

ASI MAGAZINE

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GUY SAVOY, XAVIER ROUSSET MS
Looking back and to the future



**TERRY KANDYLIS, BERNARD LEMOINE,
ELEFTHERIOS HANIALIDIS MS**
Wine List Profitability



YEAR IN REVIEW





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DE LA SOMMELLERIE
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Welcome!



*William Wouters,
President ASI*



ASI's Year in Review: Celebrating Our Achievements and Looking Towards a Bright Future

As I reflect on the remarkable achievements and memorable events of the past year, I am amazed that our ASI family has been able to accomplish so much in so little time. It has been a year of growth, challenges, and triumphs, and it has been my pleasure to share these moments with you.

First, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Raimonds Tomsons from Latvia, who was crowned the Best Sommelier of the World in Paris, an event hosted by our great friends at the USDF (Union de la Sommellerie Française). Raimonds' victory is not just a personal achievement; it's also a testament to the dedication and skill that epitomises the spirit of our profession. His exceptional knowledge, charisma, and poise under pressure have set a new benchmark for sommeliers worldwide and have brought great pride to the ASI community.

This year also marked a significant milestone with our successful General Assembly, hosted in Finland. The assembly was a vibrant platform for exchange, learning, and decision-making, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of our profession. The discussions and resolutions adopted during the assembly have set the course for the ASI's future endeavors and

have reinforced our commitment to excellence, education, and collaboration among our international community.

In addition to these hallmark events, ASI organised another of our sommelier bootcamps. This time it was held in Ecuador. These bootcamps have been designed not just as training sessions but as immersive experiences that allowed participants to delve deep into the local wine culture, understand diverse terroirs, and expand their global perspective. The enthusiastic participation and overwhelmingly positive feedback from these bootcamps have been inspiring, showcasing the growing interest and dedication among sommeliers to continually enhance their skills and knowledge. We also successfully launched our Certification 1 and Certification 2 exams, which reaffirms our commitment to support sommeliers at all levels of their development.

As we look back on these achievements, I am filled with a sense of pride and optimism for what the future holds for our profession. ASI is more than just an association; it is a global family of passionate individuals united by a shared love for hospitality and a commitment to excellence. The past year has shown that

despite the challenges we may face, our community's resilience and unity make us stronger and more adaptable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each one of you for your continued support, dedication, and contribution to the ASI and the sommelier profession at large. Your involvement and enthusiasm are the driving force behind our success and the advancement of our profession.

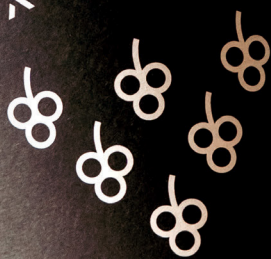
Looking ahead, we have many exciting plans and initiatives in the pipeline, all aimed at promoting the sommelier profession, fostering international collaboration, and enhancing the skills and knowledge of our members. I encourage you to stay engaged, participate in our upcoming events, and continue to be ambassadors of wine culture in your respective countries.

In closing, let us raise our glasses to the achievements of the past year and to the promising journey ahead. Together, we will continue to elevate the sommelier profession and make a lasting impact on the world of wine.

Happy holidays from myself and the board of ASI.

W. & J.
GRAHAM'S
ESTABLISHED 1820
PORT

SIX GRAPES



W. & J.
GRAHAM'S
ESTABLISHED 1820
DOURO VALLEY · PORTUGAL
RESERVE PORT

The Six Grapes symbol originated in the nineteenth century. Following each harvest, Graham's winemakers would mark each barrel of port using grape symbols to rate the quality of the wine from one to six. The image of Six Grapes on a barrel meant the wine inside had Vintage Port potential. It indicated complexity, structure, and balance. By the early 1900's, Graham's started bottling wine selected from these barrels under the Six Grapes label. Over a century later, Six Grapes continues to be Graham's signature reserve port.

Wm & J. Graham & Co

Guest Editors

GUY SAVOY, XAVIER ROUSSET MS



Guy Savoy: Reflecting on the Past and Anticipating the Future of Gastronomy

Guy Savoy's story is a testament to the art of fine dining and relentless pursuit of excellence. Born 70 years ago in Nevers, France, Guy Savoy grew from the son of a gardener and a taproom owner into arguably the world's most renowned chef. His rise in the culinary world was marked by an early apprenticeship with the legendary Troisgros brothers, a pivotal experience that shaped his approach to cooking and set the foundation for his illustrious career.

In 1980, Savoy's culinary vision materialised into reality with the opening of his own restaurant in rue Duret, Paris. This venture not only marked the beginning of his independent journey but also heralded a new era in French cuisine. By 1985, his Parisian establishment had already earned two Michelin stars, a recognition that was a testimony to his unique culinary skills and innovative approach. The zenith of his career, however, was the coveted third Michelin star, awarded in 2002, cementing his status as a maestro in the world of haute cuisine.

Savoy's influence, however, extends beyond the borders of France. His eponymous restaurant in Las Vegas mirrors the excellence of its Parisian counterpart, with both establishments boasting multiple Michelin stars. Savoy's empire also includes three other restaurants in Paris, each echoing his commitment to culinary perfection. The pinnacle of Savoy's achievements came with the prestigious title of the Best Restaurant in the World, awarded by La Liste. This is a recognition he received a remarkable five times in a row. We asked Savoy for his thoughts on the current and future state of the hospitality industry.

“I deeply believe that ‘restaurants are the last civilised places on the planet.’”

ASI: 2023 was the first year of uninterrupted business due to a pandemic since 2019. How long will it be before the industry fully recovers? Will it?

Guy Savoy (GS): The foodservice sector has been hit hard, with restaurants remaining closed for extended periods for almost two years. Fortunately, we’ve been “fed” by aid. However, young and indebted restaurants are recovering with difficulty, or not at all.

Our sector has suffered in another way, one that is less often mentioned: the training of cooks and waitstaff. Those I call our students. Ours are not professions learned from books or online, but by practicing and observing. A two-year break from an apprenticeship has had enormous impact. Many young people destined for the hospitality industry have been unable to learn these trades and have therefore turned their backs on them. People are crying about the shortage

of staff, but those of chefs and restaurateurs know exactly why this has happened.

ASI: The post-pandemic global economy has recently faced many challenges. What impact have these economic fluctuations had on the hospitality world, and on your restaurants in particular?

GS: From this point of view, the consequences of the pandemic and its aftermath were quite different. Indeed, the deprivation of all leisure activities, of all conviviality, of all the “good things in life”, created such frustration that, when the doors reopened, we witnessed an unbridled desire to rediscover all these pleasures. So, as soon as the restaurant reopened, the reservation book filled up and we couldn’t even satisfy all the requests, which far exceeded the physical capacity of our restaurant.

We didn’t make any changes to the way we received our guests, and the menu continued to change with each season, as always, because what our guests really wanted was to rediscover everything they had to give up.

ASI: Sustainability is a growing concern worldwide. Could you tell us how this trend has influenced your restaurant operations and sourcing practices?

GS: Sustainability is intrinsic to our business. In our restaurants there is no plastic. Everything is made of sustainable and/or recyclable materials: porcelain, ceramics, glass, cotton; no packaging. Everything is served on the spot. There is no waste. Everything is consumed. At least almost all of it. When it comes to produce, there is minimal transportation. Our suppliers are 90 per cent French, and most local. We serve no proteins raised using intensive breeding methods



Guy Savoy with an artistic artichoke mural (Photo: Fabrice Hyber)

“If I knew what was going to happen tomorrow, I’ll do it today!”

or vegetables grown in heated greenhouses. Our producers work according to the ancestral practices of their terroir, which is also a guarantee of the protection of their biodiversity. For us, the carbon balance is not just balanced; it shows a strong surplus for the benefit of nature!

ASI: Have consumers changed because of technology?

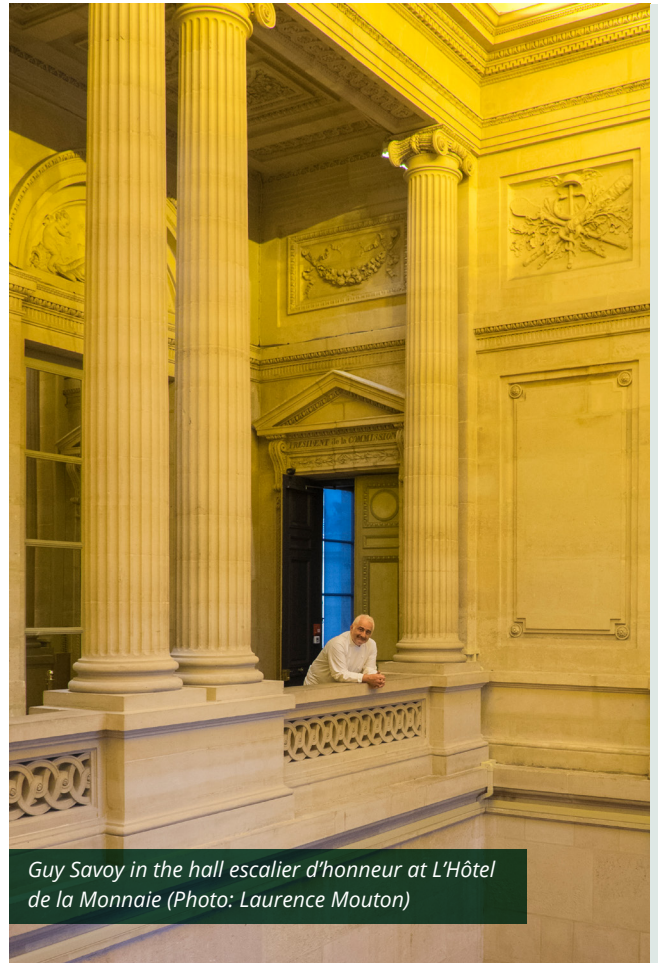
GS: Yes, consumers are much better informed thanks to our presence on social networks, podcasts, and websites. They are informed in real time all over the world. It’s why we now have Thai, Filipino, Indonesian, Taiwanese, and Korean guests, for example, in our restaurants. These are nationalities we’ve never had visit us before. Thanks to the awareness technology brings, they come to us to discover our art of living. We show them the true face of French gastronomy, and that is something we know how to do!

