: Contributed

Feature Article

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Feature Article

*Wine, the Wall and Somellerie*

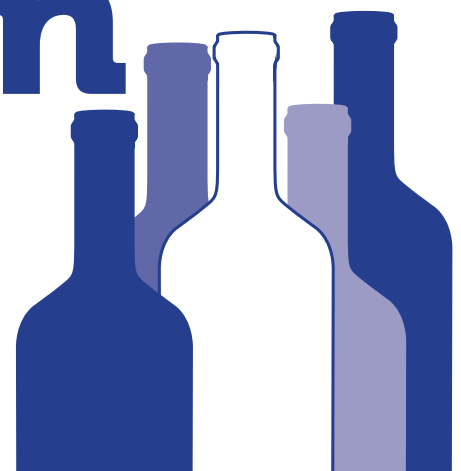




Istria Photo: 123rf.com

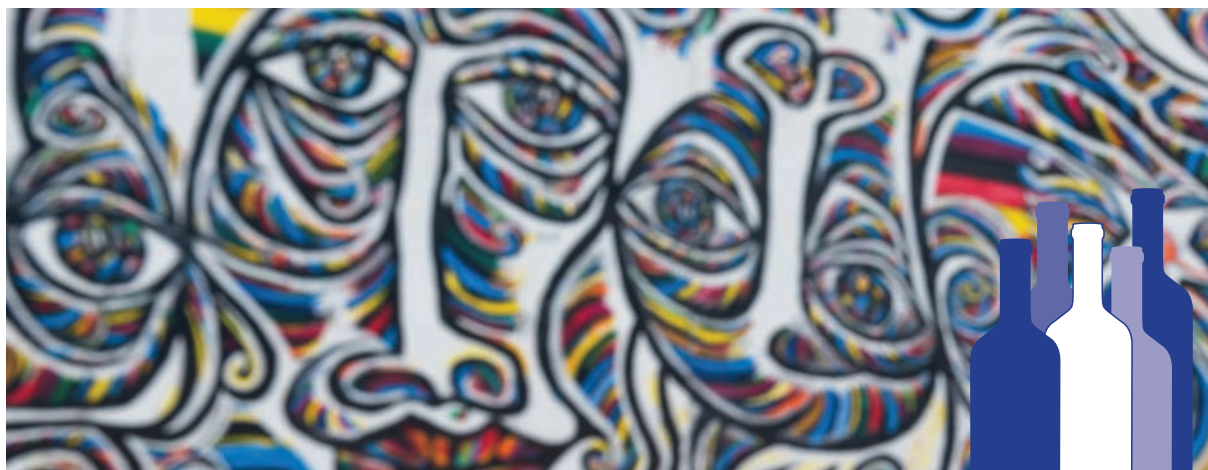
# 5 Central and Eastern European

## Wine Regions to Get to Know



Feature Article

*Wine, the Wall and Sommellerie*



Istria Photo: 123rf.com

### ISTRIA, CROATIA

Istria is a small peninsula located in the northern section of Dalmatia, Croatia. Here in iron-rich vineyards (although some limestone-based soils can be found in its central and high elevation sub-regions) overlooking the Adriatic, a new generation of modern, forward-thinking winemakers are crafting a new image of Croatian wine, with a wondrous mix of single vineyard Malvazija Istarska (Malvasia), orange and skin contact wines, and an increasing amount of red wine. The latter a mix of native (Terran, Hrvatica), Italian (Refosco, Barbera) and international varietals (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Gamay, Pinot Noir). With such an ideal Mediterranean climate, cooled by winds off the Alps, there is little wonder why Croatia is poised for increased renown amongst sommeliers and wine lovers.



Moravia Photo: Contributed

### MORAVIA, CZECH REPUBLIC

According to Ivo Dvořák of Asociace SommelierU (the Association of Sommeliers of the Czech Republic) "grapevines and wine came to Bohemia and Moravia around the 3rd century AD, when the planting of vineyards behind the Alps was initiated by the Romans." Of its two main regions, Bohemia and Moravia, the latter accounts for 96 per cent of production, and has four recognized subregions (Znojmo, Mikulov, Velké Pavlovice and Slovácko). 70 per cent of the area is occupied by white grape varieties, such as Grüner Veltliner, Müller Thurgau, and the Riesling, along with Vlašský ryzlink (Welschriesling). Red wine producing grapes are Frankovka (Blaufrankish or Lemberger), Svatovavřinecké (Saint Laurent) and Zweigeltrebe. Whites are known for their aromatic freshness and solid structure.



Negotin, Serbia Photo: Contributed

## NEGOTIN, SERBIA

Nestled on the banks of the Danube and surrounded by the Crni Vrh, Deli Jovan, and Miroč mountains, Negotin is one of Serbia's gifts to the wine world. Moderation by air currents from the distant Mediterranean, Black Sea, and the nearby Danube protect the region (whose vineyards are mostly planted between 100 and 300 meters) from frost. The Danube also acts as a source of reflective heat in the summers. The vineyards are a mix of local varietals such as Bagrina, Black Tamjanika, Prokupac, Smedervka, Vranac, and Začinak, along with international varietals including Cabernet Sauvignon, Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Gamay. While modern cellars prevail, the tradition of pimnice (cellars made from stone and logs, partially underground) remains part of the charm of the region.

## COLINELE DOBROGEI, ROMANIA

The small region, home to three DOC (Babadag, Sarica Niculițel and Murfatlar), situated on the banks of the Danube has an incredibly long history of winemaking. In this bucolic environment, winemakers are crafting elegant wines fashioned from local varietals such as Babeasca Neagra and Fetească Neagra for reds and Fetească Alba, Fetească Regală and Tamiloasa for whites. Of Fetească Regală, Romania-born Julia Scavo says "I really am fascinated by the Fetească Regală... I like it, as it is multifaceted and terroir sensitive." Of course, like much of Eastern Europe, international varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Merlot, and Pinot Noir share vineyard space with the local favourites.



Dobrogea, Romania Photo: 123rf.com



Goriška Brda, Slovenia Photo: Contributed

## GORIŠKA BRDA, SLOVENIA

Goriška Brda shares a lot of similarities to Italy's Collio. The region in essence is an extension of the famous Italian region. Not surprisingly the grape varietals that occupy the vineyard space share a lot of similarities to those across the Italian border. In reality, the border is only official as in practical terms, it can be hard to distinguish which side of the border you are on at any one time. Some wineries even own vineyards on both sides. The grape list includes Sauvignonasse (Friuliano), Rebula (Ribolla Gialla), Malzizza Istarska (Malvasia), and Pikolit along with some French varietals (Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Blanc). Like its Italian counterpart, vineyards sit on terraces in the foothills of Alps. While the region has risen to fame over the last 30 years thanks to orange wine and skin contact, there is a lot more to the region than this singular style.

# INTRODUCING FROM BEHIND THE WALL A SLEEPING GIANT AWAKENS

**From Behind  
the Wall a  
Sleeping Giant  
Awakens**



Photos: Contributed



# WINE OF MOLDOVA

A LEGEND ALIVE

Between Romania and Ukraine, sits Moldova, a country with thousands of years of winemaking tradition that is reemerging to the world after a 50-year period behind a wall. Moldova never stopped making wine, but while under communist rule, the wine drinking world could be excused for losing its memory of it. Since 1991, with the breakup of the USSR and subsequent independence of the Republic of Moldova, the industry is being revitalized, as new investment and government support are leading to a modernization of cellars.

