

ASI MAGAZINE

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LEADING WOMEN OF WINE

Dr. Laura Catena, Julia Harding MW, Catherine Fallis MS



INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN SOMMELIERS

Paula Bosch, Miyuki Morimoto, Paz Levison



BREAKING *The* BARRIER





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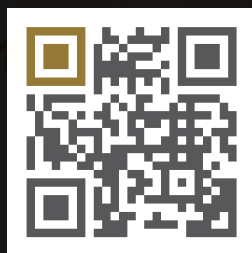


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Cover Photo: Celebrating the women that have broken the barrier in the past, and those that lead a new generation into the future.

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Welcome!



Beata Vlnkova
ASI Secretary General

Welcome to Our Celebration of Women in Wine and Sommellerie

SECRETARY GENERAL'S WELCOME

“I cannot imagine the sommelier world without a wealth of women. Women have transformed the profession, enriched it, and made it a more inclusive, dynamic, and a poetic space.”

When I stepped into the sommelier world 20 years ago, I was one of very few women working as a sommelier at the time. I vividly remember those early days of organising sommelier courses, when there were often just one or two women in a room of 30. Fast forward to today, and women now make up more than half of these classes. What an incredible evolution to witness.

I must admit my own journey into the wine world, and the sommelier profession, was far from conventional. I didn't start as a wine expert or even a wine enthusiast for that matter. Instead, I was an administrator tasked with organising sommelier courses. While sitting in on some of the classes, I became captivated by fascinating wine stories and tasting the diversity in each glass. I was completely hooked, and my life has never been the same since.

One of the most important moments for me personally and for all Slovakian sommeliers was when our association joined the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI). It was a transformative moment for us all. It was through ASI I was able to meet my first working women sommeliers: **Annemarie Foidl** from Austria and **Mary Callaghan** from

Ireland. They instantly became my mentors, volunteering their time and expertise to help me and our association develop courses in Slovakia. Their generosity left an indelible mark on me.

Over the years, ASI has introduced me to so many inspiring women working in the sommelier profession, including those that work in restaurants, but also those that have taken leadership roles within their own sommelier associations. Some of the many women that have been my inspiration include **Alba Hough** (Iceland), **Heidi Mäkinen**, MW (Finland), **Heleen Boom** (Netherlands), and **Saiko Tamura Soga** (Japan). Each has brought their own spirit, personality and gifts to the world of sommellerie. Alba is my Icelandic Viking. She is strong, independent, cool, fearless, and refreshingly straightforward. Not only has Alba shown women (and many men for that matter) the power of conviction, honest and a transparent, direct approach to her work, but she has been an inspiration for an entire community of LGBTQ2S+ hospitality workers. Heidi has taught me the values of being focused, knowledgeable, and disciplined. She has also demonstrated that to be successful one must be both strong of mind and strong of body. It's a lesson I

Beata Vlnkova, ASI Secretary General



now live by. For every Alba, you need a Heleen. Heleen has inspired me to be hardworking, and to use my experience to work diplomatically with others, and to never lose sight of my ethics and integrity.

Finally, there is Saiko. She has taught me the importance of being precise, detail oriented, and to aim for perfection, even if perfection isn't always attainable. If we are deeply principled and aim to do the very best we can, we can never look back with regret. I thank these wonderful women and all women of sommellerie for motivating me to be better in my profession and home lives. These women sound serious, even intense. They are! But they also know how to have fun. Trust me, you'd be envious of our "Negroni Club."

My professional growth is also attributable to the amazing women

who share their knowledge with the world. Books have also been steadfast companions on this journey. **Jancis Robinson's** *The Oxford Companion to Wine and Wine Grapes*, **Karen MacNeil's** *The Wine Bible*, and most recently, **Pascaline Lepeltier's** extraordinary *1000 Vines* have all guided and inspired me.

The more I have immersed myself in this world, the more I have witnessed with the rising influence of women in the sommelier profession, our world has become richer, full of emotions and unparalleled knowledge. It made me consider a question: Are women better sommeliers? Perhaps not better—but certainly different, and that difference is their strength. I recall early critiques from some male colleagues: "they can't handle heavy boxes" or "their moods can be unpredictable." Of course, this is nonsense. Not only have women succeeded as sommeliers

but women have brought new nuances to our profession. They have brought elegance, poetry, and harmony to the sommelier profession—qualities that have elevated the entire field.

I can't close without mentioning one remarkable woman: Nina Basset from the UK. Nina was the wife, partner, and confidante of the late great Gérard Basset MS MW. While she often stayed out of the spotlight, she was undoubtedly a driving force—wise, humble, adventurous, and unstoppable. Her wit and British humour were legendary. Ask her about her days as a hotel inspector, hotelier, or mother, and you will be in for a treat. Thank you, Nina, for your continued support.

Today, I cannot imagine the sommelier world without a wealth of women. Women have transformed the profession, enriched it, and made it a more inclusive, dynamic, and a poetic space. This issue of ASI Magazine is a celebration of their contributions, and the contributions of women throughout the wine and hospitality industry. I am honoured to welcome you to it. I invite you to get insight into some amazing women of wine such as the ever-inspiring **Dr. Laura Catena**, **Julia Harding MW**, and ASI's own **Xeniya Volosnikova**. In this edition we've also taken the time to acknowledge the pioneering women of the California wine industry and identify many of great women sommeliers that have inspired others to work in this field. Thanks also to William Wouters, ASI President, and Mark DeWolf, ASI Magazine Editor, two men that normally contribute the welcome letters to this edition, but out of respect and humility graciously offered this opportunity to me, and Xeniya Volosnikova.

Let us raise a glass to the women who inspire, educate, and lead in the world of wine. Cheers!

In My Glass



Xeniya Volosnikova
ASI Marketing & Communication

Inspiring Women of Wine

The world of wine is full of remarkable personalities, but I find myself particularly inspired by women working in this industry. Their shared experiences, challenges, and wisdom resonate deeply with me. While these extraordinary women possess a wealth of wine knowledge, it's their soft skills that truly set them apart and serve as a source of inspiration.

Take **Nina Basset**, for example—a shining embodiment of soft power, leadership, and wisdom. Then there's **Valeria Tenison**, who motivates me with her relentless pursuit of perfection, her insatiable curiosity, and her ability to continually learn and grow. And, of course, **Jancis Robinson** stands as a beacon for so many of us. She has reached the pinnacle of the wine world, proving that anything is possible with hard work and determination.

Three Wines Made by Inspiring Women

Here are three incredible wines in my glass, crafted by women who exemplify passion and innovation in winemaking:

Filipa Pato's Sparkling 3B Rosé

Filipa inspires me with her deep understanding of sustainability—not just through biodynamic farming but through her genuine care for the land and the people she works with. This choice might be subjective, as I adore sparkling

rosé, but her bubbles, such as this Baga and Bical blend from Bairrada (Portugal) truly stand out. They're a perfect reflection of her commitment to excellence and environmental stewardship.

Caroline Frey's *Les Grains Blancs de Mon Jardin Secret*

Caroline is perhaps better known for her work at prestigious estates like La Lagune in Bordeaux and Paul Jaboulet Aîné in the Rhône Valley. However, it was her small Swiss project that captivated me last year when I tasted it with her in Bordeaux. I admire her dedication to terroir and her creativity—her belief in Petite Arvine as a grape of the future is particularly inspiring. Often overlooked, this variety has untapped potential, and Caroline's vision is bringing it to light. I recommend the *Les Grains Blancs de Mon Jardin Secret (Chasselas/Petite Arvine)*.

Dorli Muhr's Ried Spitzerberg 10TW

Dorli is a trailblazer, breaking barriers and leading change with her infectious energy and drive for excellence. Both as a wine producer and a business owner, she sets a remarkable example. Her Blaufränkisch, such as her Weingut Dorli Muhr Ried Spitzerberg 10TW, is, for me, the epitome of this variety's potential—elegant yet powerful, perfectly balanced, and capable of ageing beautifully. These women remind me that

wine is not just about what's in the glass—it's about the passion, resilience, and creativity that bring it to life. Each of these winemakers has left a unique mark on the world of wine, and I'm endlessly grateful for the inspiration they provide.

So, here's to the women who lead, innovate, and inspire in the wine world—may their stories encourage us all to reach for new heights.

Cheers!



Murh Ried Spitzerberg



Xeniya and Miyuki

IN MY GLASS

Xeniya Volosnikova, ASI Marketing & Communication



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Dr. Laura Catena (Photo: Dave Lauridsen)

A DISCUSSION WITH...

From Medicine to Malbec: Dr. Laura Catena's Journey in Wine

Dr. Laura Catena was born into a legendary wine family but made a decision early in life to follow a different path beginning with acquiring a degree in Biology from Harvard University before studying medicine at Stanford. Despite a successful career in emergency medicine in California, in the mid 90s she made the decision to manage both a career in medicine and support her family's business. Over the past three decades she has become the face of the Argentinean wine industry, a much in demand speaker, an author (*Vino Argentino, An Insider's Guide to the Wines and Wine Country of Argentina* and *Oro en los viñedos / Gold in the vineyards*). Amongst many, many other accolades she was named "Woman of the Year" by The Drinks Business Awards in 2022, and in 2023 announced as WSET's Honorary President. She has also been a passionate advocate of, and inspiration for, women working in the wine industry.

ASI: Despite growing up in a wine family, you didn't pursue wine initially. Was this a personal choice or does it speak to Argentinean culture at the time?

Dr. Laura Catena (LC): Both. When I was a child, when we went to the winery, I used to watch the dogs, while my brother would go hang out with my grandfather. Watching the dogs was an important job, because my grandfather was obsessed with his dogs, but at that time he felt 'the winery was not a woman's place.' In fact, in Argentina, at that time, a lot of women didn't even drink wine. It was viewed as not womanly.

Dr. Laura Catena, Julia Harding MW and Catherine Fallis MS

However, my father had a different attitude. His mother was the headmistress of the local school. She really believed in equality amongst men and women. She was just as demanding academically of her daughters as her sons. So had I told him at 18 I wanted to go work with him, he would have said, yes, you can start today. But my grandfather would have first asked my brother, 'are you sure you're not interested in the job?' before giving me the chance.