ASI: What, if any, technological innovations have you incorporated into your restaurants?

GS: I believe that too much technology is detrimental to conviviality. A restaurant is a place where you are surrounded by attention, where your slightest desire is satisfied, even anticipated, by the men and women who are there to make your experience a moment of total happiness for one, two, three hours or more. I deeply believe that ‘restaurants are the last civilised places on the planet.’

ASI: What are your forecasts for the next twelve months as it regards consumer habits, wine trends and the restaurant industry in general?

GS: If I knew what was going to happen tomorrow, I’d do it today!



Guy Savoy in the hall escalier d'honneur at L'Hôtel de la Monnaie (Photo: Laurence Mouton)



*Xavier Rousset MS*

“Rousset’s innovative approach led to the creation of TRADE, the hospitality industry’s first-ever private members’ club, later transformed into a comprehensive digital app offering a range of benefits for the hospitality community.”

Xavier Rousset MS: A Master Sommelier’s Vision of the Present and Future of the Restaurant Industry

Xavier Rousset’s journey into the world of wine and hospitality began at the young age of 16, sparked by a visit to a winery in Collioure. His early fascination with wine deepened when he came across an article about the renowned sommelier Gérard Basset, founder of Hotel Du Vin. Seizing the opportunity, Rousset reached out to Basset for a summer job, marking the start of a remarkable career spanning over two decades. At just 23, he achieved the title of Master Sommelier, becoming the youngest ever to do so. Rousset’s early experience included prestigious stints at the Hotel du Vin in Bristol and the two Michelin-starred Le Manoir aux Quat’Saisons with Chef Raymond Blanc.

In 2007, Rousset launched his first venture, Texture, which earned a Michelin Star, followed by the 28-50 Wine Bars in 2010. His ventures didn’t stop there. He continued to make his mark in the industry with roles as a judge on key panels and as a teacher with the Court of Master Sommeliers. 2015 saw the opening of Blandford Comptoir in Marylebone and Comptoir Café & Wine in Mayfair. The following year, he partnered with Gearoid Devaney to open Cabotte.

Rousset’s innovative approach led to the creation of TRADE, the hospitality industry’s first-ever private members’ club, later transformed into a comprehensive digital app offering a range of benefits for the hospitality community. Continuing his entrepreneurial journey, Rousset recently opened The Black Book, a wine bar in Soho, and Old Brompton, a wine and cheese bar in South Kensington. In this interview with ASI, Rousset shares his insights on emerging trends in the wine and hospitality industry, drawing from his extensive experience and innovative ventures.



Black Book

ASI: How did your time with Gérard Basset inspire you?

Xavier Rousset (XR): When I was 18, I was completing my A-levels, and considering going the wine industry. At the time the quickest way was through restaurants and hotels. At the same time my mom showed me an article in the local paper, about this man Gérard Basset doing very well at Hotel du Vin in the UK (United Kingdom). He was from a small place in France, like me, and doing incredibly well as sommelier. My mom said to me, 'why don't you write to him to spend a month in England?' So, I did. One night, he called me in France, and he said, 'okay, you can come for a month.' This was August 1997. After that time with Gérard, I was hooked. I loved Gerard, I loved the wine. I loved everything. It was amazing.

ASI: You had a lot of success early in your career. What accounts for your personal drive?

XR: There was so much energy around me during my time at Hotel du Vin. This led me to take exam and do wine competitions and keep learning about wine. When I got my MS (Master Sommelier) and UK Sommelier of the Year title I was very young. It took me 10 years to open my own place, in 2007. I was only 28, which meant I was young, crazy, and naive enough to open a

restaurant. I'm not sure I would do it again, but I don't regret it. Let's put it this way. It was more trying to prove to myself, at the time, I could do it. From then on it was just one target after another. Now I have six locations in London.

ASI: 2023 is the first year where we really haven't had the pandemic interruptions, since 2019. How long is it, do you think, before the industry fully recovers from its impact? Will it?

XR: It will take some time. I think, fundamentally, the global restaurant scene has changed permanently. There is a global staffing crisis, which is a direct result of COVID. As result, people changed their work lives and

lifestyles. Restaurants won't ever be the same. For our restaurants in London, for example, we've changed opening hours, and number of days we are open to accommodate as a way of adapting, the best can to this new reality. As for the question of have we as an industry recover. The answer is 'not yet.'

ASI: Has the consumer changed?

XR: I don't think so. Once we reopened customers were so happy and grateful, we returned. They've been very positive and supportive. I think their behaviors have returned to normal lately, and they are still being supportive, despite the impacts of rising prices because of inflation. I'm grateful that they still go out and spend money in our restaurants.

ASI: As a sommelier are you seeing any changes in what wines consumers order?

XR: They like biodynamic, but that's been a trend for quite some time now. We are seeing a lot more interested in local wines, especially English sparkling wines. And I think people love the fact that they are local, often made within a 50-mile radius of the restaurant. There are quite a few restaurants now using as many local ingredients as possible which has a positive impact on our carbon footprint. This is great news.



Blandford Comptoir



Cabotte



Comptoir Café & Wine

ASI: How is technology playing a role in restaurants?

XR: It's been massive. Customers are increasingly knowledgeable about wine, cocktails, and spirits. We are having more in-depth conversations with our guests about the specifics of producers, vintages, and the people behind the products we serve, which also includes our food offerings. This makes staff training more important, as this expansion of knowledge, because of technology, keeps us on our toes. It's positive as it pushes staff to be knowledgeable and forces them to stay current.

ASI: Are you incorporating technology in other ways in your restaurants?

XR: We are considering switching to iPad wine lists instead of the traditional printed list, but we haven't crossed that bridge yet. Technology like this, and use of QR codes, was more relevant during COVID, but personally I am slightly old-fashioned when it comes to our wine lists. I prefer an old-fashioned wine list instead of some wireless version. There is also a danger of relying too much on technology. I think having customers talk with their sommelier, and waiters is important. Watching their eyes open up when they talk about a specific wine, or a dish brings a lot of value to hospitality experience.

ASI: What trends will be driving the wine lists of 2024?

XR: I'll be a bit boring here as we've been talking for a few months, even years, about the same things. It will be wines with higher acidity, less oak, and less alcohol. This applies not just to new cool climate regions, but this is also a trend we are witnessing in Spain, Australia, South Africa, and California, for example. There is not specific grape, like in the past, driving the trend. What is trendy is a great drinkability. Customers are now willing to experiment up to a point. If the customer is spending over 100 pounds per bottle, they don't want to risk it on something they don't really know. Less than that and they are happy to experiment. This has allowed me to put on some different crazy wines by the glass at time, such as a sweet wine from Romania, or a Chinese Cabernet. By the glass programmes are great ways to introduce consumers to these new styles because it allows them to try them without committing to a full bottle.

ASI: Perfect. Finally, did you create the TRADE app?

XR: Prior to COVID we opened a hospitality members club in a basement in Soho, London. It was designed as a place to welcome hospitality staff hours. COVID kicked in, and then we realised it was going to be tough. The space is now called Black Book, which is open to the public. Following COVID, we took spirit of TRADE and transitioned it into, a digital world. Basically, how it works is it allows trade to get discounts and special offers, when you go out.

Petite Fleur

CHAMPAGNE
FLEUR DE MIRAVAL

PETITE FLEUR, THE NEW CUVÉE FROM CHAMPAGNE HOUSE FLEUR DE MIRAVAL

The artistic and artisanal approach of Champagne Fleur de Miraval, supported by internationally recognized mastery, has given birth to a new champagne. With the vast majority of Chardonnay, mainly from the Grand Cru Mesnil-sur-Oger, and a touch of Pinot Noir from the neighbouring village - Premier Cru Vertus - the subtle blend of «Petite Fleur» is classic; in the tradition of great Rosé Champagnes.



Crafting a Profitable Wine List: how three leading sommeliers make the most from their wine programme



Bernard Lemoyne

Top sommeliers don't curate lists purely out of self-interest. Ultimately their role is to ensure the beverage programme harmoniously blends with the cuisine, appeals to their customers and is a profit center. We asked three notable sommeliers about their strategies when developing wine lists that combine these elements.

Despite his relatively young age, **Terry Kandylis** has been a prominent figure in the UK sommelier scene for more than a decade. The Evia, Greece, born Kandylis has worked at several notable restaurants including Heston Blumenthal's The Fat Duck, The Ledbury and as Head Sommelier at 67 Pall Mall, after which he spent time as Group Wine Director for Caprice Holdings vast number of London eateries before return to Noble Rot, a trio of London based 'shrines to the vin.' In 2016 Kandylis was awarded the distinction of UK Sommelier of the Year.

Zambia-born **Bernard Joseph Lemoyne** is the Head Sommelier and General Manager of Ottawa-based Atelier, a prestigious restaurant in Canada's capital city. Lemoyne began his hospitality career in a kitchen while studying criminology at the University of Ottawa. Ten years later he completed his sommelier programme at a local college, before pursuing the Master Sommelier title.

Eleftherios Haniialidis MS has enjoyed a long and prosperous career in the hospitality industry as a Head Sommelier and consultant. He is an ASI Diploma (Gold) recipient and Certified Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers. He was awarded the title of Best Sommelier of Greece in 2020.

The Food and Wine Relationship

A sentiment shared by all three sommeliers is the need of the wine list to align with the cuisine of the restaurant, albeit where Atelier's Lemoyne journey to crafting a wine list begins in the kitchen, Kandylis says 'at Noble Rot wine is centre stage.'