Wine is part of the identity of the Republic of Moldova, part of the DNA of the people, a real treasure of the country and one of the main drivers of the economy. The Republic of Moldova is known as the “open country in the paradise of wine,” because wine production is the main occupation of Moldovans. Anyone who enters here is welcome. Architectural jewels, underground galleries, vine-strewn hills and wineries that produce from a few thousand bottles to a few million — this all is the treasure of Moldova which managed to put the country on the world map of wine.

Moldovan wine today brings a fresh modern face. Its new generation wines are actually rooted in a rich and complex history, giving the authenticity that so many wine drinkers are looking for today. At the same time, it can offer unique and sometimes surprising wines, especially blends of international and indigenous grape varieties, a true expression of Moldovan terroir. “Wine of Moldova” today is the very real result of this country reinventing its approach to wine — focusing on quality, consistency and ‘enjoyment-in-a-glass’ as its priorities.

The Republic of Moldova is a country located in Eastern Europe, bordered by Ukraine to the east and Romania to the west. It is considered a major wine producing country.

## How much do you know about Moldovan wine?

Moldova is home to a number of unique, local indigenous grape varieties such as Fetească Alba (white), Fetească Regală (white), Fetească Neagra (red), and Rara Neagra (red), although it also specializes in international varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and others.

White wines represent 60% of the production from the following varieties: Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc, Muscat ottonel, Aligoté, Pinot gris/blanc, Fetească alba/regală. Red wines (40% of the production) are made from Merlot, Cabernet sauvignon/franc, Pinot noir, Rara neagra, Fetească neagra, Saperavi.

The National Office for Vine and Wine worked with wine producers to set up a quality system of protected geographical indications (PGI) on the EU model. Based on research into differences in climate and growing conditions, these represent the three winegrowing regions and the country's wine brandies:

- **VALUL LUI TRAIAN** (Trajan's Wall) covers 16,113 ha southwest including 3520 (36%) unde IGP.
- **ȘTEFAN VODĂ** (southeast) covers 6,415 ha including 1,223 (12%) unde IGP.
- **CODRU** (center) covers 11,838 ha including 2687 (27%) unde IGP.
- **DIVIN** covers the whole country including 2,507 (25%) unde IGP.

The authenticity and uniqueness of Moldovan wines is represented by the local varieties, which represent 10% of the vineyards: Fetească Alba, Fetească Regală, Fetească Neagra, Rara Neagra and the new selection varieties Viorica, Alb de Onițcani etc. Over 80% of the wine produced in the Republic of Moldova is exported in more than 70 countries around the world.

Moldovan wines are now sold in 71 countries, most of them on high value markets in the European Union, with a steady increase over the last 5 years. In 2021, the Republic of Moldova maintained its status as the most awarded country in Eastern Europe, having obtained a record number of awards at international profit competitions: 1,146 medals, half of them are Gold medals.



## Things to know about Moldovan Wine

- Moldova can trace its winemaking history to 5,000 B.C.
- There are 4 recognized wine regions/ PGI in Moldova: Codru, Ștefan Vodă, Valul lui Traian and Divin.
- Vineyards occupy 4% of its land mass and 7% of agricultural land.
- 200,000 people are involved in the winemaking sector.
- Moldova has the 6th largest area under vine in Europe, and home to nearly 225 wineries producing a mix of European (85%), Black Sea Basin (10%) and local (5%) grape varieties.

Besides, Moldova is considered an emerging tourist destination in central Europe, offering an authentic experience to travelers looking to return to their roots and the most untouched values of life. In recent years, the number of wineries that have opened their doors for tourism and places that promote consumer culture has almost tripled, due to the growing number of visitors from abroad.



# Get to know Moldova's Wine Regions

The Republic of Moldova is home to four recongized PGI

## CODRU PGI

**Climate:** The climate of this wine region is temperate and continental with a mild, short winter, a warm, long summer, and relatively small amount of precipitation.

**Soil:** Rich in black chernozem soil.

**Production:** Although noted for its quality of white and sparkling wines, which account for 63 per cent of production, Cabernet Sauvignon is the most planted grape varietal. Other important varietals include Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Aligote, Pinot Noir, Rkatsiteli, Fetească Alba, Merlot and Muscat Ottonel.

## ȘTEFAN VODĂ PGI

**Climate:** Unlike the more continental climate of Codru, Ștefan Vodă feels more of the influence of the Black Sea, which extends the growing season and its more southerly location contributing to a slightly higher overall average temperature.

**Soil:** Loam and clay soil covers the majority of the region with the remainder a mix of alluvial clay, loessoidal clay and other soils.

**Production:** Well known for its red wine production account for 57 per cent of the production. The predominant varieties are Cabernet Sauvignon,

Chardonnay, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Gris, Rara Neagră, and Malbec.

## VALUL LUI TRAIAN PGI

**Climate:** Valul lui Traian wine region has a temperate-continental climate with influences from the Black Sea. Like Ștefan Vodă it benefits from its southern location in the form of additional heat units over the course of the growing season along with moderation and extension provided by the Black Sea influence.

**Soil:** Like Codru, the soil of Valul lui Traian is dominated by the carbonate black soil known as chernozem.

**Production:** Valul lui Traian produces 60 per cent red wine, and within the Moldova wine industry, the reds of the region are known for their rich colour, fresh flavours and ample structure. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay are the predominant varieties here.

## DIVIN PGI

**Climate:** As the region encompasses the entire country, a range of microclimates exist.

**Soil:** A broad mix of soils including chernozem, alluvial clay and loess amongst others.

**Production:** The Divin PGI is reserved for spirits made from international grape varietals. They must be produced at local distilleries and aged for a minimum of 3 years in wood before release.

We highly recommend visiting Moldova as your next wine tourism destination or perhaps to return to this wonderful country for new wine experiences! Having visited once, you will fall in love forever with Moldovan wine culture and hospitality.

# SOMM DAY SOME DAY

## ASI CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL SOMMELIER DAY

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, ASI celebrated its 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday with International Sommeliers Day. The annual celebrations have been taking place every year since 2013, when the first International Sommeliers Day was held. This year ASI asked sommeliers from around the globe to create a video that depicted a day in their life. The “Somm Day Some Day” promotion set out to explore the diverse activities that comprise a day in the life of a sommelier.

### SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING SOMMELIERS FOR THEIR VIDEO CONTRIBUTIONS:

Arkadiusz Kurowski, Poland  
David Hsiao, Taiwan  
Liora Levi, Norway  
Marc Almert, Germany  
Marina Revkova, Ukraine  
Mirko Pastorelli, Italy  
Maria Raquel Morales Tejerina,  
Bolivia  
Zulfiya Ibragimova, Kazakhstan  
Zoran Matic, Luxembourg  
Sommelier team from MoDo,  
Caracas, Venezuela





## WINE AND SPIRITS FROM 2030 ONWARDS



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# VINEXPOSIUM, COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE OF THE WINE AND SPIRITS INDUSTRY

On 20 and 21 June, the Vinexposium group organised the second Act For Change Symposium at the Cité du Vin in Bordeaux, two days during which the major issues and challenges facing the industry up to 2030 were discussed.