That said, as a young adult, I wasn't interested. I only thought 'losers' went into their parent's business. I thought, at the time, you are supposed to do your own thing. I think that still holds true, as most young people don't want to go work with their father, or their mother. That's why I'm very patiently waiting for my children or my nieces and nephews to hopefully come and work with me.

I wanted to do something to help people. I wanted to become a doctor, to help people. As with many young people, I was not interested in making money. Of course, now, I have a lot of respect for people wanting to make money. You can do a lot more things when you have money. You can pay people better, you can plant better vineyards, you can make better wine. This is what makes the world run.

ASI: Was there a seminal moment, point in time, that made you change your mind about being directly involved in your family business?

LC: Back in the mid 90s, my father asked me to represent Catena at Wine Spectator's New York Wine Experience. It was the first time a South American winery was invited. My father said to me, 'Laura, you're the only one who speaks English well. You need to go and represent us.' I went there and realised nobody knew about Argentine wine, at all. We didn't exist. I thought to



myself, my father's whole project of putting Argentinean wine on the map of great wines of the world was going to fail. So, in the end, I made the decision to work for the winery mostly to help my dad.

ASI: At the time, you were a young emergency room doctor. How did you balance your love of medicine and this desire to help your father?

LC: It was difficult. I had just finished a specialty in emergency medicine, and running, for the first time, the emergency department of a great hospital in Los Angeles. This was before I moved to San Francisco to run emergency departments there. But I also really thought what my father was doing was very interesting. I wanted to help him, and I also really believed in the quality of our wines. Even then I was a wine lover and had the luxury of drinking some of the best wines in the world during my university days. When I went off to college (Laura Catena graduated

"I was determined that if we were going to compete with the best minds of the world, we better get our science right."

magna cum laude from Harvard before pursuing medicine at Stanford), my father gave me his credit card. He said, 'you can buy any wine you want with this card, but when I come for a visit, we have to taste them blind together. At 20 I was blind tasting Vega Sicilia Unico, Lafite, Latour... all the best wines of the world. When I started working with my dad, I wanted to combine my love of wine and science. I told him let's get our research in place. Let's understand our place, and let's see what those great wineries of the world are doing. Over time I realised we couldn't just apply what they were doing in Bordeaux and Burgundy, or even in California to Argentina because we were in this unique high-altitude region, with almost no water. We had these different soils, different varieties, even Malbec wasn't Malbec. At the time everyone in Argentina was focused on clones, but really we had all these different soils, different varieties of Malbec. Thanks to my time in France with my family, I learned the value of massal selection of old vines.

ASI: What made you finally decide to give up medicine and work full-time at Catena?

LC: I made that decision in November 2019. My dad had turned 80, and I'd done emergency medicine for almost 30 years. At that point, I felt like my family deserves this. I wanted dad to be able to relax a little bit and spend time with the grandkids. Of course, then came COVID. I thank God I made the decision I did because I was so busy with COVID. I felt like I was on Zoom all the time. With COVID, I also got to use my medical skills. I went around with a team that vaccinating marginally housed people. It was great to be out there again, convincing people who didn't want to get vaccinated.

ASI: Have you experienced any sexism at the winery?

LC: I always tell people that nothing good comes out of something good. Good things only come out of bad things. So that's why every time something slightly bad happens to you, you're about to do something great. I do a lot of good things when I get mad. When I first went back

“You can pay people better, you can plant better vineyards, you can make better wine. This is what makes the world run.”

A DISCUSSION WITH...

Dr. Laura Catena, Julia Harding MW and Catherine Fallis MS



Vineyard, Winter Dusk (Photo: Catena Zapata)

to Argentina to help at the winery, I was looking at one of our vineyards with one of our winemakers. He was conducting the research using a trial-and-error approach. Not super scientific. I remember asking him 'what is your control for this experiment?' and his response was 'your English is good, you should help us with marketing.' I was so insulted. I didn't even know what marketing was. I went to medical school, and I had previously studied biology. And while today I understand what marketing is, and understand it isn't easy, it's an entire field of its own. It's just as distinctive as making wine and management. I remember thinking, 'this person is not going to just throw me into the public relations, or marketing department. I am sticking to what I know how to do, which is biology.'

I was determined that if we were going to compete with the best minds of the world, we better get our science right. My decision was mostly based on helping my dad, and protecting him from bad advice, but it was also to conduct research. There was a little youthful arrogance too, at the time. I am more humble now.

ASI: When you began your work with your father, women in the Argentinean wine industry were few and far between. As you alluded to, most worked in public relations, and marketing. How important has it been for you to be a mentor to young women seeking to become winemakers or take on senior leadership roles?

LC: I always say that the best thing is to lead by example. If you go to a winery such as Catena and see that I'm in a leadership position, as are several women both in the business, winemaking, viticulture sides of the business. If you see women in leadership positions, whether you are a man or a woman you want to join that winery. I find men don't like working in all male

teams. Men love working with women, or at least the kind of men that I hang out with.

Another thing I have been a real advocate for is equal pay for equal work. It's an all-too-common thing to say 'women do all the work, or the women are so good at things', but then ask yourself are you paying them the same for that job as a man? It's the basics of equality, but it is not always what's happening. Pay equity is something that is very firmly established at our winery. My business philosophy is whoever does most of the work gets paid for that.





ASI: Is there anything else that needs to change in the workplace to make sure more women are advancing to leadership positions?

LC: I think the next big discussion point in terms of the advancement of women, and in a sense its about men, is family responsibilities. Who goes home if a child is sick? Many times, when both mother and father work, it's the woman. I once was in a situation when a man indicated he had to go home because his child was sick. Somebody asked, 'where's your wife?' I was so angry. That is not the right question. We need to support men in taking on these roles that are traditionally female. If we don't then we're not going to get true equality. We need to encourage men to take on roles like taking care of older parents. All these things where it's much more acceptable in jobs for the women to do it. And so that women end up doing.

ASI: You are also a mother of three. Which brings up another important challenge with respect to equality, which the role of men and women in work and at home.

LC: As far as being able to do two professions and be a parent at the same time, the key was what I call accepting the B minus or the C. I remember one time with my second child, I was having difficulty

producing milk. I was very worried. I couldn't get enough milk for my baby. I remember thinking, 'why is this happening?' I was really stressed about trying to take care of the baby, traveling for wine and practicing medicine simultaneously. I asked myself, 'do I need to do everything well?' Honestly the answer is no. I don't. For example, having a neat house. Nobody needs a neat house all the time. Do you need to have a perfectly cooked meal every night? No; you don't. It's the same way with parenting. The best parents are not the perfect parents. The best parent is one that lets the kid make mistakes. When one of my kids called me about they forgot their lunch, I would tell them to beg their friends for some food. Asking for favours is an important skill to learn. It's a class in negotiation. Even young kids can figure things out. Letting them do things for themselves is the best form of education. I think that there's a lot of areas in your life where accepting a bad grade is the secret to being able to get a good grade in the things that are important.



JAPAN
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Pioneering Women: A New Era in Traditional Sake Brewing

Historically, sake brewing was considered a male-only profession. Today, the role of women in sake brewing has evolved significantly. Women's skills and perspectives contribute to improving sake quality and creating better working environments in breweries.

On January 25, 2025, a symposium was held to commemorate the recognition of traditional sake brewing as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. Two remarkable women took the stage.

One of them was **Kazuko Shiiya** from Niigata Prefecture. She entered the world of sake brewing at 25, initially handling miscellaneous tasks at a local brewery. Over time, she took on crucial roles in fermentation management and koji-making, which are the heart of sake production. In 1976, she became the first woman to obtain the prestigious National First-Grade Sake Brewing Technician certification, paving the way for future generations of female brewers. She recalled, "The brewers I saw were incredibly cool, which made me want to join the craft. I carried heavy loads and worked the same as the men. I was never treated differently as a woman." She noted that the presence of women in the brewery led to increased awareness of cleanliness and improvements in the workplace atmosphere.

The other speaker was **Mayuko Kita**, born into a family-run sake brewery in Shiga Prefecture. Believing that it was not enough simply to sell good products, it was also essential to understand the production process firsthand as the owner. She began learning sake brewing from the Toji (master brewer). Now, she not only manages the brewery but also serves as the Toji. She has focused on creating a better working environment and optimizing workflows and equipment to ensure safety and efficiency for all. "A brewery that is comfortable for women to work in is also a better

workplace for men," she says. While cherishing traditional handcrafting techniques, she continues to innovate.

In ancient times, it was women who brewed the sake that was offered to the gods. However, as production expanded, specialised guilds of male brewers took over, and the tradition of men-only brewing developed. Today, many breweries embrace diversity, working as integrated teams regardless of gender.

Sake brewing is a delicate craft requiring a keen eye for subtle changes in temperature, humidity, and fermentation. The most crucial step—koji-making—unfolds over 48 hours, during which the rice undergoes continuous transformation. Shiiya remarked, "Watching those changes was fascinating. The more care I put in, the better the koji turned out." She fondly recalled drinking the first sake she brewed: "It was rewarding to see my hard work come together in that one glass."

Sharing the Beauty of Sake Brewing with the Future

Women in sake brewing are not only preserving tradition but also creating new opportunities to connect with markets and consumers around the world. The future of sake lies in sharing its appeal across borders and genders. Kita emphasized, "Sake brewing is a beautiful and honest craft, and the mindset with which we approach it is essential." In closing, Shiiya expressed her hope: "Sake brewing should continue to be passed down regardless of gender, nationality, or age. I hope people keep spreading the joy of delicious sake."

Women's contributions are shaping the future. The documentary film *KAMPAI! Sake Sisters* (2019) is also recommended, and it features three influential women: **Miho Imada** (Toji), **Marie Chiba** (sake sommelier), and **Rebecca Wilson-Lye** (sake advocate).



A DISCUSSION WITH...

Leading by Example

With Julia Harding MW

Over the past 25 years **Julia Harding MW** has become one of the world's most respected wine writers. She is currently senior editor and staff writer for a position that requires her to maintain some of the highest editorial and journalistic standards in the business. Her work has included, in addition to her articles for Jancisrobinson.com, co-authoring *Wine Grapes* with Robinson and grape geneticist José Vouillamoz, her role as maps editor for the 7th and 8th editions of the World Atlas of Wine, and her position as a co-editor and most recently lead editor for the *Oxford Companion of Wine*. We asked Julia to talk about her journey to becoming one of the world's most respected wine writers, and her role as a mentor, inspiration to other women.