Lemoyne says "whether it is here at Atelier or when I am consulting is having a meeting with the chef and kitchen. Ultimately restaurants are chef driven. Your wine list should align with the cuisine first." Kandylis stresses the importance of a wine list that complements the menu's culinary themes, but selections at Noble Rot aren't limited to France and England, where Chef Stephen Harris sources most of his ingredients. He explains "we love artisanal producers who farm responsibly and make delicious wines that speak of where they were grown, whether that is the classic French and Italian regions, or up-and-coming terroirs elsewhere in the world. This ethos is reflected in the vigneronns we write about in Noble Rot magazine, which is the starting point for all our restaurant wine programmes, although the exact composition of each list will differ slightly from site-to-site."

Margins and Profitability

Hanialidis prefers to focus on pricing strategies. His first course of action is to identify the selling price range that would be the most popular, quickest selling, according to the location and concept and cuisine of the venue. His next step is to find "my work horses" and make the proper agreements based on quantities to achieve better cost prices."

Kandylis counters profitability is found in building consumer interest. "At Noble Rot we deliberately work on very tight margins compared to other restaurants and do everything we can make our lists different from elsewhere. This encourages our guests to drink better which, in turn, enhances their experience, creates regular customers, and has enabled us to build a reputation as a wine destination. To do this we buy from a wide network of private collectors and European merchants, in addition to working closely with UK suppliers (including our sister company Keeling & Andrew)." Kandylis suggests volume-driven ordering and negotiation of volume discounts 'will reduce wine costs and increase profit margins, but the trade-off is usually a less interesting wine list.'



Eleftherios Hanialidis MS

"Classic wine styles and regions are fundamental to our lists. They are usually referred to as 'classic' for good reason."

- Terry Kandylis





Bernard Joseph Lemoyne prefers to think about profitability from another perspective. He advocates for keeping prices in line with customer expectations, largely driven by the restaurant's food

“These additions should not at the detriment” to “these additions should be not at the detriment.”

– Bernard Lemoyne

prices, but also suggests another way to keep a list profitable is by keeping it manageable, as he says “one thing the pandemic taught us is that your cost of goods percentage is nothing compared to solid cash flow. You can't take a good margin to the bank. Ordering appropriate volumes of wine is key.”

Familiarity Versus Trendy

All three value the balance of classic and less-well known wine choices. For Kandylis “classic wine styles and regions are fundamental to our lists. They are usually referred to as

‘classic’ for good reason. That said, we are just as excited to introduce our guests to new and interesting grapes or places that they might not expect. Mature, ready-to-drink bottles are also an important part of our offering, and these will typically be from well-established regions with a long track record of producing fine wines, but there is great value for money to be found off the beaten track and this offers great opportunities to savvy sommeliers.”

Lemoyne argues “having some familiarity on your wine list is important but trends can also make us pivot and be more flexible, keeping our wine selections fresh, but these additions should be not at the detriment of the core philosophy. The list should still be fundamentally rooted in its ability to match the cuisine.” This approach of balancing classics, trending styles and unique varietal and regions caters to a broad range of customer preferences, offering both comfort in familiar choices and excitement in discovering new options.

Your Best Measure of Success is the Real Return

Kandylis points out that while external factors like taxes and inflation are uncontrollable, areas like wastage and inventory management are crucial for a profitable wine programme. Techniques like using wine preservation systems and managing a dynamic by-the-glass offering are essential. Lemoyne echoes the sentiment of controls. Lemoyne says "the comptroller is one person it is important to please. Personally, I hate doing inventory, but inventory management, and quantifiable measurements, are key to having a successful and profitable wine programme."

Knowledge is Key

Kandylis acknowledges that their approach of listing "small amounts of limited production wines that change on a daily basis undoubtedly increases the administrative burden, but the result is a unique and exciting wine programme that keeps our team members engaged and eager to share new listings with our guests." It also means ensuring well-trained staff as otherwise "if the wine knowledge of team members is not at a high level, this will make a regularly changing wine programme problematic", Haniialidis succinctly concludes "finally invest in people who understand and know wine in order to form a good team, because at the end of the day these are the people who will make the difference in terms of sales."

"Invest in people who understand and know wine in order to form a good team, because at the end of the day these are the people who will make the difference in terms of sales."

- Eleftherios Haniialidis MS



Terry Kandylis



WINE PARIS & VINEXPO PARIS 2024, A TRADE EXHIBITION GETTING BIGGER AND BETTER.



The Vinexposium group's flagship exhibition is readying to ramp up the experience for wine and spirits professionals. February 12-14 promise to be action-packed with even more regions, countries, conversations, inspiration and business relations. 2024 will mark a turning point in the history of Wine Paris & Vinexpo Paris whose growth and legitimacy are all-set to get a significant boost.

+72%

international exhibitors and

50

producer countries

+28%

extra floor space to welcome the

3,900

exhibitors

+25%

floor space in the Be Spirits area designed for spirits, craft drinks, No/Low, beers & ciders

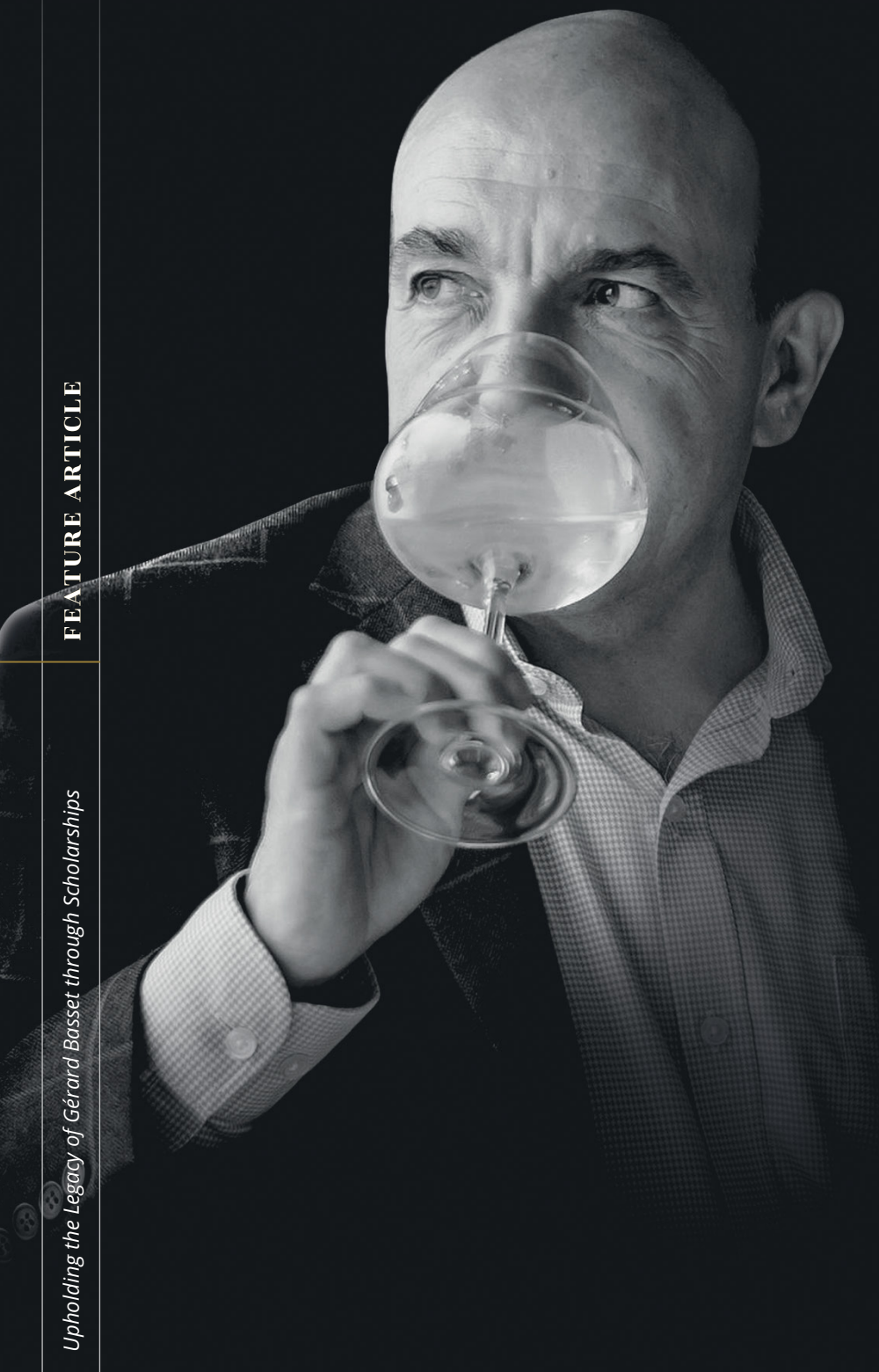
100%

of France's wine regions



VINEXPOSIUM

Upholding the Legacy of Gérard Basset Through Scholarships



Nina and Romané Basset need little introduction to the world of Sommellerie. Nina's husband, Gérard, was considered by many to be the greatest sommelier in history. Since his passing, Nina and Romané have continued his legacy through amongst other things, the Gérard Basset Foundation, which has made a significant impact in the wine industry through its initiatives, not least of which is the development of scholarships that support increased diversity in the world of Sommellerie. As part of this year's Golden Vines Award celebration held in October, Dr. Sachindri Rana from New Zealand, Eduardo Bolaños from the United States, and Amrita Singh from India were officially awarded their 2023 Taylor's Port Golden Vines Diversity scholarships worth a staggering 55,000 Pound Sterling each. Also of note, Aprine Manukyan from Armenia also received her Dom Pérignon Golden Vines MW Scholarship.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Upholding the Legacy of Gérard Basset through Scholarships

ASI: Can you tell us a little bit about the inspiration behind setting up the Gérard Basset Foundation and how it upholds the legacy of Gérard?