At the crossroads of a post-pandemic context that has impacted entire sectors and 2030, which marks a key deadline in the United Nations' agenda and COP 26 in terms of sustainable development, this event aimed to bring out new, concrete and reasonably prospective avenues in order to support all professionals with concrete solutions for the years to come.

In a format conducive to exchange, debate and looking to the future, the Act For Change Symposium welcomed 35 international experts and personalities on stage and an audience of 250 professionals from various activities and backgrounds. At the heart of the 9 sessions proposed, subjects such as the future of fine wines, the organoleptic profile expected by consumers in 2030, the digitalisation of the industry (led by Google France) and the distribution revolution were addressed.

Find the full programme and watch all the sessions on  
[www.symposium-actforchange.com](https://www.symposium-actforchange.com)

Feature Article

*Sommellerie in Africa: Nourishing wine culture in the oldest world*



# Sommellerie in Africa:

## Nourishing wine culture in the oldest world

With Mikael Rodriguez and Spencer Fondaumiere



**Mikael Rodriguez**, president of the Association des Sommeliers du Maroc (the Sommeliers Association of Morocco) received his

international wine and hospitality education in Bordeaux and London, which led him on a career that has given him the knowledge, insight, and reputation for creating unique wine collections. Mikael spent the last 15 years working for some prestigious establishments as head sommelier. He spent seven years at the Dokhan's Champagne Bar in Paris, where he developed a reputation for his in-depth knowledge of Champagne; followed by eight years at the mythic palace hotel, La Mamounia. There, he created an internationally recognized wine selection, growing the wine list over his tenure, and playing a key role in the creation of the hotel's wine bar and tasting room.

Making use of his extensive list of contacts in the wine world, Mikael is now using his years of experience to create exceptional commercial and private wine cellars for clients around the globe. His deep knowledge, combined with his intuition, results in bespoke wine collections that correspond to the specific needs and palettes of his clients. Mikael also continues to bring together the best wines in the world, from the best terroirs and years, and will take wine lovers on a journey of discovery usually reserved only for those in the know.



**Spencer Fondaumiere** began his journey in wine when he moved to South Africa in 2013. He is an Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI) certified sommelier, one of less than 500 people to have ever successfully passed the demanding

Diploma exam. He is currently the president of the South African Sommeliers Association. In addition, he is a certified wine judge graduating from Michael Fridjohns wine judging academy in 2016 and has completed WSET level 3. He is a qualified chef, with vast experience in hospitality on both sides of the pass. He is the co-founder of Winery East Africa, distributors of wines and spirits in Rwanda and Kenya and Somm on Call, a digital sommelier platform. In addition to that he is a consultant with The Misfits, a food and drink creative and digital consultancy specialising in strategy for the hospitality and wine industry. Previously he was the national brand manager at Warwick Wine Estate and the operations manager for the Burrata group of restaurants. He has vast experience as a wine judge with an accomplished track record of serving on several panels of the leading wine competitions in South Africa

The African continent is one of the few regions of the world, where sommellerie is still somewhat foreign. Not surprisingly, given the continent as a whole has less than modest wine consumption. There have been attempts to cultivate wine culture in Africa over the centuries. In fact, the heart of human civilization first embraced wine cultural in ancient Egypt and later the Mediterranean coastal regions occupied by the vine-loving Phoenicians. The first "modern" inroads began in earnest with the European colonization of the continent, starting in South Africa in the 1600s, and subsequently the entire continent by the French, Portuguese, and Germans.



Photo: Pierre van der Spuy

The Dutch first inhabited South Africa in the mid 17th century. Like the British in America, development of vineyards was part of the colonization strategy of the Dutch, who brought with them vines, and an enthusiasm for viticulture, eventually supported by French Huguenots who fled France during a period of religious persecution and arrived in South Africa, many settling in Franschhoek. Notably it was Simon van der Stel, who launched the South African wine industry, His Constantia estate remains an iconic symbol of the history of South African wine, and whose legacy lives on in the wine regions of Stellenbosch and Simonsberg which bear recognition of his name. South Africa eventually flourished as a wine producing nation, despite a roller coaster of successes and setbacks over the centuries, ranging from the collapse of the burgeoning industry thanks to improved relations between the British and French in the mid-1800s, resulting in a reduced tariffs on French wine, a bout with odium and phylloxera later in that century, the Boer War and

the restrictions of growth of the industry in the 20th century as a result of the formation of the KWV and the politics of apartheid. A quarter century after the end of apartheid, the South African wine industry has witnessed a transformation of its vineyards, an exponential rise in gastronomy, and the rise of young breed of sommeliers from a wealth of cultural backgrounds.

In South Africa, Spencer Fondaumiere, president of the South Africa Sommelier Association, suggests South Africa has an advantage to developing wine culture given “we have wine on our doorsteps” but in terms of sommelierie he says “one of the unique challenges of South Africa is despite being a wine producing country most of the population does not have a wine drinking culture. This has hindered the development of sommelier culture. But it is something that is slowly changing, hence the optimism for the future. There is tremendous potential in both the short and long term. South Africa has a unique landscape with a vibrant hospitality scene while producing some really



Photo: WOSA



Photo: Anne Lusty

exciting wines. In many ways it feels like we are on the cusp of a golden period. Hospitality is one of the biggest employers in the country and we need to do the work to make sommellerie both desirable and aspirational.”

In the far north of the continent, in countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia modern wine production have also existed for close to two centuries, but consumption and wine culture has been tempered, but not fully eliminated, over the last half century by the rise of Islam. Here, historically under the direction of French vigneron, grapes such as Carignan, Cinsaut, Grenache and Alicante Bouschet have basked in the warmth of the Mediterranean sun. Perhaps that light is just starting to shine on sommellerie in Morocco. Mikael Rodriguez, president of the Association des Sommeliers du Maroc (the Sommeliers Association of Morocco) says “Morocco is not an easy country for sommellerie knowing the laws regarding Islam and alcohol. Some people are interested in wine but cannot really be open about it. But still, there are quite a few wine lovers as well as customers or young professionals in the trade who want to learn more about wine and wine service. More and more bars and restaurants ask for sommeliers in Morocco, they are starting to understand the real “plus” of having a sommelier in their restaurant, for the satisfaction of their guests.”

In terms of how to develop sommellerie in their own countries, Fondaumiere says “we need to create the awareness and interest at ground level. I, and SASA (South African Sommelier Association) have developed a new introductory qualification that is focussed on the basics of service and South African wine knowledge. Our hope is to have a large number go through the qualification and then convert those that get inspired to continue their sommelier journey. We feel, if we have a very wide base of the pyramid, we will have a better chance of more rising to the top.” Rodriguez takes a consumer first approach, saying “One of our first steps is to teach what wine is to our patrons, and to make restaurants understand they need to have good wine service and invest in it. Culturally, wine is not a very known product in Morocco. We must communicate about Moroccan sommeliers who have received awards and recognition and spread the word about sommellerie to our catering schools.”