ASI: When you entered Cambridge to study modern languages, could you have ever guessed a future career in the wine industry?

Julia Harding (JH): Absolutely not! I didn't grow up in a wine household. My parents liked wine but didn't have a big budget so my introduction to wine through them was mostly via a few bottles of good value Bergerac they brought

back from a holiday to France. In university, I would label myself as a casual wine drinker, but I was always interested if someone new more about wine than I did. I would usually ask them a few questions or have them give me some ideas regarding what wine to buy. Wine was, at this time, very much in the background. I was very focused on building a career in publishing.

ASI: Your career began in traditional publishing, editing. How did it transition to focusing specifically on wine?

JH: There were a couple of things. First, I joined a tasting group via a couple of friends that knew about and loved talking about wine. Second, I started hanging out on Saturday mornings at Oddbins in Bristol, which at that time was a very good

Dr. Laura Catena, Julia Harding MW and Catherine Fallis MS

wine shop. The head buyer at the time was Steve Daniel, who's still very active in the UK wine trade. He was extremely innovative. He was one of the first people to bring, for example, great Greek wines to the UK market. The staff were all mad about wine. There was one who, if she suggested a wine, I knew I would like it. Thanks to her, I became more adventurous in my wine selections.

It was at this time I decided it would be a good idea to try and do an evening wine class, which turned out to be WSET. The first WSET class I went to was very basic, and some of the material drawn from Jancis' television programmes. I was completely gripped because the subject was so fascinating, so diverse. There were so many aspects to wine that I'd never thought about such as viticulture, chemistry, geography, history, and socioeconomics. Then there was the simple pleasure of drinking wine. Combined it all fed my mind but also fed my taste buds, and my curiosity. I'm one of these people who loves to learn. This was something I knew nothing about. It became the beginning of a real learning adventure which I'm still on.

ASI: How, and why did you go from WSET Level 1 all the way to becoming a Master of Wine?

JH: After 20 years as a freelance editor focusing on academic texts—linguistics, literature, and university textbooks—I found myself increasingly bored. Amid this, I had a habit of reading Jancis Robinson's wine articles in the Financial Times. I would buy the newspaper tear out her article and throw the rest of the newspaper away. I realised there was somebody whose role I aspired to.

On a whim, and before even starting the WSET Diploma, I reached out to Jancis, expressing my interest in wine writing and editing. Remarkably, she agreed to meet. During our conversation,

we explored the parallels between editing and wine writing. Before leaving, I boldly asked if I could work for her. She declined, citing her control-freak tendencies, but that meeting solidified my resolve. By my mid-40s, I felt an urgency to pivot careers. I dove into wine wholeheartedly, earning the Master of Wine (MW) designation to fast-track my transition. At that age, I believed the MW would open doors and establish credibility in a new industry. My approach was all-in, driven by passion and a need to act decisively. It wasn't just a career change—it was the culmination of my editing background, fascination with wine, and determination to pursue a dream. So after completing my WSET Diploma, I received a scholarship and the opportunity to work for Waitrose. They had a fantastic wine buying department which including three or four Masters of Wine at the time, including one woman who was the buyer for Burgundy and Champagne. Even though it was a male dominated environment, there was no question that she was any less than anybody else. To be honest she was probably one of the strongest people in the

"I'm one of these people who loves to learn. This was something I knew nothing about. It became the beginning of a real learning adventure which I'm still on."

A DISCUSSION WITH...



While studying in Cambridge, Julia Harding MW interest in wine grew through friends with a deeper knowledge of the subject and by joining local tasting groups.

Dr. Laura Catena, Julia Harding MW and Catherine Fallis MS

team. During my time at Waitrose, they very generously supported me in taking the Master of Wine programme.

While I was at Waitrose my job was to run the press tastings. This allowed me to keep in steady contact with Jancis, with whom I had done a contract job for previously. That job was condensing the *Oxford Companion of Wine* to three quarters of its original length. After I passed the Master of Wine, knowing that I could study, edit and write she took me on part time, for a period of two years. I was still working for Waitrose. At the end of those two years I had to make a decision. Jancis' affirmation gave me the confidence to work with her full-time.



For Julia Harding MW, wine writing is more than just words—it's an immersive experience of tasting, learning, and storytelling, shaped by a lifelong passion for both language and wine.

ASI: Would you call Jancis your mentor?

JH: Yes, but not in the traditional sense of the word. Jancis didn't then or now have time to mentor actively. For me, it was about sitting down and having a heart to heart with her what I'd written. She gave her feedback and so essentially, I was learning by osmosis. At some point I started editing her articles on the website and working with her on the third edition of the *Oxford Companion*. Via this constant interaction, via many, many emails every day, I was able to see how she did things, learn from her suggestions to me, learn how to approach a tasting, etcetera. It was an osmotic, informal mentoring style.

ASI: Jancis broke the glass ceiling for women wine writers. As you entered this profession, did you experience any negativity or challenges because of being a woman?

JH: To be honest, I didn't. It might but it never occurred to me there was an issue being a woman wine writer, either before or during my time working with Jancis. Jancis never made it appear there was an issue about being a woman in the field. Obviously because she was, and is, so good that being a woman

was sort of irrelevant. That's the environment I was, and am, living and working in. The bigger issue for me, isn't when you are a wine writer but getting going as a wine writer. You need to have confidence, and whether that (confidence) is tied to gender, I don't know.

ASI: What drives you keep writing and editing?

JH: Before working in the wine business, I would often get so bored by the subject matter. In my current role I never get bored because I am fascinated by the content I am working on. All the romanticism and the stories of the wine world are what motivates me daily. I consider myself a writer more than a journalist. Which makes Jancis and I a great combination. Jancis is much better at me at getting the scoop. I am more about writing detailed stories about the wine world. It's not always easy. I think about my time working on the fifth edition of the *Oxford Companion* with Tara Thomas. There would be days when I'd be just sat at my desk editing contributions from other people, struggling with the complexity of the editing a book like that. What really motivated me, after a whole

day spent fighting words about this liquid, was going to the tasting table at the end of the day, remembering what it is all about and why I'm doing this. Even more motivating is visiting a winery or meeting a producer and learning their stories. Often after spending an evening with a winemaker, I come home just buzzing with enthusiasm because they do something I could never do. The good ones create something that is amazing. I think if you feel that enthusiasm, energy, it can't help but enliven you're writing.

ASI: What are your thoughts about the underlying sexist, Anglo and Western bias of the language of wine?

JH: As far as masculine and feminine, I think there's perfectly good alternatives. They are completely unnecessary, and hail from a previous or several previous generations when wine writing as well as everything else was male dominated. One of the things we tried to do, beginning with the fourth edition of the *Companion*, was to move away from Anglocentric language. Tara Thomas (Managing Editor Jancisrobinson.com, based in New York City) and

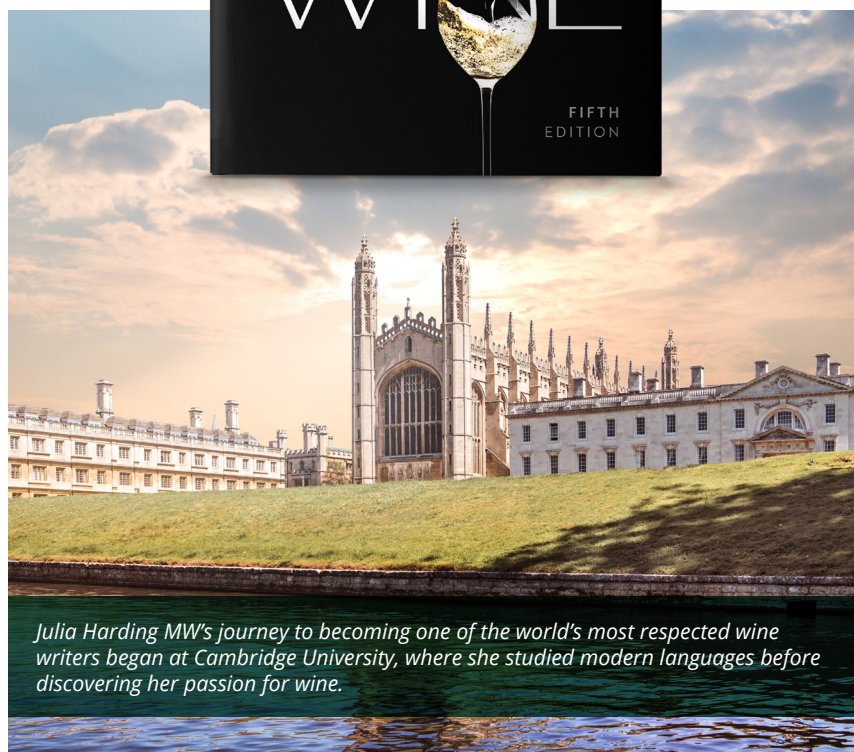
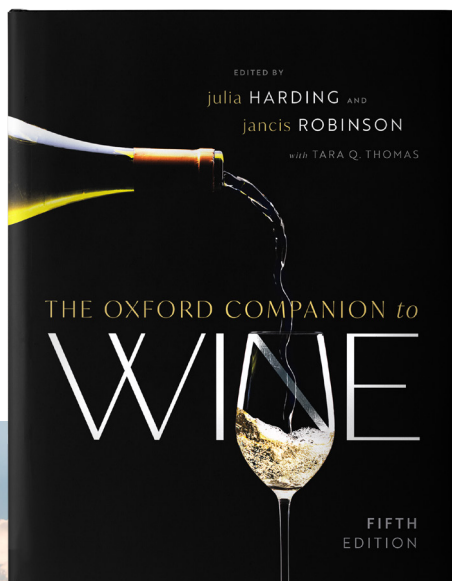
I have had a lot of discussions about this. She often asks, 'what does that mean?'. I would reply 'what do you mean by that?' We would have to fight over the cross transatlantic differences. As a result, we try to avoid gender stereotypes but also anything colonial. This required some drastic rewrites. We still use New World and Old World as shorthand for style, but we don't use them in the same way they would have been colonially used. Another area where I feel like I don't know that I can make a difference is the Westernisation of wine language. My diet, my palate, is mostly Western. I still tend to think in terms of my own palate and the words and the associations I learned as I grew up through wine.

As such I don't think I'd be able to translate, if you like, all my tasting notes into words that would be readily understandable by an Asian wine taster, for example.