Nina Basset (NB): We were very keen that, when Gérard passed away, that nobody forgot him. We wanted to find a way to keep his legacy alive. We wanted to do so in a way that would honour, what

“We try to help them overcome that hurdle and allow them to fulfill their natural potential.”

– Romané Basset

was so important to Gérard, which was mentoring and nurturing people and ensuring that they got the best possible development and education to help them in their career progression. Gérard always loved studying, traveling. As such, we decided if we set something up in his honour, it must include education, and it has to be about mentoring

people and helping them on their journey. The idea of a foundation developed from conversations that we had between ourselves and between, one of Gérard's very good friends, Lewis Chester. We think quite small, but Lewis thinks very big. When we started talking about the foundation, Lewis said,

‘if we're going to do this, I think you really need to consider doing it on a large scale. It's got to be a global foundation that touches as many people as possible.’ That's how it sort of all started.

Romané Basset (RB): To elaborate on what mom (Nina) mentioned, when we give out scholarships or grants for funding, we look for people who are hardworking, passionate, and determined. They're obsessed almost, in many cases, with wine, spirits or hospitality but for whatever reason, outside of their control, they can't progress further. There is a hurdle standing in their way if you will. We try to help them overcome that hurdle and allow them to fulfill their natural potential, which I think is what papa (Gérard), was all about. He loved sort of seeing people flourish and achieve what they wanted to.

ASI: Does this idea of bringing in the values of diversity and inclusion and opportunity give you personal reward?

NB: It is hugely rewarding, not only because everybody that we help has a very inspirational story, but as Romané said we help them push down that very last hurdle. We can see how this helps them



gain confidence, grow their careers, progress, and allows them to network with other people who are like minded in the world of wine. It's exactly why Gérard loved mentoring young people. We're very proud of all our scholars and, what they're doing in terms of their study programmes and career.

RB: To that point, we're sort of almost building a new community with all these scholars and the beneficiaries of our grants of funding to different institutions and groups around the world. It is so rewarding to see them all making a real success story from it.

NB: We are finding now we can connect our new protégés with our previous scholarship and grant recipients. It's a lovely way of connecting everybody, and it keeps the thread of Gérard through everything that we do.

ASI: One person that comes to mind is Sharrol Mukendi-Klaas of South Africa who has won a scholarship you created in partnership with ASI. How have you seen her grow?

NB: Sharrol has done a phenomenal job, and taken an incredible number of courses, since she won that scholarship. She's also been able to visit some of the classic winemaking regions in France. She's been able to experience, Michelin star level service, and build her skills through initiatives such as ASI Bootcamp in Ecuador. From what I've seen, and from what I've heard, her confidence has just grown enormously.

RB: It's lovely to know Sharrol has become an inspiration to others in South Africa. Now other people can look at themselves and say, 'if Sharrol can do that, I can too. She's become a role model for others, and especially women in wine in South Africa.'

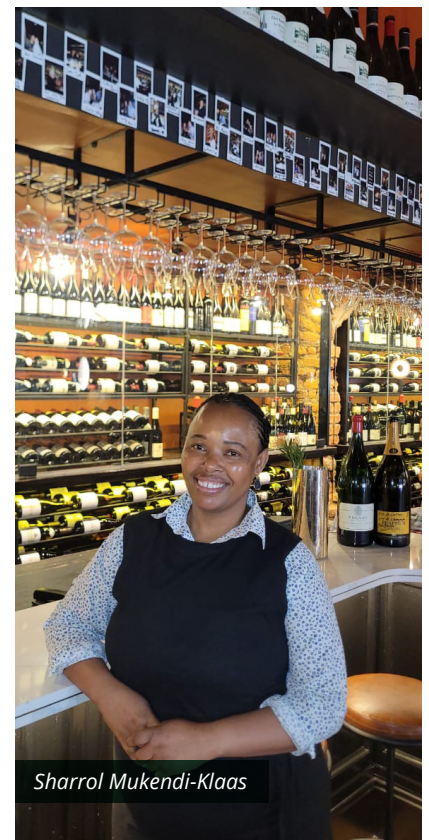
ASI: When you provide a scholarship or grant, what are the qualities that you look for?

RB: One important factor which has to be considered is the need of the person. Will the support help them overcome obstacles? Past need, we are looking for a balance, between ability and character. We offer scholarships, grants, and bursaries at, many different levels. From WSET Level 1 all the way up to the Master of Wine programme. As such the criteria varies depending upon what is included in the award. Beyond ability we also look for character. We want people who will share their knowledge, and be as passionate as papa was, about mentoring, about educating, about growing the sommelier, wine, spirits, and hospitality community wherever they live.

NB: It should be noted, each scholarship has a different panel of judges. There's always one of us or one of our trustees who are then joined by other high-profile judges from the wine, spirits, and hospitality industry. So far, the people that have been chosen as scholars have all been brilliant, not only in terms of being ambassadors for the foundation, but also ambassadors for Gérard 's legacy in terms of they're already involved with mentoring others.

ASI: A lot of focus is given to those that win scholarships or grants to allow them to achieve the highest distinctions such as Master of Wine, but how about those just starting their path?

NB: We have our scholarships, of course, which are sort of the headline ones, that have big sponsors, for those very high-level qualifications. Alongside those programmes we have what we



Sharrol Mukendi-Klaas



Romané and Nina Basset



Gérard Basset and Family

“We can see how this helps them gain confidence and grow their careers.”

– Nina Basset

call our grantees. When setting up the foundation, we had this realisation that we want to have a global impact, but we don't necessarily know, living here in the UK, what's best for, people in emerging regions. Through these programmes focused on the foundational or intermediate level we've had very broad impact.

I think that's really where we make a broad impact at that more foundational to intermediate level. To date we've supported 23 different grantees in 11 different countries. A great example of a grantee programme we've supported since 2021 is called the Pinotage Youth Development Academy based in South Africa. This programme, for students aged between 18 and 25 provides them a combination of education, vocational training, work experience, and life skills. As the programme is based in Stellenbosch, it has led to a lot of career opportunities for those seeking employment in the South African wine industry. Once the

leave the programme, the support doesn't stop, as they get continued support from the alumni. I am happy to say the students we have supported over the last two years have broken records with upwards of 94 per cent passing WSET 1 and 2. You never know, in a few years time, we might see one of them applying for our, Master of Wine or Master Sommelier Scholarship. To reiterate we see supporting those starting their journey at the foundational and intermediate levels, because we see this as essential for building the pyramid of knowledge and skills that people can work up to.

RB: Another fantastic project we support is in Greece for single mothers, run by the Wine and Spirits Professional Center (WSPC), a local WSET provider. Greece, as a European nation, you might assume wouldn't have some of the issues that other countries do when it comes to diversity and inclusion. But as it turns out, single mothers in Greece have additional difficulties, as there is a stigma there when

you are a single mother. The WSPC came to us with this idea of funding 25 Greek single mothers taking WSET Level 1 and a basic barista course. The view being those skills are all very applicable in the tourism industry in Greece.

ASI: What's the next two or three years hold for the foundation?

RB: We recently appointed Lulie Halstead, founder of Wine Intelligence, a renowned consumer research, organisation in the wine industry, as interim CEO. Lulie has incredible experience in the wine industry. She's very well respected and well-known. With her help, we're going to grow our, fundraising abilities, which thanks to the generosity of the wine industry is already incredible. We're immensely grateful, but I think we want to open new avenues for fundraising with a view to then being able to support more grantees, more bursary recipients, and more scholars, around the world. We have a few projects in the pipeline, so I think come the start of next year, we'll be able to announce those more fully.



Gérard Basset and ASI:

a timeless bond

Giuseppe Vaccarini receives the ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award
 Left to Right: Nina Basset, Giuseppe Vaccarini, Serge Dubs, Romané Basset

FEATURE ARTICLE

Upholding the Legacy of Gérard Basset through Scholarships

The Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI) and the Gérard Basset Foundation, have a special bond forever tied to the link between the association and Gérard Basset himself. The relationship is rooted in the pursuit of excellence and education, and a joint desire to spread the knowledge of wine to all corners of the globe.

This connection is exemplified most recently by the foundation announcing its support of Sommelier Education for Zimbabwe, in partnership with ASI, the Sommeliers Academy, and the Sommeliers Association of Zimbabwe. This will be the first ever grantee in Zimbabwe and symbolises both the foundation and the association's ethos of diversity and inclusion. This follows in the footsteps of the foundation and ASI presenting the inaugural ASI Gérard Basset Foundation Sommelier Scholarship, to Sharrol Mukendi-Klaas, from South Africa, this past February. Amongst other opportunities, Ms. Mukendi-Klaas will be working towards her ASI Certification 2 thanks to the scholarship and support provided by the foundation.

With the addition of the grantee programme in Zimbabwe, the scholarship Ms. Mukendi-Klaas received which was presented in partnership with the foundation, ASI, the Sommeliers Academy, and the South African Sommeliers Association, and finally their

ongoing support of the Pinotage Youth Development Academy (PYDA) the foundation, ASI and its regional partners are demonstrating a clear desire to support prospective sommeliers and hospitality professionals succeed in the region.

Earlier this year, at a ceremonial dinner held during the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the World in Paris, the foundation and ASI recognised Giuseppe Vaccarani as the recipient of the prestigious 2023 Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award. Vaccarani's achievement is a testament to the enduring legacy of Gérard Basset, and of Vaccarini's (himself a former world champion, and president of ASI) own lifelong commitment to being an ambassador of wine service, education, and hospitality, Giuseppe is a mentor and a shining example of professionalism, both through his own achievements and how he has inspired others to succeed in their own, not least through his role in developing the ASI Diploma, and recently launched Certification levels.