Unlike Northern and Southern Africa, Central Africa has little wine making traditions. If religion and culture has been the challenge at the antipodes of the continent, the lack of a conducive climate, creating poor ecological fit for vines, in much of central African has challenged the development of wine culture there. However, with the rising wealth of many African nations, albeit often limited to a small sub-section of the population,

Feature Article

*Sommellerie in Africa: Nourishing wine culture in the oldest world*



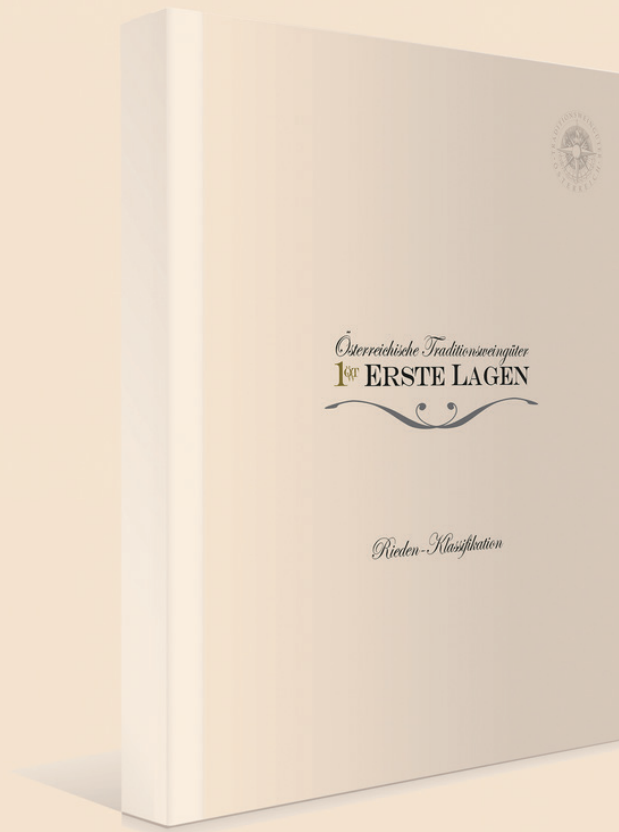
Photo: Contributed

the sub-Saharan countries offer a lot of potential for wine culture and sommelier development. Both Rodriguez and Fondaumiere agree on this point. Rodriguez says of the potential “yes, for sure there is potential. There are all those high-end hotels who attract customers who have traveled all around the world and eat at Michelin star restaurants and stay in palaces. They need to find the service and knowledgeable staff they find anywhere else. Things are moving in that direction. It will come.” Fondaumiere agrees saying “absolutely the need is there, as are the products (wine, food). Unfortunately, a lot of people are working under the title sommelier without necessarily having the certification or experience. It’s only a matter of time before they have access to certifications. A lot will depend on their employers. They must appreciate the value of a good sommelier and remunerate them accordingly. As long as this does not happen nobody will want to be a full-time sommelier, if they are treated and paid as glorified waiters.”

In Zimbabwe with the support of colleagues in South Africa, sommeliers have their own association (Zimbabwe Association of Sommeliers), familiarly known as “Zim Somms” and officially joined Morocco, and Mauritius as the African members of the ASI family. Who’s next? Island nations such as the Seychelles, where domestic consumption, and a wealth of high-end resorts, is logical, but other potentials include the likes of Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Kenya, Angola, Nigeria and Uganda where wine consumption is on the rise and in the case of Tanzania, and Kenya there is a limited amount of wine production. If there is a singular truth of sommelierie it is where there are vines, there are wines. Where there are wines there are tourists, and where there are tourists there are restaurants that need sommeliers to guide their selections. While the current state of sommelierie in Africa is a dim light, there is a bright African sun waiting to guide a new era of sommelierie in this part of the world.



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Happenings

# LET'S MEET in Mal

Let's Meet in Malaysia



# aysiaia

Happenings

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# KUALA LUMPUR TO HOST ASI BOOTCAMP 2022

Happenings

**2022 is the Association de la Sommellerie's year of Asia and Oceania, as ASI's major events are unusually concentrated in Asia this year. A first for this emerging powerhouse of sommellerie.**

Asia and Oceania is a region of great diversity. Each country has its own unique culture and way of life. Therefore, the way the profession of sommelier is perceived, the importance of the profession, and the status of the sommelier vary greatly from country to country.

ASI Vice-president Asia & Oceania Saiko Tamura-Soga says of the concentration of events in the region "the overwhelming presence of ASI, a globally recognized organization of sommeliers, in Asia will enable us to reach many people (with different cultural background and custom) in the region, make them aware of and pay attention to the profession of sommelier. This is, more than ever, a great opportunity for each national sommelier association to take advantage of it to develop the sommellerie in their country."

The desired outcome according to Tamura-Soga is "consumers will appreciate the importance of sommeliers more and they will seek richer dining experiences, which in turn will require sommeliers to improve their skills to meet their expectations, thereby raising the sommelier's level even higher. It can only be positive!"

The first event is the ASI General Assembly in Nagoya, followed by ASI Bootcamp in Malaysia. Situated at the crossroads of an important maritime trade route, Malaysia has long been a meeting place in Asia, a middle point that connects the continent with its southerly neighbours in countries like Australia and New Zealand, evidenced by the

diversity of its population, the richness of its cuisine and its economy. It is home vibrant urban centers such as Kuala Lumpur, host of ASI Bootcamp, rural oasis in its rich interior rainforests and secluded beaches where a wondrous mix of ocean life calls this part of the world home.

The melting pot nature of Malaysia is another reason the Malaysian Sommelier Association is excited to welcome the world to Kuala Lumpur. According to Roderick Wong, Founder and Honorary President of the SOMLAY (the Malaysian Sommelier Association) "Malaysia is blessed with a wide variety of culture, race and religions; thus, the abundances of gastronomic offerings are very diversified. We look forward to showcasing as much of this cuisine, our city and culture to the attendees." The sentiments are shared by Ronald Binati, President of SOMLAY, who explains the impact this has on sommelier life in Malaysia. "Being a sommelier in a multicultural society like Malaysia challenges one to learn more about different food textures, flavours and tastes that sometimes are non-existent in western cuisine, particularly in the use of spices and herbs. As a non-wine producing country, assimilating wine into the dining scene definitely takes time and effort."

According to ASI Vice-president Asia & Oceania Saiko Tamura-Soga of the rationale of awarding the hosting rights to Malaysia "there are practical aspects, such as the geographical accessibility from any country in Asia and Oceania and the wide choice of hotels with excellent facilities, but above all, I always wanted and still aim to give sommelier associations like Malaysia, which had never hosted an ASI event before, the opportunity to do so, to gain experience and confidence of

Let's Meet in Malaysia



**ASI Vice-president Asia & Oceania**  
**Saiko Tamura-Soga** Photo: Contributed



**Roderick Wong** Photo: Contributed



**Ronald Binati** Photo: Contributed

hosting an ASI event and deepen connection with ASI as an ASI family member.”

The honour of hosting their first ASI event isn't lost on Wong and Binati. Wong says “it has always been our aspiration to host an ASI program in Malaysia and with this opportunity, it will bring wider awareness of the sommelier profession in Malaysia, provide an opportunity for our members to be involved which will elevate their skills and understanding in organizing an event of such importance.” Tamura-Sago is confident of their abilities saying “Tamura-Sago has a lot of faith in the local team saying “for this ASI event to be a success, the Sommelier Association of Malaysia inevitably needs to work as a team and get local partners already working closely together involved even more. I feel that under the strong leadership of Roderick Wong and Ronald Binati, respectively honorary president and current president of the association, sommeliers are united, involved, and smoothly preparing for the event. They are very diligent and efficient. No doubt sommeliers in Malaysia will be in the limelight.”