ASI: Have you been a mentor or consider yourself an inspiration to other women wishing to become wine writers?

JH: With respect to women wine writers, only in the sense like Jancis was a mentor to me. I guess I have been doing that all my adult life. It's just that sometimes the mentee doesn't or doesn't have the opportunity to engage in the process and must make the effort to look at changes made. One of my current colleagues is Samantha (Sam) Cole-Johnson who started writing for us a few years ago.

When I wasn't working as much on the *Oxford Companion* (that takes the better part of two year) I would be editing most of the articles on the website, not necessarily heavily, but I'd be checking all of them. I would give Sam feedback on some of her articles. It wasn't an official mentorship per se, but she has become a very good writer. She now writes regularly for us and does our social media content. Most of my mentorship would be for those taking the Master of Wine programme, but that wasn't specifically for women. Mentoring for the MW exams and the dissertation was an intensely engaged and interactive process, not just in writing but also in tasting and assessing wines (for the blind-tasting part of the MW).



Julia Harding MW's journey to becoming one of the world's most respected wine writers began at Cambridge University, where she studied modern languages before discovering her passion for wine.

“What really motivated me, after a whole day spent fighting words about this liquid, was going to the tasting table at the end of the day, remembering what it is all about and why I’m doing this.”



A DISCUSSION WITH...

The Grape Goddess: **Rising Above Circumstance**

With Catherine Fallis MS

Catherine Fallis MS, also known as the Grape Goddess, is an author, columnist, critic, speaker, and the fifth woman in the world to attain the Master Sommelier designation. Catherine currently owns and manages [The Grape Goddess](#), a platform that provides reviews and offers restaurant consultation services. She is also a much sought-after public speaker. ASI spoke with Catherine about her journey from poverty to professional success.

ASI: Growing up, did you ever foresee wine as a career?

Catherine Fallis MS (CF): It's an emphatic no. I think for many of us who end up in this industry, it's by way of something else. I grew up in less-than-ideal conditions, moving around quite a bit and living in some very challenging inner-city neighbourhoods. This made me incredibly independent but also unaware of life beyond the small bubble I knew. It made me hungry for something else, gave me the desire to see the greater world, and allowed me to imagine a life far removed from what I was living. At 19 or 20, I travelled to Europe, staying in youth hostels, camping, or even climbing onto luggage racks to sleep on overnight train journeys. I remember arriving in Paris and buying a peach at a fruit stall. When I picked it up and unwrapped it from its beautiful packaging, I kept

Dr. Laura Catena, Julia Harding MW and Catherine Fallis MS



“She inspires confidence in women to take on leadership roles in winemaking and winery management. Confidence is so critical to success.”

thinking, This peach smells amazing. I was entranced by its aroma and taste, not by the 10 euros or whatever I had paid for it.

ASI: Do you think your challenging upbringing and food insecurity made you more aware of these new flavours than someone who may have grown up with more exposure to food and drink?

CF: Definitely. My senses were so overwhelmed by that peach in Paris or my first taste of a tomato in Bari, Puglia. Everything about Europe mesmerised me: the sights, the sounds, the architecture, and the culture. It was incredible to see people strolling after dinner on a Sunday in Florence, or in Paris, where everyone seemed so impeccably dressed and fragrant with cologne and perfume.

These experiences heightened my sensory awareness—for my eyes, my nose, and my palate. After this, I transitioned into hospitality, working in hotel and restaurant management. I decided to pursue a

career that would allow me to work anywhere in the world so I could surround myself with beautiful things, even though I didn't yet know it would involve food and drink. That said, I had imagined making chocolate, working as a baker, or becoming a chef. I tried the latter, but it was a huge disaster.

ASI: You eventually landed at *Windows on the World* in New York City. How did that shape your career?

CF: I started out in hotel and restaurant management, which was very tedious. At 23, I looked at my potential colleagues, who were in their 50s and 60s, never married, and had no personal life because they worked nights, weekends, and holidays. I wanted to specialise in something to break out of this routine.

I read an article in *The New York Times* about Kevin Zraly, describing how people who worked for him went on to have amazing careers. I thought, *I want to work for him at Windows on the World*. After a year and a half of persistence and stubbornness, I finally got an interview—and he hired me. That was the beginning of my wine career.

While there, I met amazing wine producers and educators from around the world. It was during this time I became aware of the Court of Master Sommeliers, but I didn't begin the programme until I moved to Hawaii. I had three jobs at the time, but I used every free moment to study.

After a couple of years, I moved to Los Angeles to work with a distributor, and that's when I began seriously working towards the MS. Six or seven years later, I finally passed.



Catherine Fallis MS in Sicily

ASI: At the time, you were one of the few women Master Sommeliers. Were you subjected to sexist behaviour in a profession dominated by men?

CF: Absolutely, and it remains an issue. Even now, at the upper levels of sommellerie, the majority of MS candidates are men. The biggest fall-off seems to occur at the advanced level.

Part of the problem is representation. When you look at a picture of Master Sommeliers and don't see many people who look like you, it can make you feel like you don't belong. That's a significant barrier.

At the time, I didn't have much in the way of mentorship or coaching. Madeline Triffon was my beacon. I remember flying out to Michigan to spend three days with her at her restaurant. She was incredibly generous with her time.

She inspired me not to quit, even when I faced sexism and other challenges. Her advice to "put on the blinders, don't get distracted, and win the race" was invaluable.

ASI: Is mentoring women important to you?

CF: Absolutely. By mentoring and inspiring others, I hope more women will pursue the Master Sommelier designation.

ASI: Are there women in the industry who inspire you?

CF: Laura Catena. She has completely transformed the landscape in Argentina, which is a male-dominated culture. She inspires confidence in women to take on leadership

roles in winemaking and winery management. Confidence is so critical to success.

ASI: How much confidence did it take to transition from writing technical wine descriptions to consumer-friendly ones?

CF: A great deal. Wine language is historically technical and complex, but I believed it could be clearer.

For example, in my consumer-friendly work, I avoid terms like *tannin* because not everyone knows what that means. I've received feedback from beginners saying, *You're the first person I can understand when it comes to wine.* That's deeply rewarding.

ASI: Are there any rising female sommeliers you'd like to highlight?

CF: There are so many talented women out there. I'm also thrilled to see increasing diversity in race, gender, and background. Hopefully, more people will say, *If they can do it, I can too.*

"There are so many talented women out there. I'm also thrilled to see increasing diversity in race, gender, and background."



VINHOS VERDES

Região Demarcada desde 1908



The taste of tomorrow

By MW Dirceu Vianna Jr

Sommeliers and consumers often associate this lush green northwest corner of Portugal with vibrant, light and refreshing white wines. Broadly speaking, this remains true, however as one takes a closer look, the picture is increasingly detailed, enticingly diverse and exciting. Ambitious winemakers are fast transforming the region into a dynamic hub of creativity and innovation.

Cool, maritime climate influenced by the Atlantic Ocean, enables producers to create wines displaying elegant fruit profile combined with vibrant refreshing acidity and light alcohol, perfect for the modern consumer. In addition, a new wave of producers has been embracing lesser-known grape varieties, exploring precise parcel selection and using distinct winemaking techniques to craft ambitious styles that serve to highlight not only a unique terroir but also achieve wines that can please even the most discerning palates.

White wines showcasing Alvarinho, Arinto, Loureiro, and Azal dominate production. Techniques such as skin contact, extended lees ageing, and judicious oak use are helping to create wines that are increasingly characterful, complex and capable of demonstrating ageing potential.

Sparkling wines are also rising to prominence, offering a spectrum from playful Pét-Nats to serious bottle fermented expressions. The region's rosé wines are equally captivating. Some of the best examples are made from Touriga Nacional, Padeiro, and Alvarelhão. These wines feature vibrant berry flavours and lively acidity, with some sparkling rosés adding a refreshing twist.

Meanwhile, red wines of Vinhos Verdes, that in the recent past have been overlooked, are gaining importance. Grapes like Vinhão and Espadeiro produce lively, fruit forward reds that are versatile and full of character. Alvarelhão also has enormous potential and likely to be appreciated by consumers who enjoy elegant, silky reds reminiscent of Pinot Noir.

Beyond the mainstream, research into lesser-known varieties, such as Lameiro, Pintosa, and Verdelho Tinto is uncovering exciting new possibilities. Today, Vinhos Verdes harmonizes tradition and innovation. From crisp whites and vibrant rosés to intriguing reds and sparkling wines. If you are one of those who still associate this lush green northwest corner of Portugal with vibrant, light and refreshing whites to be enjoyed young, it is time to start exploring. There has never been a better time. Ever increasing diversity of styles, exciting and exotic wines are waiting for you.

www.vinhoverde.pt



In Memory of Myriam Broggi, the first woman sommelier in history to reach an international competition podium

FEATURE ARTICLE



Myriam Ch Mercian 1995



Myriam President ASSP 1996



Myriam shares a laugh with Michèle Chantôme and Jean Frambourt



Myriam next to Roland de Calonne 1994

In Memory of Myriam Broggi

Nothing suggested that **Myriam Praz**, the Verbier ski instructor, would one day become the first woman to reach the podium of an international sommelier competition. It was only after marrying **Roland Broggi**, Head Chef at the *Hôtel du Midi* in Delémont, Jura, that she felt the need to study wine. "I wanted to be able to advise customers on their choice of wine, so that they could best appreciate the dishes prepared by my husband. In fact, it was out of love that I became a sommelier!"

In 1987, she became Best Sommelier of Switzerland, qualifying for the Ruinart Trophy for Europe's Best Sommelier, of which she was a semi-finalist three times before reaching the final and securing third place in 1994, behind **Éric Beaumard** (France) and **Franck Kämmer** (Germany).

This marked the very first time in the history of sommellerie, a woman was recognised at the

international level... during a time, at the end of the 20th century, when it was still a very male dominated profession.

Having earned her title, and thus the recognition of her peers, Myriam decided to help young women and men attracted by the world of the restaurant trade, and to devote herself to their training, preparing them for sommelier exams and competitions. For several years, she also hosted columns on Swiss radio and television. Sharing and passing on her knowledge.