ADVINI

DES VIGNOBLES & DES HOMMES

A WATERSHED YEAR FOR KEN FORRESTER

The Stellenbosch Chenin Blanc pioneer, Ken Forrester, was this year the recipient of the 1659 Visionary Leadership Award, as well as being honoured as the Drinks Business Man of the Year, for his profound contribution towards the South African wine industry. A recently announced five-star rating for the Ken Forrester FMC 2022 in the 2024 Platter's South African Wine Guide culminated a watershed year for Ken Forrester.

Forrester has had a significant impact on the South African wine industry, most notably as a flag-bearer for Chenin Blanc. He has been devoted to this varietal since 1993, when he and his wife, Teresa, decided to buy a 50-ha run down Stellenbosch property at an auction. A massive renovation was undertaken, both in the vineyards (Ken) and the house (Teresa). Ken was advised to uproot an old Chenin vineyard and to rather plant with Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay. But something stopped him, saying that "I wanted to give it a chance."

A second chance: both for Forrester – who was at that stage a restaurateur in Johannesburg - and an old Chenin Blanc vineyard that was destined for the chopping block. With most of the vineyard planted to Chenin Blanc, it was decided to enlist the help of good friend and top winemaker, Martin Meinert, with the quest to produce Chenin Blanc that could rival any white wine in the world.

Since then, the wines have been poured at numerous grand events, including the opening of the Scottish Parliament, as well as the 85th birthday of South Africa's own icon, former President Mandela. Ken's Chenin Blanc has received considerable international acclaim, receiving literally hundreds of awards and accolades. The Ken Forrester Old Vine Reserve Chenin Blanc 2021 was recognized as the world's top Chenin Blanc at the 2022 Decanter World Wine Awards, while most recently, the 2022 vintage of the famed FMC was awarded a 5-star rating in the authoritative Platter's South African Wine Guide 2024.

Forever daring and courageous, Forrester has played a remarkable role as inspiration for a generation of South African Chenin Blanc producers – most notably to his mentee for nearly a decade, Shawn Mathyse, who has this year taken the helm as Ken Forrester Vineyards winemaker.

For more information, contact Advini South Africa's Strategic Development and Marketing Director, Dr Edo Heyns



THE EVENTS OF 2023

The Year that Was: a look back at
the ASI events in 2023

FEATURE ARTICLE



Raimonds Tomsons (Latvia)



February: ASI Best Sommelier of the World in Paris, France

February: ASI Best Sommelier of the World in Paris, France

It took 30 years for the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest to return to Paris. It may take 30 more to replicate the spectacular nature of the latest competition held in Paris, which was held in partnership between the USDF (Union de la Sommellerie Française) and ASI. ASI President William Wouters says, "it was worth the wait! From the first day candidates arrived, they were treated to the hospitality and amazing gastronomy of France. As for the contest itself, it honoured the commitment of our candidates by being both challenging and fair."

The final contest itself was a spectacle full of intrigue and tension. The final three pitted **Raimonds Tomsons** (Latvia), **Nina Jensen** (Denmark), and **Reeze Choi** (China). Ultimately it was Latvian Raimonds Tomsons who was announced as the winner. Of Tomsons Wouters commented "I have no doubts he will be a fantastic representative of ASI, and an inspiration to our global sommelier community. The final contest itself was a spectacle full of intrigue and tension. The very talented French candidate narrowly missing the final, despite her heroic efforts, much to the dismay of the largely French crowd in attendance watching the finals at Paris la Défense Arena.

March: ASI Diploma

On Monday 13 March 2023, ASI in coordination with member associations from around the world, once again hosted the ASI Diploma certification exam. The ASI Diploma has established itself as the international standard for Sommellerie, with its Gold recipients being recognised as the very finest of their craft in the world. This past year 20 countries participated, with 92 people taking the exam. 61 candidates passed the exam, with 31 of those graduating as ASI Gold Diploma recipients, 27 as Silver Diploma recipients and a further 3 as Bronze.

**May/June: Certification 1**

ASI in its quest to support sommeliers in each step of the journey once again hosted the ASI Certification 1 exams. The exams which are designed to certify those at a level commensurate with a junior sommelier or apprenticeship position, where once again a great success with 17 countries participating, 351 people taking the exam and 195 passing the exam.

July: ASI General Assembly in Helsinki, Finland

The Finnish Sommelier Association, led by **Heidi Mäkinen MW** and ASI Deputy Treasurer **Samuil Angelov**, welcomed the global ASI family to Helsinki for the annual General Assembly. The assembly was moderated by **Nina Basset** as one of her final duties as an ASI Board member. Basset was the association's Secretary General, an interim role she held until a new Secretary General was appointed at the ASI General Assembly. Of Basset, returning ASI President **William Wouters** who won the right for a second term uncontested, says "Nina (Basset) brought a professionalism, warmth, and spirit of collaboration to her role. While her role was interim, our association will feel the affects of her presence and support for years to come. We thank her for her time and look forward to continuing to work with her and her son Romané through the Gérard Basset Foundation."

Looking towards the future Wouters says "there's a saying 'a house isn't a home until it's full of family and memories.' Over the last three years we as a board and our committees have been working hard to lay a foundation, establish cornerstones of success, and build strong pillars. Now is the time to do the final decorations and set up our successors and the next generation of sommeliers for the future."

At the assembly three new board members were announced: **Beata Vlnkova** (Slovakia, Secretary General), **Ivo Dvořák** (Czech Republic, Deputy Secretary General), and **Matias Prezioso** (VP Americas) joined Wouters as new board members.





October: ASI Bootcamp in Quito, Ecuador (dinner event)



October: ASI Bootcamp in Quito, Ecuador (blind tasting)

November: Certification 2

In ASI's continuing effort to create educational opportunities and create a global understanding of knowledge base required to be a sommelier, ASI hosted its first Certification 2 exams. Certification 2 requires prospective graduates to be at the level of an internationally recognised sommelier, capable of working at restaurants around the world. Candidates attempting to achieve this distinction were required to answer a questionnaire and write a blind wine tasting analysis of an internationally recognised wine style and an identification of three mainstream spirits, as selected by the ASI Exams & Education Committee (EEC). Finally, candidates were also asked to do a practical service task and a food pairing exercise. Only those that achieved 60 per cent on the exam, passed. Last month 74 candidates took the exam in 15 countries. The results of the ASI Certification 2 exam will be announced in early January.

October: ASI Bootcamp in Quito, Ecuador

ASI Bootcamp Ecuador was the third in a series of intensive sommelier training activities hosted by ASI over the past three years. Over the course of three days, a diverse group of sommeliers from across the Americas and around the world gathered to deepen their knowledge and refine their skills. The event featured exclusive masterclasses many of which were presented by ASI partners including the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association, Symington Family Estates, and Advini, emphasising a diverse range of beverages a sommelier must master. Participants also had the opportunity to taste and learn about local food and drink including Ecuadorian chocolate, local water and discuss the impact of the industry on the environment. **Michelle Bouffard** of Tasting Climate Change hosted a discussion on the effect of climate change on wines and its impact on trends. Other notable tutors were **Sören Polonius**, Co-Director of ASI Exams and Education Committee and ASI Bootcamp Content Co-Director, **Marc Almert**, ASI Bootcamp Content Co-Director (2019 ASI Best Sommelier of the World), **Veronique Rivest** (runner-up 2013 ASI Best Sommelier of the World), **Pascaline Lepeltier** (2018 Best Sommelier of France), **Emily Wines MS**, **Andreas Matthidis DipWSET**, **Nathan Keffer**, Master Brewer, and **Julian Diaz**, a notable bartender, chef, and sommelier. All of which would not be possible without the contributions of our bootcamp champions: **Piotr Kamecki**, **Xeniya Volosnikova** and **Dawid Sojka**.



FAMILIA TORRES COLECCIÓN PRIVADA: GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT

Familia Torres has taken its winemaking legacy to new heights with the release of Familia Torres Colección Privada. This extraordinary collection comprises a range of rare ex cellar vintages, spanning from 1989 to a minimum of 10 years old.

To ensure the authenticity and provenance of these exceptional wines, Familia Torres presents them in a beautifully crafted wooden box, adorned with a seal of wax. This seal not only adds an elegant touch, but it also guarantees the origin and integrity of the collection. This attention to detail and meticulousness is a testament to the Torres family's commitment to quality and excellence.

It's important to note that these wines are truly limited in quantity and have been released only in a few select markets. The rarity of these wines lies not only in their limited availability but also in the fact that they have been carefully aged and preserved in the family's private cellar. The stringent selection process ensures that only the finest vintages are included in this exclusive collection.

Each bottle within Familia Torres Colección Privada tells a unique story, representing a pivotal moment in the family's winemaking journey. Mas La Plana older vintages from as far back as 1989 possess remarkable complexity, having benefited from years of aging and maturation.

Other wines included in the collection are Grans Muralles and Milmanda from Conca de Barberà, and Waltraud and Reserva Real from Penedès. All these wines have evolved over time, developing exquisite flavours and complex aromas that can only be experienced with such maturity.

However, even the youngest wines in this collection, aged at least 10 years, showcase the wines' ageing potential. These bottles offer a glimpse into their future, revealing an idea of what younger vintages' evolution could become.

A cellar reveals itself with the jewels that are ageing in it. Familia Torres has decided that time had come, to share some of these with you. We hope you will enjoy them.



Wijnhuis A. Torres

The Year of ASI:

quotes from our committee heads

As we turn the page to a new year, it's the perfect time to reflect on the achievements and insights shared by ASI's committee leads. Their collective efforts and expertise have not only enriched the industry but also set new standards for sommeliers and enthusiasts alike. Let's uncork the details of their accomplishments and explore the flavours of success that defined ASI in 2023.