The team in Malaysia not only see the potential benefits it has to their own sommelier community, but also recognize the impact events like this have on the broader ASI family. As Binati says “after nearly 2 years plus of not being able to travel and meet fellow sommeliers and industry practitioners, I believe everyone attending the ASI Bootcamp has a renewed vision and goals to be fulfilled, to meet and get to know the ASI board members attending this session in Kuala Lumpur and to renew camaraderie that online meetings could not fulfil. For us at the association, this is also a test run to gauge our ability perhaps in the future to host an

ASI competition, whether it is a regional contest or the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest.”

There is little doubt that ASI Bootcamp in Malaysia will continue the tradition established by ASI's first Bootcamp in Poland by hosting an event that challenges its attendees to learn more and become better sommeliers in the process.

ASI Bootcamp will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Kuala Lumpur, September 11th to 14th, 2022. The hotel is strategically located in the city's heart, with good accessibility to amenities, restaurants allowing attendees to experience the vibrancy of life in the city, and the opportunity to easily experience the culture, and cuisine of Malaysia in all its richness.



Photo: unsplash.com / Nour Betar

Make Me a Match



# M

# MAKE ME A MATCH

Pairing the Northern  
European Way

Pairing the Northern European Way



Photo: NBLXER / 123rf.com

The wine world knows well Europe's Nordic and Baltic nations have become rising stars of sommellerie. Swedish sommeliers have twice grabbed top spot at the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in the 2000s. Along with the strong performances of the likes of Raimonds Tomsons, Nina Jensen, Martynas Pravilonis, Piotr Pietras and others who have proven the strength of sommellerie in Europe's northernmost countries. ASI asked some of the best sommeliers of the region to provide a wine pairing and local pairing for salmon gravlax, an iconic dish of many northern European nations.

### **Chef Magnus Nilsson's Gravlax**

*(The Nordic Cookbook, Phaidon Press)*

- 2 1/4 pounds salmon fillet, skin on, pin bones removed and patted dry
- 4 tablespoons salt
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 20 white peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1 bunch dill, stalks and fronds separated

**Directions:** Remove the pin bones from a clean and evenly thick piece of fish fillet. Rub it all over with a mixture of salt, sugar and aromatics. I like to store the fish and the curing mix in a plastic bag, which makes it easy to keep the whole surface of the fish in contact with the cure, ensuring an even result. When the fish is thoroughly coated, place it in a bag on a tray and set a few plates on top to weight it down a little (or use something else flat and suitably heavy). Transfer it to the refrigerator to cure for the required length of time. I like to cure the salmon for about 24 hours before washing off the cure mix. To stop the cure, take the fish out of the bag and either rinse it quickly under cold running water or scrape the cure and seasonings off it. Transfer the fish to a new plastic bag, place it back on the tray and return it to the refrigerator. This allows the cure to even out within the fish. Leave it for about the same length of time as it was in the curing mix. The fish can be served straight away or after only a short rest, but it will appear more cured on the surface than in the middle. Fish prepared this way is either cut straight down, at a 90-degree angle relative to the chopping (cutting) board, in slightly thicker slices of 4 to 5 mm (1/8 to 1/4 inch) or else it is cut at a 45-degree angle into very thin and much larger slices.

Make Me a Match

Pairing the Northern European Way



**EMMA ZIEMANN** (SWEDEN):

Sommelier & Cellar Master at restaurant ÄNG, Ästad Vingård, Winner Swedish Sommelier Championship (2018, 2022)

**WINE PAIRING:**

**Egon Müller Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett 2015**

My preference for this dish is a fruit driven style of white with refreshing acidity. Gravlax in itself has high levels of saltiness and fat that will polish the edge of the sharpness in the wine. The acidity of the wine will however make this course appear lighter and more elegant. Fruitness in the wine will play nicely with the high levels of umami of the fish and some sweetness in the wine will meet and balance with the sweetness and white peppercorn elements of the gravlax. Traditionally, Gravlax is also served with sweet mustard sauce, hence a few grams of residual sugar can be the key to a balanced pairing. To create an equilibrium between the elegant but flavorful salmon it is worth seeking out an aromatic wine with an equal poise. I would love to have a sleek white wine glass of Egon Müller Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett 2015 served at 8 Celsius in the midsummer.

**LOCAL PAIRING:**

**Östgöta Sädesbrännvin and Qvånum Mat & Malt's Q Lager**

Gravlax is definitely a classic! This serving sums up the composure of a Swedish traditional course quite well: salt, fat and a hint of sweetness. Served at our holidays around Christmas, Easter or midsummer it would be considered odd, almost offensive, to offer gravlax without a small glass of something stronger and a beer. I recommend Östgöta Sädesbrännvin, a rye-based Swedish snaps which recipe that goes back to 1864. The alcohol will cleanse the palette between bites and the fat and saltiness of the fish will mellow the warming effect off the snaps. Gravlax does have an element of sweetness and that is something to take in consideration. This spirit is dry in style, but it is balanced with a few grams of sugar that comes in handy harmonising the character of the salmon. The flavours of spices, hay and honey in the snaps will also boost the aromatic aspect of the gravlax. Serve the spirit chilled at 4 to 6 Celsius in smaller tulip shaped glasses which will embrace the aromatic qualities but still smooth the attack of the alcohol. When it comes to the beer, choose a slightly more flavourful style of lager like Swedish Qvånum Mat & Malt's Q Lager served at 6-8 Celsius in medium sized sleek white wine glasses served to heighten the fresh character of the beer. This lager has an elegant bitterness that will not be to unsettling with the umami of the fish but instead help control the fattiness and meet the salty aspects of the Gravlax. The malt driven style and mild hop character of the beer will also harmonize with the character of the snaps.



Photo: Contributed

**MARTYNAS PRAVILONIS** (LITHUANIA):

Head Sommelier Grand Hotel Kempinski Vilnius, Lithuanian Sommelier Championship (4-time winner), Baltic Sommelier Championship (2-time winner), 4<sup>th</sup> place ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2019

**WINE PAIRING:****2019 Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Renner Grüner Veltliner**

Salmon gravlax is a rather fatty and oily fish dish so I would be looking for wines and beverages with a good backbone of acidity to refresh the palate by cutting through that fat giving some good balance. There is also interplay of sweet and salty notes in the gravlax as well as some fragrant and slightly spicy flavours from the white peppercorn while the dill gives some herbal freshness.

All of this at once reads almost as a classic tasting note to one of my favourite grape varieties: Austrian Grüner Veltliner and if I needed to suggest one wine to go with this dish it would be Schloss Gobelsburg Ried Renner Grüner Veltliner 2019. Coming from a single vineyard in Kamptal DAC area this white wine shows beautifully defined aromas and flavours of ripe lemon and fresh peach which are complimented by distinctive notes of smoky flint, salty seashell, and slightly spicy and fragrant pepper nuance. The palate is textured with ripe mouth-watering acidity which is a central attribute and provides structure and length to the wine which leads. On the finish a tell-tale white pepper spiciness appears which mingles with a flinty smokiness. I find this wine to be both racy and rich with a good degree of complexity even in its youth.

As we see, we can find many descriptors in this wine which mirror some of the flavours in the gravlax which I find is very important when pairing wine and food since they become as a kind of bridge. And then the acidity as well as some phenolic texture works as a refreshing aspect to our palate.