Having participated, with Piero Tenca and Thomas Eltschinger, in the formation of the Association Suisse des Sommeliers Professionnels (successor to Bernard Fourgous' Club des Sommeliers de la Confédération Helvétique), she was elected as the first president for French-speaking Switzerland, then for the three linguistic regions of Switzerland,

and hosted an ASI General Meeting in Montreux in 2000.

Myriam left her mark on an entire generation of sommeliers. She also proposed a new approach to wine tasting and attached great importance to terroir. She had a privileged contact with all the winegrowers of Switzerland.

It is reported that Broggi became lost while in Cazorla Natural Park in southern Spain in late January 2024. The 80-year-old Broggi is reported to have made an input error in her GPS, inadvertently directing her to a remote hamlet in the park, which boasted the same name as the street she lived on near Almeria. Broggi is presumed to have abandoned her car, a result of the geolocation error, and in combination with a lack of telephone reception, is assumed to have become lost in the dense vegetation and rough topography of the region. The search to find her was unsuccessful.

Tribute to Myriam Broggi, by Paolo Basso, ASI Best Sommelier of Europe 2010 and ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2013

"There are encounters that mark a life. For me, one of them was meeting Myriam Broggi, an extraordinary woman and a true pioneer in the world of sommellerie. When I was a young sommelier at the start of my career, fate would have it that we worked in the same village. She, a consultant for a wine merchant, and I, a sommelier in a gourmet restaurant. That's when, without hesitation or personal interest, Myriam decided to devote her time, experience and passion to me.

She motivated, guided and steered me along a path, begun some time before with **Éric Duret**, which then led me to the titles of Best Sommelier of Europe and the World. But more than that, she passed on to me the value of perseverance, the love of wine and gastronomy. Myriam was driven by an infectious passion and a deep desire to pass on her knowledge. She possessed a unique charisma and an innate ability to inspire and motivate everyone she met.

She was an outspoken and direct person, sometimes misunderstood for these very qualities. She refused to give in to "political correctness", which today often permeates our world with hypocrisy, and preferred sincere, open and, above all, fair confrontation. She loved sommelier competitions, true symbols of constructive confrontation and growth, both professional and personal. And in this world, Myriam was an icon: the first female finalist in Europe's Best Sommelier competition, a feat that paved the way for many other women.

Myriam Broggi was not only an outstanding professional, but also a deeply authentic person. Her perseverance, spirit and dedication remain an example to us all. Whatever the passage of time, her memory will remain engraved in the hearts of those who had the privilege of knowing her.

A sincere tribute to all that she represented and all that she contributed to the sommellerie and to those who crossed her path. Her legacy will live on forever.

Six Inspiring Women of Sommellerie

The world of wine, historically shaped by tradition and often male-dominated, has been transformed by the remarkable contributions of trailblazing women sommeliers. From the pioneering women who shattered glass ceilings in fine dining establishments to the modern-day innovators championing diversity, sustainability, and education, these women have not only elevated the profession, but also inspired a new generation to follow in their footsteps. Their stories are a testament to resilience, passion, and an unyielding dedication to excellence, proving that the art of sommellerie is enriched by voices that bring fresh perspectives and courage to the table.



Paula Bosch (Germany)

In 1981 when Paula Bosch was hired by the Hotel Inter-Continental in Cologne, she became Germany's first female sommelier. She continued to work as a sommelier, eventually moving to Restaurant Victorian in Düsseldorf, where she worked as head sommelier from 1985 to 1991. In 1988 the Gault Millau awarded her the inaugural title of "Sommelier of the Year." From 1991 to 2011, Bosch served as the sommelier for the prestigious Tantris restaurant in Munich, a venue that earned 3 Michelin stars during her tenure. She managed the restaurant's extensive wine cellar with approximately 65,000 bottles, traveled to the most famous wine regions, where she discovered new talents and great wines. In her spare time, from 1996-2003, she wrote Germany's first e-weekly wine column in the famous SZ (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*) magazine and 10 seminal books about wine in general, enjoying wines at a restaurant, at home, and on the most important wine producing nations and their leading wine personalities. She has received numerous awards from the wine industry and has cemented her status as the German Sommelière with the highest award of the Bavarian Ministry, the Bavarian Order of Merit. As a lecturer for sommeliers at the IHK and at the VHS, she has been giving regular master classes for 15 years. In July 2011, she transitioned to self-employment, becoming a wine consultant. She is also a journalist, an author, and a commentator.



Etinosa Emokpae (Eddie Sade) (USA)

Better known as Edie Sade, Emokpae, has long been a strong advocate for women working the sommelier industry. Originally from The Bronx, New York City, she has worked there at various restaurants including Untitled, Maialino, Lafayette, and Mission Chinese before moving to Philadelphia. Since moving to Philadelphia, she has managed beverage programmes for Walnut Street Café and Friday Saturday Sunday. Although she has recently moved from the restaurant floor to wine sales, she continues to be an inspiration for men and women of colour seeking to make their mark in the US wine and restaurant industries.



Pascaline Lepeltier (France, USA)

Considered by many to be one of the world's most influential wine figures, Pascaline Lepeltier defies convention. The Loire-born Lepeltier anticipated becoming a professor of philosophy, but a love of wine took her down another career path. Lepeltier immersed herself in the subject and quickly rose through the ranks of France's restaurant establishment, working at such prestigious restaurants as *L'Auberge Bretonne*, and *George V* in Paris before crossing the border to work at *Rouge Tomato* in Belgium. In 2009 she moved to New York City to be Beverage Director of *Rouge Tomato's* flagship restaurant, and the rest they say is history. She has subsequently become a laureate of "*Un des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France - Sommellerie*" and won the title of Best Sommelier of France in 2018. In January 2019, she became the first woman to be recognised by *La Revue du Vin de France* as their "Personality of the Year 2019." She co-owns a winery in New York State, *Chambers Restaurant* in Tribeca (New York City), and recently published her first book, *One Thousand Vines: A New Way to Understand Wine*. In 2023, Lepeltier was awarded fourth place at the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the World in Paris, and most recently placed second at the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of Europe, held in Serbia.



Paz Levinson, ASI Diploma Gold Plus, (Argentina, France)

In a country, Argentina, known for the heights of its wine industry, no sommelier has taken its profession to a higher level than Paz Levinson. Levinson has successfully competed on the world stage, becoming Best Sommelier of the Americas (2015) and then notably placing fourth at the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the World in Mendoza (2016). The gracious and personable sommelier now commands one of the most prestigious sommelier positions in the world, as the Global Executive Sommelier for Chef Anne-Sophie Pic's eponymous *Groupe PIC*, with celebrated restaurants throughout France, London, Lausanne and Hong Kong.



Miyuki Morimoto, ASI Diploma Silver (Japan)

Miyuki Morimoto is the Executive Sommelier at the *Conrad Hotel Tokyo*. She made history as the first woman to reach the final of the Best Sommelier of Japan competition, an extraordinary achievement she has accomplished twice in her career. Miyuki has also represented Japan at the ASI Best Sommelier of Asia & Pacific competition and is set to compete on behalf of Japan again this year.

Balancing her career with motherhood, Miyuki is raising her one-year-old son alongside her husband, who is both a sommelier at their family-run restaurant and a Master of Wine candidate. In her role as Executive Sommelier at the *Conrad Hotel*—a position previously held by Satoru Mori, Miyuki continues to excel. She is a Master Sommelier candidate (having already achieved the Court of Master Sommeliers' Advanced Certification) and is a recipient of a scholarship from the *Gérard Basset Foundation*.



Madeline Triffon MS (USA)

Madeline Triffon is known as “Detroit’s First Lady of Wine.” In 1985, she passed the Master Sommelier exam on her first attempt, becoming the first American woman and only the second woman globally to do so. She later worked as the sommelier at London Chop House, where her wine list received the Wine Spectator Grand Award. Throughout her career, she has held leadership roles, including Wine Director for Jimmy Schmidt’s restaurants and Director of Wine and Beverages for Unique Restaurant Corporation, where her wine lists earned multiple Wine Spectator Awards of Excellence. In 2011, Triffon became the Master Sommelier for Plum Market. Plum Market is a full-service grocery retailer with stores in Southeastern Michigan and Metro Chicago. Madeline directs wine tasting events, hand selects wines for in-store and online retail sales and serves as a corporate wine educator. She is a Chairman Emeritus of the American Chapter of the Court of Master Sommeliers and has also served as Scholarship Chair. In 2012, she was named one of the hundred most influential persons in the U.S. wine industry by IntoWine.com.

Other notable sommeliers include Switzerland’s **Myriam Broggi** (first woman to stand on the podium at an international sommelier contest), **Danièle Carré Cartal** (first women to become a sommelier in France), **Julie DuPouy-Young** (French-born Irish sommelier and business owner known for finishing third at ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2016 Mendoza), Denmark’s **Nina Jensen** (twice runner-up at the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest), American **Alpana Singh** (youngest woman to pass Master Sommelier exams, TV personality, and restaurateur), Canadian **Véronique Rivest** (ASI Diploma Gold Plus, finished second at the ASI Best Sommelier of the World Tokyo 2013, and wine bar owner), UK resident **Claire Thevenot** (first French woman to become a Master Sommelier, and a winner of the Best Sommelier of the United Kingdom title), and **Alba Hough** (an Icelandic sommelier who has been an advocate for members of the LGBTQ2+ community working in the hospitality industry and sommelier profession).



Trailblazing Women of California Wine

FEATURE ARTICLE

California's wine industry has long been a hub of innovation, artistry, and resilience. Within this thriving landscape, a cadre of extraordinary women have emerged as pioneers and leaders, shaping the industry with their vision, expertise, and dedication. From Master Sommeliers and groundbreaking winemakers to influential authors and scientific innovators, these women have paved the way for a more inclusive and dynamic wine community. This article highlights some of California's most inspiring figures, whose contributions have in the past and continue to elevate the state's global reputation for excellence in wine culture and production.



Emily Wines MS

Emily Wines, Master Sommelier

Emily Wines MS is a distinguished Master Sommelier, one of only 149 in the Americas, and a Rémi Krug Cup recipient for passing the rigorous exam on her first attempt. As Vice President of Wine & Beverage Experience at Cooper's Hawk, she leads wine education, events, and guest engagement for their over 650,000 Wine Club members. Previously, Emily served as General Manager at Skipstone Winery and Senior Director of Beverage for Kimpton Hotels, managing wine programmes for 65 restaurants. A former Chair of the Court of Master Sommeliers, she has been a leading advocate for inclusivity and transparency within the sommelier community.