During 2023 I had the immense pleasure and privilege of suppo. ding both the Marketing Committee as its co-ordinator and taking on the role of interim Secretary General of ASI. The latter was a position very close to my heart, as my late husband, Gérard Basset had held the role previously. I never imagined I would share such a role with him but am honoured to have done so. I loved my time in this role and am so delighted that the very professional, well-respected, and lovely Beata Vlnkova has now taken on this duty. From a Marketing Committee perspective, Claire Berticat, who had done so much to make ASI more professional over the last few years, left us to seek new challenges. Although it was a big hole to fill, having Xeniya Volosnikova as a leader within our Marketing & Communication team, the creative and talented Mark DeWolf heading up ASI Magazine, and newly appointed Ana Sofia Oliveira taking over partnership we forged ahead without missing a step. Thanks also to the rest of the team including Liora Levi (event), Barbara Wanner (Press) and Manuel Negrete, and Michèle Chantome with their invaluable translations. 2023 marked a year in which the Marketing team had a full calendar year to perfect what had been built in 2021 and 2022. Expect big things from them in 2024.

- Nina Basset: Co-ordinator, Marketing Committee

The by-laws committee had a busy year leading up to our annual general meeting in Helsinki, with plenty of countries approaching the ASI for inclusion into the college of applicants. Successful applications that were processed in time came from Moldova & Lebanon and we congratulate these two countries for being successfully voted in as observer members. BUSA (USA) and ZSA (Zimbabwe) were also welcomed into ASI as full members. New applications in the process of being completed, with assistance from the by-laws committee, are coming from Peru, Israel, Kenya, India and Dubai (UAE). These applicants are aiming to be ready for the voting process at our next AGM in February in Monaco. Ecuador and Vietnam are eligible for progressing to full membership from the college of applicants in 2024.

Our drive to collect updated and recent official Statutes from all of our member associations have yielded results, and we are down to only a few countries who still need to send us their documents. Our work alongside the Ethics, Diversity and Compliance committee also continues, with systems being put in place for awareness, education, and compliance with the ASI code of conduct.

- Higgo Jacobs: Committee Director, By-Laws Committee





Last year I was quoted in ASI Magazine as saying “the fact we exist (as a committee) is a statement we aren’t where we need to be.” While we may never reach a perfect state in terms of equity, diversity, and inclusion, I can report that ASI as an association is continually moving in the right direction. As a global community we are continuing to evolve and transform the profession into one that embraces uniqueness, individuality, and freedom of expression. With the support of our team which itself represents a diverse mix of individuals we are one step closer to that perfect state.

- Heleen Boom: Co-director (with Ricardo Grellet) Diversity, Ethics & Compliance Committee

2023 was a monumental year for our committees, marked by the Best Sommelier of the World contest. Thanks to our Sommelier Contests Committee led by Olivier Poussier, and Shinya Tasaki and supported by a world class list of committee members, we were able to deliver an ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the World that exceeded expectations. Managing an exam for a contest like this under the spotlight of the world is challenging but our team delivered.

Of course, this was also a monumental year for our Exams & Education Committee. For the first time we delivered a Certification 1, Certification 2 and Diploma exam in the same year. It goes without saying that Giuseppe Vaccarini and team outdid themselves this past year.

Not to be outdone, was the efforts of the Education side of the Exams & Education Committee, led by Sören Polonius. In addition to their leadership for our ASI Bootcamp in Ecuador, a pivotal element of their work has been done on the ASI Sommelier Guidelines, coupled with the ASI Moderator/Jury Guidelines. These guidelines were collaboratively developed by the Education, Exam and Competitions teams. The intention behind the ASI Guidelines is to aid sommeliers in their studies, sharpening their skills to excel as competitive international ASI Sommeliers. We should all be proud of this work, offered in English, French, and Spanish. It is a great honour to be part of such a transformative and enriching initiative that continues to shape and elevate the sommelier profession.

I recommend ASI member association presidents to send the guidelines to all their members. These fantastic guidelines are free of charge.

- Tim Vollerslev: Liaison Officer, Liaison Officer for Sommeliers Contests and Exams & Education Committees



Member Association Spotlight

ASI and the Association of Venezuelan Sommeliers: membership has its benefits



In the world of Sommellerie, the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI) is renowned for its pivotal role in nurturing and guiding sommelier associations globally. Among its noteworthy collaborations is its relationship with the Academia de Sommeliers de Venezuela, led by its passionate President, **Leo D'Addazio**. In this interview we investigate the bond between these two entities, exploring how their partnership has enriched the sommelier profession in Venezuela but also what can be done to further the partnership between ASI and Venezuela. Leo D'Addazio, with his rich experience and deep commitment to the art of Sommellerie, offers unique insights into this collaboration, shedding light on the shared goals, challenges, and triumphs that define the journey of these two associations. Join us as we uncork the essence of this partnership and discover how it's shaping the future of the sommelier world, both in Venezuela and beyond.



ASI: How does your association's philosophy and mission align with that of ASI?

Leo D'Addazio (LA): The Asociacion Venezolana de Sommeliers has been part of ASI since 1999. Since then, we have held several national sommelier competitions and participated in several ASI Best Sommelier of the Americas and ASI Best Sommelier of the World contests with our candidates. Since 2019 our association has participated in all the ASI Diploma examination offerings as well as offering ASI Certification Level 1 and now ASI Certification Level 2 to our membership. Among our association we now count eight ASI Diploma recipients and 14 graduates of ASI Certification I. Recently, on November 25th we had another 14 candidates take the ASI Certification 2 exam, as we have made it the mandatory final exam of all the cohorts of professional sommelier training in our country.

ASI: Please share some successful initiatives or programmes that have resulted from your association's partnership with ASI?

LA: For the realisation of our first ASI Diploma exam, we had the support of Giuseppe Vaccarini who

traveled to our country to carry out a week of intensive preparation and training sessions for our candidates. We also had the support of Michèle Chantome with Master Classes, as well as Jean Vincent Ridon expanding our knowledge of South African wine, Andreas Matthidis explaining to us the particularities of Greek products, as well as other introducing us to the world of food and drink pairing, mineral water, and coffee amongst other subjects. We thank all those members of ASI who have kindly lent their support.

Additionally, we have made about a dozen wine tours with students and professionals which have been enhanced by being of a member of ASI. As a result of our association with ASI when visiting producers in Italy, Chile, Argentina, Spain, France and Germany we have been served directly by the enologists at some of the most important vineyards of those countries. These have included the likes of Alejandro Vigil from El Enemigo (Argentina), Gerardo Aguirre from Vinos Aranjuez (Bolivia), Patrick Van der Spiegel (Belgian brewmaster), in addition to the renowned Spanish winemaker Maria Isabel Mijares amongst many others.

ASI: In what ways has ASI's international network contributed to the development and support of sommeliers within your association?

LA: Tickets to important wine fairs such as Vinexpo, have been provided for our members thanks to the participation of the ASI in these events. Currently our professionals are in several countries of the world including the United States, Spain, Australia, Ecuador, England, Italy, and Argentina. The acceptance of them has always been positive through the associations of those countries and thanks to the brotherhood of the members of ASI.

We also appreciate the opportunity for all our student and sommelier members to participate in the ASI Certifications. Even though it is an individual challenge, the conditions of the exam are equal, regardless of where you are in the world.

Finally, the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the World gives an option to all affiliates of ASI member countries to attend these events.

These are just some of the advantages of being a member of ASI.

"We are convinced that this contact will help our professionals to grow, as well as to make better known the noble products of our country."

ASI: Facing the diverse and evolving challenges in the wine industry, how does ASI support your association in providing continuous education and professional growth opportunities for your members?

LA: Communication is an invaluable contribution in the dissemination of new trends, technology, and emerging markets. The website and ASI magazine are ways to share what happens in all latitudes, allowing us to update and meet professional colleagues from all over the planet. The ASI Bootcamp although is limited in terms of the number of sommeliers that can attend is also a wonderful tool that serves to inform us and get to know each other while also helping to standardise service standards, learning and teaching techniques.

Greater coordination among ASI member countries would be ideal to support and facilitate the obtaining of legal documents like visas requested by other governments to Venezuelan (and many others) sommeliers, preventing or hindering entry to those countries and participation in competitions.

ASI: Looking towards the future, what goals or projects is your association hoping to achieve with the support of ASI?

LA: Our medium-term goal is to hold an ASI event in our country such as a continental competition, ASI Bootcamp, or a General Assembly. We are convinced that this contact will help our professionals to grow, as well as to make better known the noble products of our country.

ASI: What more can ASI do to further support your association grow?

LA: For Venezuelan sommeliers it would be of great help to be able to carry out one of the big events with the support of the ASI. As I expressed previously it is one of our medium-term goals.



“As a result of our association with ASI when visiting producers in Italy, Chile, Argentina, Spain, France and Germany we have been served directly by the enologists at some of the most important vineyards of those countries.”

Raising Glasses Worldwide: Sommellerie in Kazakhstan



MEMBER ASSOCIATION SPOTLIGHT

In the ever-expanding world of Sommellerie, ASI is striving to be a beacon of knowledge, expertise, and guidance. Part of this commitment is to support, and nurture the growth of smaller, emerging sommelier associations around the globe. The Kazakhstan Sommelier Association stands as a shining example of how ASI's influence, and guidance can help local organisations flourish in the dynamic landscape of the global hospitality industry.

Kazakhstan, a country more traditionally known for its vast steppes and rich history along the Silk Road, is now emerging as a noteworthy player in the Central Asian hospitality world, thanks to the efforts of its dedicated sommelier association and the guiding hand of ASI. ASI spoke with the association's founder **Artem Lebedev** and its current president, **Zulfiya Ibragimova**, about the relationship between their association and ASI.

ASI: How does your association's philosophy and mission align with that of the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale?

Artem Lebedev (AL): When we started the association in 2017 our main target was to become part of ASI as a leading industry organisation. Which meant integrating and adopting all international standards. For now, we are still trying to support all ASI activities due to the strong belief that the international association is going the right way in terms of how they promote Sommellerie worldwide.