**LOCAL PAIRING:****Roksala Rhubarb Pet Nat from the north of Lithuania**

Produced by Raimundas Nagelė a small farm holder in Rokiskis municipality this sparkling wine produced from 100 per cent of local rhubarb has a rather subtle but clean and precise flavours and aromas of rhubarb and white blossoms with just a hint of some toastiness from the lees aging. On the palate it is light, salty and remarkably fresh with smooth and creamy mousse. Rhubarb plays a main chord in flavours but it is quite subtle and makes the wine very easy to enjoy.

I believe that this saltiness and distinctive freshness of rhubarb would be a key factors making Roksala Pet Nat a perfect pairing to the salmon gravlax.



Make Me a Match

Pairing the Northern European Way

Photo: Contributed

Make Me a Match

Pairing the Northern-European Way



Photo: Jussi Koivunen

**KIRSI SEPPÄNEN** (FINLAND):

Sommelier at Ravinteli Bertha, Best Sommelier of Finland (2018, 2021), Young Sommelier of Finland (2018), Nordic Ruinart Challenge Winner (2018)

**WINE PAIRING:**

**Champagne Marc Hebrart Blanc de Blancs**

With cured salmon I would serve Champagne Marc Hebrart Blanc de Blancs, from Mareuil sur Aÿ, Champagne. Cured salmon seasoned with peppercorn and dill is a very elegant and fresh dish, as is the champagne. Salmon is quite a fatty fish, and I like the acidity (and the bubbles) of the champagne to lighten the mouthfeel, and the very elegant fruit flavours of the champagne to balance the spices of the cure. There's a ripe yet fresh fruit character in the wine, so it will ease down the saltiness of the fish and bring up the full flavours of the salmon. I would love to start my dinner with this pairing.

**LOCAL PAIRING:**

**Mead from Ainoa Winery, located in Hollola, Finland**

As for a local pairing with the salmon, I would suggest a local mead from Ainoa Winery, located in Hollola, Finland. Their newest product, Ainoa Taival would be super with the fish! It is a dry tart mead flavoured with sea buckthorn and apple. In Finland cured salmon is a quite common dish, so I would love to pair it with local flavours, as apple and sea buckthorn. I like that this mead is dry, as such it has light mouthfeel to lingering aftertaste. In terms of the pairing the acid of the products used in its production will freshen up the dish, while the spicy flavours will accompany, match the dill and peppercorn elements.



**KAROLINE REINHOLD** (ESTONIA):

Head Sommelier Pelagos (Athens, Greece),  
 Best Sommelier of Estonia (2020, 2021),  
 ASI Gold Diploma

**WINE PAIRING:**

**2019 Rudi Pichler Grüner Veltliner  
 Federspiel 2019**

For the wine pairing I would go to Austria and specific the Wachau DAC. In the 2019 Rudi Pichler Grüner Veltliner Federspiel 2019, you can find some spiced lemons and ripe apple aromas and the white peppery character of Grüner Veltliner which will complement the flavours of gravlax, while the lively freshness of the wine will help us to cut through the protein. Finally, the slight sweetness of the Federspiel will balance the aftertaste. As 2019 was an exceptional year in Wachau, the vintage is offering us different layers and it also gives a more complex character to the dish.

**LOCAL PAIRING:**

**Põhjala Imperial Ginie Gose**

Magnus Nilssons's Gravlax is a very elegant dish. Salmon, how he prepares it, makes it quite tender to handle. As such, I don't want to go for something very overpowering, staying simple and looking for something that is refreshing on the palate. I have opted for a beer from Estonia. Põhjala Imperial Ginie, is an imperial gose which has been aged in gin barrels from Kyrö distillery. It has a sharp citrusy like mineral taste that will help us to cut through the protein, but the botanical flavour profile will emphasise the greenness of the dish, yet the quite aromatic nose will help us to balance the greener flavours, leaving the finish fresh.



Make Me a Match

Pairing the Northern European Way

Photo: Contributed

Make Me a Match

Pairing the Northern European Way



Photo: Wil Le-Wright

**HENRIK DAHL JENSEN** (NORWAY):

Wine Director at Britannia Hotel, Trondheim, Best Sommelier of Norway (5-time winner), Best Young Sommelier of Norway (2014), Best Sommelier of the World (2016, semi-finalist)

**WINE PAIRING:**


**2018 Weingut Von Winning Sauvignon Blanc 500 (Pfalz, Germany)**

Gravlax is an amazing way to prepare salmon, and the perfect pairing will of course be influenced by your choice of garnish. However, I think that some wines in general work well, and for this occasion I would like to highlight Sauvignon Blanc of somewhat lesser-known origin, the Pfalz. Being less green and vegetal than the Loire versions, Sauvignon from Pfalz is ripe, fruity, zesty, and that slightly warmer and more yellow character is perfect against the sweet and salty flavours of the salmon. As salmon is a rich protein. I think we can risk a wine with even more intensity, body and indeed alcohol, and I would love to pair this with this wonderful and well poised Sauvignon Blanc 500 from Weingut Von Winning! A monumental Sauvignon Blanc with barrel fermentation and a great combination of freshness, aromatics, body and depth.

**LOCAL PAIRING:**

**Aga Sideri Humlepung apple cider**

For a more local option I would select an apple-based product, either with or without alcohol. An alcohol-free farmhouse apple juice based on an acidic and flavourful apple variety such as Aroma would be a great companion. If you prefer something with alcohol, I think we might just have the perfect cider; Humlepung from Aga Sideri in Hardanger. The name does not translate that well, but it is a gastronomic Norwegian Cider offering the added complexity and aromatics of hops. Both these products match the Gravlax in similar ways to the Sauvignon Blanc, with apples showcasing their inherent qualities and gastronomic properties much in the same way as a noble wine grape.



# BLIND TASTING

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Blind tasting is just one part of ASI's series of tutorials, but a skill sommeliers around the globe must perfect. The purpose of this task is to analyze, evaluate and identify a wine to determine its quality through visual and sensory analysis, using a full description and how to utilize this wine in the context of our sommelier profession. In a contest, or evaluation, blind tasting may have 6 main parts for which points are awarded. Appearance, nose, taste, conclusion, food and service, overall communication. We will guide you through the blind tasting step by step.

When evaluating a wine, keep in mind your overall communication. This is where evaluators assess the ability of the sommelier to communicate an overall impression as if describing the wine to guests. It is important that the sommelier uses full sentences to describe the wine rather than using short phrases. For example, it is better to speak about a dominant and crisp acidity than a medium-plus high acidity.

Photo:  
Contributed



**WATCH THE VIDEO**

Happenings

ASI Tutorials: Blind Tasting: a step-by-step guide

### APPEARANCE (8 STEPS)

**You must mention:**

- 1) the clarity
- 2) the brightness
- 3) the main colour
- 4) the intensity of the colour
- 5) the colour of the core
- 6) the rim variation
- 7) the viscosity of the wine

**Example:** This is a red wine. It is bright. It has very deep, nearly opaque garnet colour to the core, with a thin translucent garnet rim showing some signs of evolution. The legs are very slow, plenty of legs, slightly colouring of the glass. There is no sign of sediment or evolution.