Other Notables:

Gillian Balance MS (Cavallo Point Lodge, Treasury Wine Estates), Maja Kümmerle (Citrin and Mélisse, Santa Monica), Amanda McCrossin (formerly PRESS), Alexandria Sarovich (Own-Rooted Hospitality), Cara Patricia (DECANT), Lindsey Yield.

Trailblazing Women of California Wine



Martha Stoumen
(Photo: Andrew Thomas Lee)

Martha Stoumen, Contemporary Winemaker

Martha Stoumen is one of the most widely celebrated and best-known winemakers working in California today. Known for her integrity in and out of the vineyards, Martha produces a range of low-intervention wines with patience and a deep respect for land and process. Each year, she crafts nearly two dozen wines, incorporating both unexpected and classic varietals, all of which encapsulate the “New California” style. These wines are fun, fresh, and absolutely delicious.

Other Notables:

Terah Bajjalieh (Terah Wine Co.), Maggie Kruse (Jordan Vineyard and Winery), Jamie Benziger (Imagery Estate Winery), Heidi Bridenhagen (Director of Winemaking for Distinguished Vineyards: MacRostie, Markham, TEXTBOOK, Dough Wines, and Argyle [Oregon]), Britt Richards (Alta Nova, Bando Vintners, Head High Wines), Evyn Cameron (Une Femme Wines), Katy Larue (LaRue Wines), Shalini Sekhar (Neely Wine, Ottavino Wines, Waits-Mast, Xander Soren Wines).

FEATURE ARTICLE

Merry Edwards, Trailblazing Winemaker

Merry Edwards, one of California’s first female winemakers, began her career at Mount Eden Vineyards in 1974. She was the founding winemaker at Matanzas Creek and later established Merry Edwards Winery in 1997, focusing on Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast. Her pioneering efforts include developing the UCD37 Pinot Noir clone, which is now widely grown. She has also been a wine writer. Inducted into the CIA’s Vintners Hall of Fame and a James Beard Award winner, Merry’s contributions have shaped the American wine industry. After selling her winery to Champagne Louis Roederer in 2019, she retired in 2020, leaving a legacy of excellence and innovation. The winery, along with other Roederer Estates in the United States (Diamond Creek Vineyards, Roederer Estate, Domaine Anderson, and Scharffenberger Cellars), is now managed by Nicole Carter.



Merry Edwards

Other Notables:

MaryAnn Graf (first woman winemaker in California post-Prohibition), Zelma Long (started with Robert Mondavi in the early 1970s, later spent 20 years as winemaker for Simi), Heidi Peterson Barrett (cult winemaker known for Screaming Eagle, Dalle Valle, Paradigm, Grace Family Vineyards, and others), Helen Turley (Marcassin, Turley Wine Cellars), Delia Viader (founding winemaker, Viader), Milla Handley (first woman winemaker to have her name on a label, Handley Cellars), Barbara Lindblom (former winemaker of Sonoma-Cutrer and Marimar Torres, well-known winemaking consultant), Genevieve Janssens (Moroccan-born, French-raised winemaker, Director of Winemaking for Robert Mondavi Winery since 1997), Cathy Corison (co-founder and winemaker, Corison).

Trailblazing Women of California Wine



Karen MacNeil

Karen MacNeil, Author

Karen MacNeil is a celebrated wine authority and the only American to win every major English-language wine award, including the James Beard Award for Wine and Spirits Professional of the Year and the Louis Roederer Award for Best Consumer Wine Writing. TIME Magazine hailed her as “America’s Missionary of the Vine,” highlighting her influential voice in the wine world. Recognised as one of the “100 Most Influential People in Wine,” Karen continues to inspire and educate enthusiasts globally through her writing, speaking, and advocacy for wine culture. She is best known as the author of *The Wine Bible*.

Other Notables:

Deborah Parker Wong, Elaine Chukan Brown.

Barbara Banke, Winery Owner

Barbara R. Banke, Chairman and Proprietor of Jackson Family Wines, has led the company she co-founded with her late husband, Jess Jackson, for over two decades. Under her leadership, the global portfolio includes renowned wineries across California, Oregon, France, Italy, Chile, Australia, and South Africa. A philanthropist, Banke champions sustainability, education, and community initiatives, including funding UC Davis’s sustainable winery and supporting the Sonoma County Family Justice Centre. A former attorney, she argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Banke also oversees Stonestreet Farm, the family’s award-winning equestrian racing stable, while raising three children now active in the wine business.



Barbara Banke

Other Notables:

Gina Gallo (E. & J. Gallo), Theodora R. Lee (owner, Theopolis Vineyards, first Black woman winery owner in Northern California), Judy Sterling (Iron Horse), Jaime Araujo (Trois Noix Wine), Katie Leonardini (Whitehall Lane), Frankie Williams (Toad Hollow), Kristie Tacy (Tessier), Mara Rich (Talisman), Christina Gonzalez (Gonzales Wine Co.), Lulu Handley (Handley Cellars).

Dr. Ann Noble, Scientist

Dr. Ann Noble, who earned her PhD in Food Science from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, made history in 1974 as the first woman appointed to UC Davis’s Department of Viticulture and Enology. A pioneer in wine sensory science, she revolutionised aroma evaluation with her creation of the “Aroma Wheel.” Dr. Noble’s impactful research and mentorship shaped the careers of many women winemaking icons in California. Since retiring as Professor Emerita in 2003, she remains active globally, championing sensory education and inspiring the wine world with her dedication to advancing the understanding of flavour and aroma.

Other Notables:

Dr. Carole Meredith (grape geneticist, retired professor), Linda Bisson (yeast researcher, retired professor), Susan Hubbard (geophysicist, viticulture), Katerina Axelsson (Founder, Tastry).



Ann Noble
(Photo: Salgu Wissmath)

Oregon's Leading Ladies

By Kristy Wenz

Kristy Wenz, WSET 3, is a wine writer, educator, communications consultant, judge, and brand ambassador currently based in Willamette Valley, Oregon. She is the sole content creator of @kristys_winetravels, the author of a weekly *Substack* newsletter, the wine educator at Corollary Wines, and she provides marketing and social media content for several wineries.

The Oregon wine industry is still largely considered part of the new frontier in wine having only really begun modern day production in the 1970s. That said, the industry has always been known for its pioneering spirit and its penchant for forging new paths, including for women in wine, many of whom were founders in the region's first vineyards and wineries. Beginning with those first families, women have remained interwoven in the fabric of everything that is Oregon wine from vineyards and wineries to restaurants, wine and tourism organisations, and journalism. Today, women are essential to Oregon's success and their influence is evident. From those that paved the way, to the current wave of professionals leading the next generation, the women of Oregon wine have always shown up with gusto, and it can be said, they are just getting warmed up. Here are a few of the women that led the way, are shaping the industry, and creating a legacy for women in wine, both in Oregon and beyond.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Oregon's Leading Ladies





Diana Lett
(Photo: Kathryn Elsesser)

Diana Lett, Co-Founder of The Eyrie Vineyards

Diana Lett is arguably the first woman in Willamette Valley wine. She and her husband, David Lett, planted the Willamette Valley's first Pinot Noir, also its first *vitis vinifera*, vineyards. In fact, David's gift to Diana for their wedding in 1966, was an LL Bean wetsuit and a shovel which she used regularly in the first few years of their marriage planting what became The Eyrie Vineyard in the Dundee Hills. As Vice President, Co-Founder/Owner of The Eyrie Vineyard, Diana remained involved in the vineyard and winery operations throughout her husband's tenure, which included the establishment of the Willamette Valley and Dundee Hills as American Viticultural Areas. During this same time, Diana was also integral to the development of Willamette Valley's yearly Pinot Noir showcases, both the International Pinot Noir Celebration and Pinot Camp. Diana and David also worked together, establishing and sharing research for the region, advocating farmland protection, sharing both ideas and equipment with the growing number of vineyard and winery neighbours. They also worked closely with the Adelsheim's to draw up the strictest labeling regulations in the country. In other words, it wasn't just the first Pinot Noir vines Diana Lett helped to plant, but also the spirit of creativity and collaboration for which Oregon remains to be well-known. Today, she remains co-owner of The Eyrie Vineyard with her son, Jason Lett.



Lynn Penner Ash

Lynn Penner-Ash

Lynn Penner-Ash was the first woman to be a winemaker in Oregon in 1988. An enology student at UC Davis, Lynn began her winemaking career in the early 1980s at California's Domaine Chandon. She spent eight years in California also working for Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Chateau St. Jean before she was hired by the Willamette Valley's Rex Hill Vineyards as the region's first woman winemaker. Lynn worked her way up to President of Rex Hill before she left in 2002 to work full-time at the namesake winery she and her husband, Ron, began in 1998, Penner-Ash Wine Cellars. In 2005, Lynn and Ron designed and built their namesake estate winery which they grew to success before its sale to Jackson Family Wines in 2016. Lynn was a key player in mentoring many second-generation wine leaders in the Willamette Valley. She also served on the board of the International Pinot Noir Celebration as well as the Oregon Pinot Camp Board of Directors. Before she retired in 2022, Lynn built a legacy for herself as a "master blender" and an early champion of Willamette Valley wine.



Dana Frank

Dana Frank, Author & Sommelier

Dana Frank's wine career began at Bend's progressive fine dining restaurant, Merenda, where she worked front-of-house, but it was in Portland where she really made her mark in the wine and hospitality industries. In Portland, she worked as the wine director at Ava Gene's, helped to open Dame, and ran the wine programme at Holdfast Dining. She also gained national acclaim as both a Food & Wine sommelier of the year and a sommelier to watch by Bon Appétit in 2015, but it was her opening of her own bar, Bar Norman that same year that put her on the main stage for Portland's burgeoning food and wine scene. Bar Norman became a neighborhood destination in Portland, with Dana and her talented team being known for their approachable style and unique wine recommendations, particularly in the growing natural wine space. Dana also founded the "Wild Bunch," Portland's annual natural wine festival and is the co-author, with Andrea Slonecker, of the book *Wine Food: New Adventures in Drinking and Cooking*. Despite having to close Bar Norman last year, Dana remains a dynamic and unstoppable force in Portland's wine scene as the co-founder of the winery Bow & Arrow Wines and Austrian wine import company, High Five Selections, with her husband Scott.