Zulfiya Ibragimova (ZI): Our association tries to be as diverse and adaptive as possible. When the war started, a lot of wine specialists fled Russia and we are trying to be helpful by integrating them into our community. We never pay attention to the citizenship of our members, but we also do not tolerate any form of propaganda. That's the way we are trying to keep equity, equality, and diversity in our association.

“We want to be a central link between eastern and western civilisation and become a hub of cultural enrichment for all sommeliers from different parts of the world.”

- Zulfiya Ibragimova

ASI and Member Association Relationships



ASI: Please share some successful initiatives or programmes that have resulted from your association's partnership with ASI?

AL: First, it has been our ability to participate in international competitions. When we sent our participants to our first international contest, the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania in Tokyo, it was a huge success. Not in terms of the results, but in terms of the perception of the sommelier profession. Customers and even the sommeliers inside the country started to realise that this profession is not only about serving the wine, but way more. Second, has been our attendance at the ASI General Assemblies. You can hear about international news, but taking part in the General Assembly is something different.

Even bearing in mind that only few people from our association can attend, when they return, they motivate others. Third, are the ASI Certifications. At the beginning people do not understand why they need to do different exams such as WSET, or CMS, for example. With the ASI Certification, there is an international standard now. Finally, it is the ASI Bootcamps. I remember being at my first General Assembly in Champagne. There was talk, at the time, of the need for ASI to do some motivating, educational workshops. A couple years later, they appear as the ASI Bootcamps.

A few of our members have had the privilege to attend. Of course, the Bootcamps, are not only about education. They are about building community and networking.

ZI: For all events, such as when we host ASI Diploma or Certification 1 or 2 exams, our members arrange a small bootcamp, which helps to develop and standardise sommelier skills, language skills, organisational skills and much more. We see how ASI works and are learning how to adapt this knowledge to our association. As such we have adapted a similar structure, dividing work between separate departments, such as education, marketing, finance, etc. This division by different departments helps us to organise our workflow better and more efficiently.

ASI: In what ways has the ASI's international network contributed to the development and support of sommeliers within your association?

AL: For now, it is mainly about the things which I already described before, but also a good initiative has been the creation of ASI Magazine, as it helps to keep up us to date with news from the association, and around the world.

ZI: I want to add one more thing. Some other countries, such as Japan, have started to invite us to their national competitions. Two of our members participated in

the Japan national competition. Participation in these events help us to develop networking opportunities, bond with others, develop our skills, and have an immersion into a new culture. We have some more invitations, but I don't want to spoil the surprise yet.

ASI: Facing the diverse and evolving challenges in the wine industry, how does ASI support your association in providing continuous education and professional growth opportunities for your members?

AL: I've identified the positive opportunities already. As such, it might be worth saying a little about the shortcomings. Being in the very center of nothing and geographically being neither West nor East (although we officially belong to the Asian conference), we feel there is insufficient opportunity for collaboration with other regions.

“Customers and even the sommeliers inside the country started to realise that this profession is not only about serving the wine, but way more.”

- Artem Lebedev



Especially now as Russia is blocked due to their attack of the Ukraine. In our geographic region, we turn out to be the central association and have a strong (I believe positive) influence on our neighbours. If ASI could somehow contribute more to this, we would be very interested.

ZI: After the last General Assembly several things happened. I was included in the Exams & Education Committee as a member of the support team. As knowledge of the English language is still a big challenge for half of our members, it was decided that ASI will allow us to use Russian in ASI Certification 1 and 2, beginning in 2024. It will take a lot of pressure off our members and will encourage more people to participate in international exams.

ASI: Looking towards the future, what goals or projects is your association hoping to achieve with the support of ASI, and how do you envision this partnership enhancing the global sommelier community?

AL: Even though our region is half Muslim, we still want to have the required number of high-quality specialists who can work with enthusiasm in the profession and popularise the profession and the world of wine within the country, and the Central Asia region.

ZI: We want to be a central link between eastern and western civilisation and become a hub of cultural enrichment for all sommeliers from different parts of the world. We hope to host a General Assembly or an ASI Bootcamp in the next several years.

ASI: What more can ASI do to further support your association grow?

AL: Help us to develop the Central Asian region (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Azerbaijan and parts of China). Perhaps, in the future eastern Russia.

ZI: It would be great if ASI will support our national sommelier competition by providing international level judges, speakers, who would be a very useful resource for such events.

Make Me a Match

Festive Pairings

As the festive season approaches, with its twinkling lights and joyful gatherings, sommeliers around the world are gearing up to pair the perfect sparkling wines with a diverse array of Christmas and New Year's culinary delights. This time of year, rich with tradition and flavour, presents a unique opportunity for sommeliers to showcase their skills. From the effervescence of a classic Champagne to the subtle nuances of a Cap Classique, the choices are as varied as the festive dishes themselves.



Cap Classique with Seafood

MAKE ME A MATCH!



Marlvn Gwese

The Sommelier

Marlvn Gwese

Marlvn Gwese might be best known to the wine world as one of the featured sommeliers in the documentary *Blind Ambition*, the story of four Zimbabwe sommeliers who endured hardships to make their way to South Africa and eventually compete against the rest of the world in a blind wine tasting competition.

Marlvn Gwese first started as Wine Steward at the Table Bay Hotel, followed by a tenure as Head Sommelier at the Cape Grace Hotel

Festive Pairings

and later became Head Sommelier at Greenhouse Restaurant before being promoted to Group Sommelier for the Liz McGrath Collection. Currently he heads the wine programme at Newmark Hotels and Reserves as their Group Sommelier.

The Wine Style

Cap Classique

Cap Classique is made from traditional grape varieties like Pinot Noir and Chardonnay (and to a lesser extent, Pinot Meunier), as well as the less traditional but still popular Chenin Blanc. It is produced using the Traditional Method (Méthode Traditionnelle, also known as Méthode Cap Classique), which requires a second fermentation in the wine bottle after the initial fermentation.

Festive Pairing

Cap Classique with Seafood

I recommend pairing Cap Classique with oysters as great way to kick start off the festive season, but Cap Classique also goes well with a wide range of seafood. I recently paired seafood bisque with Mukanya Brut NV to great effect. If looking for a celebratory selection for New Year's Eve I suggest Charles Fox Cipher Blanc de Noir 2017, Graham Beck Yin & Yang, Boschendal Jean Le Long Cuvée Prestige Blanc de Blancs 2017, or a magnum of Le Lude Selection Brut 2014.

The Sommelier

Van Doren Chan

Van Doren Chan is a Vancouver-based restaurateur, sommelier, journalist, and speaker. She is the founder of C'est la V and Theoria wines and has been a longtime board member of the Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers British Columbia Chapter.

The Wine Style

Rosé Champagne

Rosé Champagne needs little introduction. The Northern French wine, produced in the Champagne region, is made according to Traditional Method (Méthode Traditionnelle). It is made from primarily Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, and Chardonnay.

Festive Pairing

Rosé Champagne and XLB Soupy Dumplings

One of my fondest memories on a cold winter day is lifting the lid off a steamy steamer of Soupy Dumplings (also known as XLB). Originating from Shanghai, China,

these heartwarming dumplings are filled with rich bone broth and delicate pork and cabbage fillings. These little umami bombs are served with a dark aged vinegar and ginger dipping sauce.

XLB's best friend is a Brut-style Pinot Noir-based Rosé Champagne. Pinot Noir brings structure and an undertone of earthiness in Champagne, which will be a nice compliment with the complex umami flavours. The natural high acidity in Champagne cuts through the richness of the bone broth. The delicate red fruit and savoury herbs characters would complement the rich savoury pork filling without overpowering it. The tricky part to this dish is the dipping sauce, this is where the brut style comes into play, the dryness of the brut style would balance the tangy quality of the aged vinegar. On the finish, soft effervescence has a refreshing effect on the palate that offers a great sense of occasion through the holiday season!

MAKE ME A MATCH!

Festive Pairings



Van Doren Chan



Rosé Champagne and XLB Soupy Dumplings

Member Association Spotlight



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF
PROFESSIONAL SOMMELIERS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES
SOMMELIERS PROFESSIONNELS

Uncorking Potential

The Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers (CAPS) has been affiliated with ASI for decades. The association originally formed in Quebec, and later joined by Ontario, followed by Atlantic Canada, is now an association made up of six regional associations spanning the length of the country. In Canada, that equates to more than 7,500 kilometres between the eastern tip of Newfoundland and the western edge of British Columbia. The latest to join the union of regional associations was CAPS Alberta, which means sommeliers from every province are now represented under a single banner.

Of the accomplishment of final unification CAPS National President **Domer Rafael** says “it has long been our dream for CAPS to be a fully national association. With the addition of CAPS Alberta, we can finally say CAPS is a truly national organisation, representing all sommeliers from coast to coast.”



Best Somm Competitors



Best Somm Test



A Collective Effort

At the helm of this association is a dedicated group of professionals who are passionate about wine and hospitality. Rafael is supported on the board by two members from each regional association, including Vice-President **Caroline LeBlanc** (Quebec), **Paul Doucette** (President, CAPS Atlantic Canada), **James Peden** (President, CAPS Ontario), **Sean Dolenuck** (CAPS Manitoba), **Tom Firth** (President, CAPS Alberta), and **Mark Taylor** (President, CAPS British Columbia), among others.

CAPS operates as a not-for-profit hospitality industry association, driven by the collective efforts of their volunteer board. Their primary mission is to champion the education of Canadian sommeliers and wine professionals. The association's overarching objective is to provide members and the broader hospitality industry with pertinent education and career development opportunities.