### THE NOSE (6 STEPS)

**You must mention:**

- 1) if the wine is clean or faulty
- 2) how intense it is
- 3) the main aroma groups
- 4) the main aroma descriptors
- 5) any oak influence
- 6) the maturity level

**Example:** The nose is clean; it is healthy. It is pronounced with a lot of layers, and it is showing some maturity. There is a pronounced aroma of cooked fruit, and dried fruit such as prunes, dry figs, and blueberries. There is also an element of dried flowers such as potpourri, and rose petals on that nose. After aeration it shows even more depth and complexity, with some more nuanced aromas of damp forest floor, dried leaves such as dried ivy, and some nuances of rosemary. There is something quite Mediterranean about it. And some hints of cherry stones and dark chocolate. As well as a very delicate seasoning coming probably from oak with some touches of cinnamon and vanilla. It is a complex and relatively mature nose.

### TASTE (13 STEPS)

**You must mention:**

- 1) if the wine is clean or not
- 2) if it is a dry or sweet wine
- 3) the body of the wine
- 4) the level of acidity
- 5) the intensity
- 6) the main taste group(s)
- 7) describe if the flavours match the aromas
- 8) if the wine is aged
- 9) the maturity level
- 10) the tannins
- 11) the level of alcohol
- 12) the finish
- 13) provide a conclusion

**Example:** On the palate this wine is clean. It is very sweet. It is full bodied. It is balanced by a lovely level of acidity which is refreshing. The intensity of flavour is high, very similar to the nose, with an emphasis on dried fruits such as prunes, dried cherries, dried figs. It is then followed by some more savory nuances of cured meats, damp forest floor and beautiful delicate seasoning from oak with some cinnamon, some vanilla and some hints of clove. It is a wine that show some maturity, but it is still developing. The tannins are high in concentration, but they are very fine-grained, very well integrated into the wine and they are part of the overall sensation of smoothness. The alcohol level is high, slightly warming, but again very well integrated. The finish is very long; about 8 to 10 seconds.



## THE CONCLUSION (9 STEPS)

### You must mention:

- 1) any indications of unification style
- 2) the climate of the region the wine is from
- 3) if it is based on a single grape variety or is a blend
- 4) if it is dominated by a certain grape variety
- 5) its origin clearly stating the appellation, the region and the country it is from
- 6) its age range and perhaps give the exact vintage
- 7) the name of the wine. Including its brand, single vineyard
- 8) an indication of the quality
- 9) is it ready to be drunk or has a further potential

**Example:** "I think this is a Fortified wine. I think it is based on a blend of grape varieties, which tradition of wines from the Douro Valley ,so I would say based on Touriga Nacional and Tinta Roriz. I think it is a Port wine, from Portugal. And in terms of age, I would say Vintage style, so I am going to give the vintage 2000. I think it is probably from Graham's, the producer. In terms of aging potential, its maturity, I would say at least over 20 years and it is a very good quality."

## SERVICE AND FOOD (5 STEPS)

### You must mention:

- 1) temperature you would like to serve the wine.
- 2) the kind of glass to serve the wine.
- 3) if it needs decanting or aerating, Or if it should be poured straight from the bottle

4) provide a recommended course or dish that you would like to serve with this wine.

5) explain the reasoning behind this recommendation.

**Example:** "I would serve this wine 12 to 14 degrees, in some wine glasses. I think it absolutely needs to be decanted because it is Vintage Port, and the sediment needs to be removed, but it also has the potential for aging, so aeration would also be needed. I propose the use of a carafe would be for both reasons. In terms of pairing, I think I will go two suggestions from the UK (United Kingdom), which is a blue cheese, which I would serve with some toasted gingerbread. The reason for this is I think the creaminess of the Stilton and the saltiness of the Stilton would match perfectly with the sweet element of this Port and rounded smooth texture of that Port while the gingerbread spices link nicely with the delicate spicing found in that wine."



Photo: Contributed

# MEMBER NEWS



Photo: Contributed

**L'ASSOCIATION LUXEMBOURGEOISE DES SOMMELIERS ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT ▲**

After 30 years as secretary and treasurer Dino Totaro has finally assumed the role as President of L'Association Luxembourgeoise des Sommeliers. Mr Totaro, is joined by Niels Toase (Vice-President) and Stéphane Lopes assumes the role of secretary. The Luxembourg

Association of Sommeliers was created in 1988 and has been a part of the ASI family since the association's inception.

**ASI WELCOMES NEW CHAMPIONS:**

**ANTERO NIEMIAHO 'FINNISHES' FIRST ▼**

After a spirited competition featuring blind wine tasting,

service and theoretical elements, sommelier Antero Niemiahho emerged as the 2022 Best Sommelier of Finland besting Taneli Lehtonen (Restaurant Muru & Winebar) and Aino Tuomikoski (Baskeri & Basso) in the final. As a result of his win, Mr. Niemiahho will represent Finland at the upcoming ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest scheduled for February, 2023.

**ADRIAAN VISSER WINS TROPHÉE HENRIOT**

Adriaan Visser, sommelier at Restaurant Harry's in Maastricht is the Best Sommelier of the Netherlands. Mr. Visser, one of 12 candidates competing for the title, also earned the coveted Trophée Henriot and accompanying silver pin. The bi-annual contest was hosted under the direction of the Nederlands Gilde van Sommeliers' chairperson Heleen Boom and board member Marco Westra.

News

Member and Industry News



Photo: Contributed



Photo: Contributed

**MIKKO PARRE IS THE BEST SOMMELIER OF ESTONIA ▲**

The Eesti Sommeljeede Assotsiatsioon has announced Mikko Parre as the recipient of the Trophée Mandrarossa, presented to the winner of the Best Sommelier of Estonia. Mr. Parre was joined on the podium by Aleksei Pogrebnoi and Kevin Lilleleht.

**SOTIRIS NEOPHYTIDIS**

Limassol’s Sotiris Neophytidis, a freelance sommelier and consultant, and former winner of the Best Young Sommelier of Cyprus (2016) now boasts the title Best Sommelier of Cyprus. Neophytidis has been in the industry for more than 15 years, working at some of Cyprus’ best hotels, before transitioning to his present role.

**CRISTIAN BRANCALEONI IS THE BEST SOMMELIER OF ITALY 2022**

Piemonte’s Cristian Brancaleoni, Head Sommelier of Torino’s Ristorante Del Cambio, has won the title of Best Sommelier of Italy by the Associazione della Sommelierie Professionale Italiana (ASPI). Andrea Sala,

Head Sommelier Geranium in Copenhagen, was runner-up, while Silvio Galvan of Hotel La Perla in Corvara, placed third. The panel deciding the winner was comprised of an international jury including ASPI President Giuseppe Vaccarini, ASI Vice-president Europe Piotr Kamecki, Matteo Ghiringhelli (Best Sommelier of Italy 2010), Mattia Antonio Cianca (Best Sommelier of Italy 2019) and the reigning ASI Best Sommelier of Europe and Africa, Salvatore Castano.

**VALENTIN BUFOLIN IS THE BEST SOMMELIER OF SLOVENIA**

Valentin Bufolin avenged his second place finish in the previous Best Sommelier of Slovenia competition to take home first prize in the 2022 edition. Bufolin edged out Rok Kerin and Ilia Nozadze in the finals which were presided by Davorin Škarabot and overseen by Ivan Peršolja, President of the Sommelier Slovenia Association. Bufolin will represent Slovenia at the 2023 World Sommelier Championships in France and the 2024 European Sommelier Championships in Serbia.