Bree Stock

Bree Stock, MW, Owner/Winemaker at Limited Edition Wines

Australian-born **Bree Stock** is not only one of the few Master of Wine (MW) in the world, she is the first woman the Pacific Northwest to become a MW. After her wine studies and harvests in wine regions around the world, including Austria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the US, Bree moved to Willamette Valley where she quickly became a respected leader in the industry. As an MW, Bree runs her own consulting business offering services in vineyard optimisation, winemaking, and blending. She is committed to promoting balance and wellness in the wine industry, believes in the importance of supporting small, independent producers, and works to highlight the contributions of women, minorities, and other underrepresented groups. She is also the co-founder and co-winemaker for Limited Addition Wines, which she owns with her husband, Chad Stock, is the co-winemaker for Concinnitas Fermentations, as well as the winemaker for Artist Block, and Grace + Vine. And as if she wasn't busy enough in the Willamette Valley, Bree is also a frequent presenter at international trade conferences, an educator with the Online Wine Academy in Napa Valley where she developed the Oregon Wine Specialist programme, a board member for numerous organisations, and an international wine judge. She also travels globally representing, and educating on Oregon wine at trade seminars and master classes. Although having already inspired many of the new generation of wine professionals and enthusiasts, Bree's impact on Oregon wine is likely to be felt for generations to come.



Samantha Cole Johnson

Samantha Cole-Johnson, DipWSET, Senior Editor US, for Jancis Robinson

After completing her degree in business and landing a finance job in Portland, Oregon, **Samantha Cole-Johnson** began tasting Willamette Valley wines which inspired her to make a move to the restaurant industry where she worked while studying wine through the Court of Master Sommeliers and WSET. During her WSET diploma coursework, Samantha completed harvest at a local winery after which she approached Jancis Robinson to write the *"Diary of a Cellar Rat"*. Jancis accepted her offer and Samantha completed the series during her second harvest in 2019. The work was such a success, Samantha became the Pacific Northwest wine writer and eventually the US Senior Editor for jancisrobinson.com. She also serves as Jancis Robinson's "social media maven" and hosts the renowned critic's weekly Wine News in 5 broadcasts on her podcast and Instagram. In addition to her work for Jancis Robinson, Samantha teaches WSET 3 and diploma classes at The Wine & Spirit Archive in Portland. She is also actively pursuing her Master of Wine certification for which she was awarded the Commanderie de Bordeaux Andre Crispin Award for her top score on the Stage 1 MW exam. Although early in her career, she has already built a portfolio of well-respected work which can be found at Guildsomm, Wine & Spirits, SevenFifty Daily, and the fifth edition of The Oxford Companion to Wine. She has been shortlisted twice for the IWSC Emerging Talent in Wine Communication Trophy and the Roederer International Wine Writers Award. It is easy to see how Samantha is not only shaping wine writing for Oregon and the US but also inspiring future wine professionals and enthusiasts.

Marqués de Murrieta's Maria Vargas: honouring tradition through innovation



Maria Vargas

Maria Vargas, Technical Director of Marqués de Murrieta (D.O. Ca. Rioja) and Pazo de Barrantes (D.O. Rías Baixas), has cemented her place in the annals of winemaking history. In 2021, she was named the Best Winemaker in the World at the Women in Wine & Spirits Awards (China) an accolade that crowns decades of dedication, innovation, and an unrelenting pursuit of excellence.

Her journey is not just a testament to her skill but also her vision—one that respects tradition while embracing evolution. This recognition celebrates Vargas' transformative work, which has elevated her wineries to global prominence, earning accolades such as 100-points from Robert Parker's Wine Advocate for Castillo Ygay Blanco 1986 and the title of Best Wine in the World for Castillo Ygay Tinto 2010 from *Wine Spectator*.

Born and raised in La Rioja during the 1970s and 80s, Vargas' path to winemaking wasn't predestined. Initially drawn to veterinary medicine, her curiosity about agricultural engineering led her to explore its many facets. "As I progressed in my studies," she recalls, "I began to focus on the world of oenology because of its complexity and ability to assess any work in both vineyards and wineries over the years."



FEATURE ARTICLE

Marqués de Murrieta's Maria Vargas: honouring tradition through innovation

Her upbringing in La Rioja—a region she describes as “blessed” for winemaking—played a decisive role. **“We have a perfect combination of climate and soil together with a winegrowing, cultural and historical heritage, which makes us a perfect habitat for the vine. To be able to be part of it and in a historic winery like Marqués de Murrieta is a real privilege.”**

Vargas joined Marqués de Murrieta at the age of 23 for her oenology internship and swiftly became an integral part of its team. When Vicente Cebrián-Sagarriga proposed she take over as Technical Director in 2000, she initially hesitated. “I was so happy working in the team,” she shares, “but I turned him down at first...as you can imagine, I was very young (23 years old at the time), and it never crossed my mind that one day I would be the Technical Director of a winery with such an impressive historical trajectory.”

Despite her youth, Vargas received unwavering support from the management and her colleagues. Reflecting on this, she says, “I can

only be grateful for the trust and constant support of the team by my side. I have been fortunate to grow personally and professionally with Vicente and Cristina Cebrián-Sagarriga and to build this project together.”

Marqués de Murrieta’s rich 170-year history is both a blessing and a responsibility. Vargas sees her role as that of a custodian, ensuring the winery’s legacy continues to flourish while adapting to contemporary tastes. “Updates have to be made looking to the future but keeping in mind where we come from. What we are today is the result of decades of know-how. I believe in evolution, but not in drastic changes.”

Her careful stewardship has been instrumental in positioning the winery as a global leader. Yet, when asked about the wine she’s most proud of, she highlights Castillo Ygay. **“It was the wine that made me rethink everything I had learned at university and is the culmination of a historical, cultural, and human evolution.”**

As one of the first women in the modern era to lead an iconic winery, Vargas recognises her potential to inspire. **“It is a dream to be a source of inspiration for young people, women or men, who want to dedicate themselves to this beautiful world. When I started, there were not many women, but I have always lived it as something natural.”**

Despite her accolades, Vargas remains humble about her success. For her, awards like the 2021 Women in Wine & Spirits honour are not merely markers of achievement but sources of motivation. “These successes are positive, but you can’t see them as a necessity for your work but as a motivation.” There is one award that is personal for Vargas. **“Last year I received the distinction of ‘Riojana Ilustre’, which is the highest award granted by the government of my region. It was an unforgettable moment that I was able to share with a large part of my family, friends and the winery team.”**

Under Vargas’ leadership, Marqués de Murrieta and Pazo de Barrantes continue to thrive, embodying a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation. As the winery celebrates its 170th anniversary, its future is as bright as its storied past, thanks to the vision and dedication of its pioneering Technical Director. Maria Vargas’ story is one of perseverance, passion, and an unyielding commitment to excellence. It’s a tale that will undoubtedly inspire future generations of winemakers to honour the past while crafting a bold, dynamic future.



Women Shaping Spirits: The Legacy of Nonino Distillery

With Antonella Nonino

The story of Nonino Distillery, producers of the finest grappa in the world—the Monovitigno® Nonino—is not just a tale of business success; it is a celebration of family and the women who have driven its legacy. Founded in 1897 by Orazio Nonino, the distillery began humbly, with Orazio travelling across northeastern Italy to collect pomace from local wine producers. His vision laid the foundation, but it was the resourceful and passionate women of the Nonino family, alongside an extraordinary man, Benito, who transformed the business into a global phenomenon.

“Grappa is our true love. Our grappa is like another member of our family.”



Amaro Spritz made with Nonino Quintessentia

The contributions of Sylvia Nonino, the first woman to manage a distillery in Italy, were monumental. When her husband Antonio passed away, Sylvia took the helm, ensuring the distillery's survival and setting a precedent for female leadership in the industry.

While Sylvia held the business together during the 1940s and 1950s, it was Giannola, who entered the business upon marrying Benito Nonino, who brought extraordinary energy and creativity. Together, they revolutionised the quality and perception of grappa. In 1973, they introduced Monovitigno® Nonino, the first single-varietal grappa, showcasing the unique characteristics of the wine variety in the grappa, beginning with Friuli's terroir. This innovation not only elevated grappa to a premium product but also set the stage for the brand's global acclaim.

"Giannola and Benito fell in love not just with each other but with the grappa business," shares Antonella Nonino, one of their daughters. "Their collaboration and their vision of grappa were revolutionary."

Antonella and her sisters, Cristina and Elisabetta, grew up immersed in the art of distillation. Each woman naturally gravitated towards roles that matched her skills and passions. Cristina oversees production and Italian sales, whereas Elisabetta is responsible for staff management, production, and the purchase of primary products for distillation, while also managing the North American market.

Antonella, who began working alongside her parents first and is responsible for institutional communication and the Nonino Prize, also oversees foreign



The women of Nonino

markets such as Germany, Austria, and the Far East, as well as Borgo Nonino and a new sustainability project. Reflecting on their synergy, she notes:

"Ultimately, we all share a passion. Even if we have different viewpoints at times, we share the same values, the same vision. We are all dedicated to producing the best quality grappa. Grappa is our true love. Our grappa is like another member of our family. All this is to say, working with family is complicated because, of course, we can have different views, but we talk a lot, and those discussions and

different opinions bring richness to the final decision and the course of action."

The sisters embody a harmonious balance of independence and collaboration, ensuring that Nonino Distillery remains a beacon of quality. Their mother, Giannola, continues to play an advisory role, enriching their decisions with her wisdom.

Cristina's daughter Francesca represents the next generation of Nonino leadership. Bringing fresh perspectives, Francesca has leveraged social media to connect

"This innovation not only elevated grappa to a premium product but also set the stage for the brand's global acclaim."

with younger audiences, particularly in the United States. She conducts masterclasses and highlights the artisanal nature of Nonino's products.

“Francesca’s work is crucial in educating a new demographic about the authenticity of our grappa,” says Antonella.

Francesca’s efforts have been instrumental in explaining how Nonino’s grappa, amaro, and other spirits are produced. This transparency is critical to the success of Nonino Distillery, as the company’s commitment to authenticity is unwavering. Unlike industrial grappa, their artisanal process is transparent and rooted in tradition. Their grappa derives its natural colour from ageing in small casks, with no artificial additives. This dedication to quality was a hallmark of Giannola’s approach, inviting customers to witness the production process firsthand—a practice that remains rare in the industry.