**SOMM U:
Uncork Your Potential**

In addition to working on a revamped curriculum for their sommelier programme, CAPS is making strides in the world of wine education by hosting SOMM U, an innovative sommelier university experience. This initiative coincided with their 2023 Best Sommelier of Canada contest, recently held in Halifax, a historic Canadian city, found along its rocky Atlantic seaboard. Over three enlightening days, attendees had the opportunity to immerse themselves in an array of Master Classes, along with a diverse suite of learning experiences designed to refine their palates and enrich their expertise. SOMM U represents a progressive leap for CAPS, underscoring their commitment to the continuous education of sommeliers, while also fostering a community where knowledge is as richly poured as the wines themselves. This educational endeavor not only elevates the standard of sommelier expertise but also serves as a beacon for professional development within the industry. As for the competition itself, Montreal-based **Joris Garcia** took home the title of 2023 Best Sommelier of Canada, narrowly edging out fellow Québécois sommelier **Hugo Duchesne** and British Columbia-based **Matthew Landry**.

**Charting New Horizons:
Embracing Diversity
and Building Global
Connections**

The voyage of CAPS continues with vigor and purpose. They are resolute in their mission to offer ongoing education and avenues for career advancement to their community. Looking to the horizon, CAPS is dedicated to dismantling the obstacles impeding diversity and inclusion in the sector. The association is poised to set a precedent, embodying the ethos that hospitality and wine organisations should inherently embrace diversity and inclusivity. According to Rafael “by partnering with various groups and wine associations, CAPS has championed scholarship programmes aimed at cultivating a more diverse cadre of sommeliers within Canada. Our most recent partnership with the Boisset Collection, via our Ontario chapter, stands as a testament to this commitment, providing scholarship assistance to aspiring sommeliers from a multitude of backgrounds.”



Domer Rafael



Joris Garcia and Mark DeWolf



Winner Joris Garcia in action

The State of the Wine Industry in 2023:

A Year of Record Low Production

According to a recent report released by the OIV (International Organisation of Vine and Wine) the wine industry is facing an unprecedented challenge as global wine production is expected to hit its lowest point in six decades. This alarming decline is primarily due to a combination of factors, including drastically reduced harvest volumes across the Southern Hemisphere and in key European Union countries. It also comes at a time when after decades of growth consumer demand, interest in the category has begun to wane. Sales of wine have decreased over the past five years, hitting pre-2007 lows of 232 million hectolitres (2022 data,).

European Union: A Mixed Picture

In the European Union, the production volumes have taken a significant hit. Italy and Spain, traditionally powerhouses in wine production, have reported substantial decreases compared to 2022. These declines are largely attributed to unfavourable weather conditions, including downy mildew and drought. However, it's not all grim news in Europe; sort of. France has re-emerged as the world's largest wine producer in 2023, with production levels slightly above its five-year average. This shift underscores the unpredictable nature of agricultural production and its susceptibility to climatic variations as France not so long ago was shedding tears over reduced yields because of unpredictable frost conditions, notably 2021 which saw nearly a third less output as result of unseasonably frigid temperatures during flowering.

Whether France's bumper crop this year is all good news, is debatable. In June the EU gave France in the neighbourhood of \$172 million to distil some 80 million gallons of wine for use in perfume and cleaning supply production.

USA: A Bright Spot

Contrasting with the overall gloomy outlook, the United States presents a more optimistic picture. Early harvest forecasts indicate that the country's wine production volume for 2023 will not only surpass that of 2022 but also exceed the average levels observed in recent years. This increase suggests a resilience in the American wine industry, potentially cushioning the global market from the impact of reduced volumes elsewhere. Like their French counterparts, this wealth of grapes may exceed demand, and put pressure on California vintners to sell more in an already competitive domestic landscape.



Southern Hemisphere Struggles

The situation in the Southern Hemisphere starkly contrasts with that of the USA. Key wine-producing countries such as Australia, Argentina, Chile, South Africa, and Brazil have all been severely impacted by adverse weather conditions. These nations are all expected to record production volumes well below their 2022 figures. New Zealand stands as the sole exception in this region, with its 2023 production level surpassing the five-year average. Australia continues to hold on a vast surplus of wine (according to 2.8 billion bottles, the equivalent of 859 Olympic swimming pools full), thanks to a variety of reasons, not at least of which was a near halt of exports to China, as result of increased tariffs placed on Australian wine in 2021.

Global Perspective: A Historic Low

When looking at the global picture, the situation becomes more concerning. Based on data from twenty-nine countries, which account for 94% of the global production in 2022, world wine production (excluding juices and musts) in 2023 is estimated to be between 241.7 and 246.6 million hectolitres, with a mid-range estimate at 244.1 million hectolitres. This represents a 7% decrease compared to the already below-average volume of 2022. The projected volume for 2023 is set to be the smallest since 1961, underscoring the severity of the situation.

This downturn is largely attributed to significant declines in major wine-producing countries in both Hemispheres, with variations ranging from -10% to -30% in some regions. The USA, along with a few EU countries like Germany, Portugal, and Romania, are the exceptions, having experienced favourable climatic conditions leading to average or above-average volumes. These fluctuations highlight the critical impact of climatic conditions on agricultural outputs, particularly in the wine industry.

Moreover, this low production comes at a time when global wine consumption is declining, and stocks are high in many regions. This complex dynamic suggests that the industry is at a crucial juncture, needing to adapt to both environmental and market challenges.

A Time for Resilience and Innovation

As the wine industry navigates through these turbulent times, with climatic conditions and consumer preferences changing at unprecedented speeds, sommeliers must also be nimbler. Now, not only do sommeliers need to adapt to the ebbs and flows of the wine industry but be willing and able to adjust listings based on supply and demand conditions, and be willing to extend their knowledge base to new beverages to meet changing consumer needs.



“As the wine industry navigates through these turbulent times, with climatic conditions and consumer preferences changing at unprecedented speeds, sommeliers must also be nimbler.”

Member News

Dmitrijs Sinkevics is Latvia's Newest Sommelier Champion

Latvia had two sommeliers crowned champion in 2023. Raimonds Tomsons took home the title of Best Sommelier of the World in front of a global audience, this past February in Paris. More recently Dmitrijs Sinkevics was crowned the Best Sommelier of Latvia. This prestigious title, made more significant by Tomsons' win earlier in the year, is a testament to Sinkevics' deep knowledge of wines, spirits and other beverages, exceptional tasting skills, and a keen understanding of wine service and hospitality. Sinkevics has undoubtedly dedicated countless hours to refining his expertise. This achievement not only highlights his personal dedication and skill but also shines a light on Latvia's growing prominence in the global wine community. As a sommelier, his victory is a significant accomplishment that celebrates both his individual talent and the increasingly rich wine culture of his country.



Joris Garcia is Canada's Top Somm

Joris Garcia has emerged one of a long list of Quebec champions by clinching the title of 2023 Best Sommelier of Canada. This prestigious competition, a hallmark event in the Canadian wine industry, was held in the historic city of Halifax, known for its picturesque Atlantic seaboard. Garcia, hailing from Montreal, demonstrated exceptional prowess in the competition, triumphantly standing out among notable contenders including Hugo Duchesne, also from Quebec, and Matthew Landry from British Columbia. The three emerged via a semi-final round which pitted 12 competitors from across the country against each other. Garcia's victory in Halifax not only crowns him as Canada's Best Sommelier of 2023 but also puts Garcia as the leading candidate to represent Canada at the next ASI Best Sommelier of the Americas contest, and the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2026.

The Baltic's Best

The Baltic Sommelier Vana Tallinn Grand Prix, a distinguished event in the world of Sommellerie celebrated its 17th anniversary, in October. Over time, this competition has become a hallmark event in the Baltic region. Held in Tallin, the contest showcased the expertise and skills of top sommeliers from the Baltic States, along with guest candidates from various countries. In a thrilling and closely contested final, Estonia's own Aleksei Pogrebnoi emerged victorious, earning the title of Best Sommelier in the Baltic States. His compatriot, Mikk Parre, achieved an impressive second place, while Yan Biazruchka from Lithuania secured the third spot. Demonstrating the burgeoning talent in the region, the title of Best Young Sommelier in the Baltic countries was awarded to Anna Elisa Vokk, also from Estonia.

Czech Republic and Slovakia Crown their Champions

The 2023 Slovak Sommeliers Championship at Hotel Matysak, Bratislava, saw Martin Paryzek (Czech Republic) win, with Slavka Raškovič as runner-up (Best Sommelier of Slovakia) and Tomáš Repa in third. The event, organised by the Association of Sommeliers of the Slovak Republic, was praised for its challenging tests and organisation. It featured 13 contestants from Slovakia and the Czech Republic, ranging from veterans to first timers. The championship is a platform for sommeliers to demonstrate skills, network, and prepare for future international competitions. Of her placing Raškovič says “it’s my best placing at the championship so far. I am very glad that I made it to the finals, and I had a chance to go through the final disciplines. I really enjoyed the competition. I felt like I was serving wine in mine beloved restaurant Gašperov Mlyn.”

Of the finalists’ accomplishments Beáta Vlnková, the president of Slovak Sommelier Association and Secretary General to Association de la Sommellerie Internationale comments “a sommelier is no longer just a person who is expected to know how to decant red wine, basic information about Bordeaux and service of cognac after dinner. Incredible number of new developing wine regions and new grape varieties have been added to what we expect a sommelier to know. Also, an endless number of spirits, fancy mixed drinks, craft beers, sake, coffee from various roasters and high quality teas. Maybe that’s one of the reasons why the profession of a sommelier is so demanding, add to that the incredible the number of overtime hours and other hours devoted to the study of new products.”



“It’s my best placing at the championship so far. I am very glad that I made it to the finals, and I had a chance to go through the final disciplines.”

- Slavka Raškovič

MEMBER NEWS



Introducing Zimbabwe’s New National Champion

Earlier this month Tadiswa Chikwanha earned the right to call himself the Best Sommelier of Zimbabwe for the next two years. The title was bestowed upon him following a competition organised by the Zimbabwe Sommelier Association.



ASI GENERAL ASSEMBLY MONACO

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