**JAKUB FILIPEK, WINNER OF THE 21ST POLISH SOMMELIER CHAMPIONSHIP**

Jakub Filipek, head sommelier at Albertina restaurant in Krakow, is the winner of the 21st Polish Sommelier Championship. Second place went to Tomasz Żak of Kontakt Wine & Bistro in Warsaw, who was making his debut in the Championship, and third place to Bartosz Nowakowski of Czosnek i Oliwa restaurant in Bydgoszcz.

“For years now, the level of theoretical knowledge of Polish sommeliers has been at a high and international level. All of them are to be congratulated, especially the finalists, for their level of knowledge, their professionalism and their involvement,” stressed Andrzej Strzelczyk, who chaired the jury.

**MARK DAVID GUILLAUDEU IS THE BEST SOMMELIER USA**

The Best USA Sommelier Association (BUSA) has crowned Mark David Guillaudeu as the Best Sommelier in America. Guillaudeu beat out 6 other finalists in the finals after two rigorous qualifying rounds. A prestigious list of contenders for the title included David Bérubé (Daniel Restaurant, New York), Eduardo Bolaños (The Wine House, Los Angeles), Dustin Chabert (Chicago), Max Goldberg (Maybourne Hotel, Beverly Hills) and Kaysie Rogers (Flagler Steakhouse, Palm Beach).

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# INDUSTRY NEWS



Photo: Contributed

News

## VINEXPOSIUM ASIA SETS SAIL FOR SINGAPORE

After years in Hong Kong, Vinexposium will be setting sail for Singapore in 2023. The recent announcement of the next Vinexpo Asia will be held in Singapore means Hong Kong, who hosted the biannual event from 1998 to 2018, prior to the pandemic, will no longer play host of this prestigious event.

The move of the event to Singapore will allow the organizers to leverage the strength of the previous events, but also welcome new clients. Singapore has long been a center of commerce in the region, and its central location positioned in Southeast Asia with close connections to the Oceania market, will broaden the reach of the event. The success of Vinexpo Asia, which attracts over 1,000 international wine and spirits exhibitors from around the world, is symbolic of the strength of the

Asian wine buying and sommelier community.

Vinexpo Asia in Singapore is scheduled to be hosted May 23 to 25, 2023 at the Marina Bay Sands, a luxury hotel and convention center.

**Read more at:**  
[www.vinexposium.com/en/vinexpo-asia](http://www.vinexposium.com/en/vinexpo-asia)

## ARENI GLOBAL RELEASES STUDY: HOW THE PANDEMIC IMPACTED WINE LISTS

The results are in, albeit from overall perspective, they could be seen as a little cloudy. In the study conducted by Areni Global in partnership with Wine Services, the volume of wines listed on the over 3,000 lists studied decreased only by 2.2 per cent since 2019.

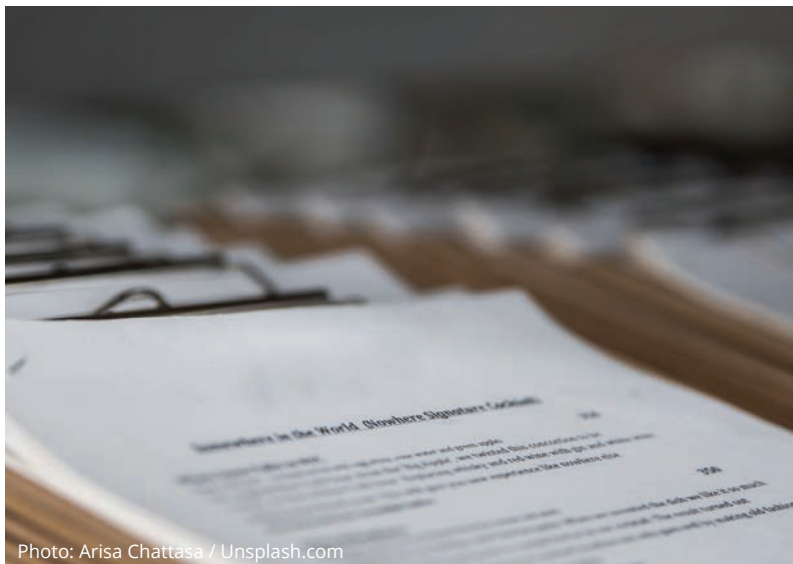
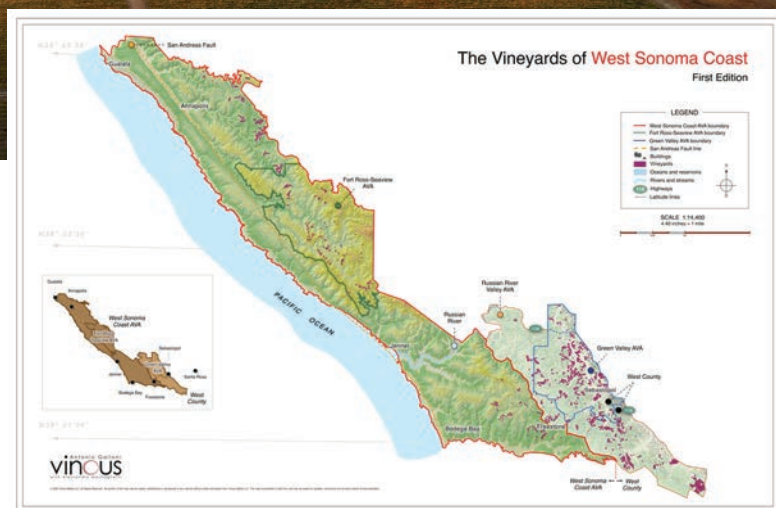


Photo: Arisa Chattasa / Unsplash.com

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Bordeaux remained the most important wine region, in terms of visibility, with Champagne and California not far behind. Volatility and change was felt most in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the United States, a drive to value saw listings under 50 Euro increase by 12 per cent while in London, wine lists were pared down by 7 per cent. While quantitative understanding of the numbers is challenging when other factors are taken into account, Areni says “it became clear that there’s been a deep shift in restaurants, from sommeliers pruning their lists and making more curated options, to more attention being paid to the needs of local diners rather than international ones.”

**Read more at:** <http://areni.global/how-did-the-pandemic-affect-wine-lists>

**WEST SONOMA COAST APPROVED AS AVA**

The approval of the West Sonoma Coast AVA by the TTB (Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau) has been a long time in the coming. The region encompasses more than 50,000 hectares of which approximately 400 are under vine, mostly planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. American Viticultural Areas have suffered, to a certain extent, from a perceived lack of homogeneity of terroir, particularly its mega-AVA. The large Sonoma Coast AVA has not been immune to criticism as it embraces both warm and cool growing regions, making everything from lean, fresh Pinot

Noir and Chardonnay to high-octane Zinfandel in its eastern extreme. The new AVA reflects the true cool climate nature of this coastal, moderate elevation (400 to 1,800 feet) region that is home to some of the state’s most treasured wineries. Attendees of last year’s ASI Best Sommelier of Europe contest in Cyprus, bore witness to the uniquely elegant and savoury Pinot Noir the region produces thanks to a lecture and tasting hosted by Elaine Chukan Brown on behalf of California Wines.

**Read more at:** [www.westsonomacoast.com](http://www.westsonomacoast.com)

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