The Nonino Prize, established 50 years ago by Giannola and Benito, further underscores their commitment to preserving Friuli’s cultural heritage. Originally aimed at protecting endangered grape varieties like Picolit, Schioppettino, and Ribolla Gialla, the prize—now overseen by Antonella—encompasses journalism, literature, theatre, and the arts, celebrating rural traditions and sustainable practices. **Antonella proudly notes of their ability to award talent, “six times the Nonino Prize has anticipated the choices for the Nobel Prize.”**

Nonino Distillery also champions environmental stewardship through innovative projects, working with companies such as Greenspot Technologies to repurpose their by-products. Antonella explains:

“We purchase pomace from the best local winemakers, which we distil and turn into grappa. What remains, we sell as animal feed or transform into fertiliser to

help plants grow, or we burn it to generate energy. With Nina (Nina Granucci, co-founder and CEO of Greenspot Technologies), we are using the leftovers from our Monovitigno® Nonino production to create flour for making bread. This bread not only has amazing flavours but also lets us explain, in a delicious way, how we can recycle and respect the environment through the creation of such a product. All of us can do something to make the world a better place, and this could be an example of how to move in that direction.”

Since 2007, the Nonino sisters have continued to innovate while honouring their roots, by introducing their grappa to the world of bartenders. Through a campaign they have termed #bebravemixgrappa, they have found a new audience in the world of mixology, with bartenders creating signature cocktails like the Paper Plane, which features Nonino’s Amaro Quintessentia. **The launch of L’Aperitivo Nonino botanical drink, along with experiments with honey-based spirits and ginger distillates, reflects their forward-thinking approach.**

The Nonino Distillery’s story is a testament to the power of women in shaping an industry. From Sylvia’s resilience to Giannola’s creativity, and the shared vision of Antonella, Cristina, and Elisabetta, the Nonino legacy is one of passion, authenticity, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. As the new generation, starting with Francesca, steps into her role, the future of Nonino grappa shines bright, promising innovation and tradition in equal measure.



Episode 9

MEDICINE TO MALBEC

**DR. LAURA CANTENA'S
JOURNEY IN
LIFE & WINE**



**A Sommelier's
Insight**





From Tradition to Innovation: Federica Boffa Pio's Journey at Pio Cesare Winery

When Federica Boffa Pio stepped into her leadership role at Pio Cesare Winery at the age of 23, she found herself at the helm of a historic estate deeply rooted in Piedmont's winemaking traditions. The unexpected passing of her father in 2021 accelerated her transition into a position traditionally held by older men in the industry. While the challenges were significant, her journey reflects a compelling blend of heritage and forward-thinking innovation, defining the next chapter for Pio Cesare.

"I wasn't fully prepared," Federica candidly admits. "But I grew up in the vineyards and started working alongside my father while studying at university." Her father, recognising their 35-year age gap, had begun to involve her in all aspects of the business, introducing her to key partners, employees, and distributors. Though their relationship was intense at times due to their differing personalities, Federica reflects, "The time spent learning from him was invaluable."

Taking over the reins at such a young age wasn't without its

hurdles. "It was hard at first," Federica shares. "But the incredible people who have worked with us for decades were very supportive. They understood that I had a lot to learn and that I needed them to help keep the winery thriving."

Collaboration has been a cornerstone of her leadership style. While Federica makes the ultimate decisions alongside her cousin, she emphasises teamwork. "Our survival as a family-owned business for so many years is thanks to great employees and strong family leadership. We have no general manager or sales director—every major decision comes from the family."

Federica describes her approach as "taking the dust off our labels." She honours the rich history of Pio Cesare while embracing innovation. "Tradition isn't a cage—it's a starting point," she explains. This mindset has opened new avenues for the winery, from expanding facilities to adopting sustainable practices.

The winery is currently undergoing a significant expansion in Alba,

"Our survival as a family-owned business for so many years is thanks to great employees and strong family leadership."

with a new building connected to the original cellar by a tunnel and bridge. This development will centralise wine storage, improve efficiency, and dedicate space solely to white wine production, which now represents 30 per cent of the winery's output.

Pio Cesare is also investing in Timorasso, a traditional Piedmontese white grape. "Our Chardonnay is well known, but Timorasso has incredible potential. We won't release it for a few years, as it needs time to fully develop its personality," Federica notes.

In response to climate change, the winery has also acquired land in the Alta Langhe to experiment with high-altitude Nebbiolo cultivation. "We've already completed two harvests there, and the results are promising. The cooler climate offers a way to adapt to rising temperatures."

As a young woman in a male-dominated industry, Federica faced initial scepticism. However, she credits her father's advice for helping her navigate these challenges: "He taught me that I needed to carry myself with confidence and earn respect by demonstrating my capabilities."

Federica acknowledges the trailblazing women who paved the way for her. "The Antinori sisters—Albiera, Allegra, and Alessia—and the Gaia family, led by Rosanna and Gaia, are incredible examples of

women leading with vision and strength."

Looking ahead, Federica's long-term vision for Pio Cesare centres on maintaining exceptional quality in the face of challenges like climate change and evolving consumer preferences. While single-vineyard wines remain a hallmark of the winery, she sees blended wines as an opportunity to showcase the full potential of their esteemed vineyards.

Beyond the wines, Federica is committed to fostering a new

generation of talent. "We've recently hired young, capable women to replace retiring staff. It's inspiring to build a team of peers who will grow with me over the next 30 years."

Under Federica's leadership, Pio Cesare Winery continues to honour its rich history while embracing the future. Her ability to blend tradition with innovation ensures that the winery remains a symbol of excellence in Piedmont and beyond. As Federica puts it, "Quality will always be our guiding light. It's what defines us and will carry us forward."



"We've recently hired young, capable women to replace retiring staff. It's inspiring to build a team of peers who will grow with me over the next 30 years."



DISCOVER

 A WORLD OF

difference

In a small country, which is the 109th in the world in land area, Portugal has been making wines since 2000 BC and part of our evolution and continued success is in our soil and climate. From sand to shale to influences from the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to diverse microclimates and beyond, our vines have a variety of environments, in 14 wine regions, to create the ultimate expression in wine.

The Wines of Portugal stand out for their wealth of grape varieties and diversity of terroirs, combined with the ancient wisdom and knowledge of its people. With a heritage of more than 250 native grapes and the highest density of native grape varieties in the world, Portuguese wines offer a unique experience, taking advantage also of the diversity of Portuguese terroirs and thanks to the techniques and people who make them. In their diversity, they are versatile and gastronomic. In their quality, they rival the best in the world.

In 2025, the Wines of Portugal brand will be present on 3 continents, in 15 priority markets: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Spain (Wine Tourism), Sweden Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine and International Fairs. Under the Wines of Portugal brand, around 95 initiatives will be carried out, 52 of which will be attended by Portuguese Producers and 43 of which will not.

These initiatives, aimed at increasing the awareness of Wines of Portugal, will be divided into 4 major headings - Events, Education, Promotion and Communication and will continue to focus on the message that the Wines of Portugal remain genuine and with strong Portuguese character.

Find out what Events and Education initiatives Wines of Portugal will be doing in 2025.



Wines of Portugal Event Plan

MARCH			
16-18	Germany	Düsseldorf	Prowein 2025
25 or 26 (TBC)	China	Macao	Wines of Portugal Tasting
TBC	USA	LA	Wines of Portugal Tasting
APRIL			
04	USA	Atlanta	Wines of Portugal Tasting
07	USA	Boston	Wines of Portugal Tasting
TBC	USA	New Iorque	Wines of Portugal Tasting
TBC	USA	Austin	Wines of Portugal Tasting
MAY			
05-09	Portugal	Portugal	Wines of Portugal Challenge
26	Canada	Montreal	Wines of Portugal Tasting
28	Canada	Toronto	Wines of Portugal Tasting
29	Ukraine	Kyiv	Wines of Portugal Tasting
JUNE			
06-08	Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	Wines of Portugal in Rio de Janeiro
10	Brazil	Belo Horizonte	Wines of Portugal Tasting
13-15	Brazil	São Paulo	Wines of Portugal in São Paulo
23	Japan	Tokyo	Wines of Portugal Tasting
26	South Korea	Seoul	Wines of Portugal Tasting
30	United Kingdom	Manchester	Wines of Portugal Tasting
TBC	South Korea	Busan and Jeju	Education Sessions
JULY			
TBC	USA	San Francisco	Education Session
TBC	USA	San Francisco	Culinary VIP Experience
TBC	USA	Chicago	Education Session
TBC	USA	Chicago	Culinary VIP Experience
AUGUST			
TBC	USA	Dallas	Education Texusom
SEPTEMBER			
08	Switzerland	Zürich	Wines of Portugal Tasting
30/09-02/10	Brazil	São Paulo	Prowein São Paulo 2025
OCTOBER			
04	Brazil	Brasília	Wines of Portugal Tasting
13	Poland	Warsaw	WPT Tasting & Portuguese Wine Week
TBC	Luxembourg	TBC	Wines of Portugal Tasting
TBC	Netherlands	TBC	Wines of Portugal Tasting
TBC	Belgium	TBC	Wines of Portugal Tasting
NOVEMBER			
TBC	Belgium	TBC	Sommeliers Education Session
TBC	Netherlands	TBC	WPT Education Partnerships
TBC	Luxembourg	TBC	WPT Education Partnerships
07-09	Sweden	Stockholm	Sthlm Food and Wine Fair 2025
12-14	China	Shanghai	Prowine Shanghai 2025
TBC	Japan	Tokyo and Osaka	Sommeliers Education Sessions
TBC			
TBC	Brazil	TBC	WPT Education Partnerships
TBC	Ukraine	Kyiv and Lviv	Masterclasses for Trade
TBC	United Kingdom	London	Masterclass Hidden Gems for Sommeliers
TBC	United Kingdom	London	WPT Academy Intermediate Level



Gordana Josovic

FEATURE ARTICLE

Shaping Wine Culture in Dubai



Joseph Mounayer

Joseph Mounayer and Gordana Josovic

Joseph Mounayer, a prominent figure in the Middle Eastern sommelier as President of the Sommelier Association of Lebanon known association for his extensive expertise and passion for wine and sommellerie.

Gordana Josovic is the esteemed Head of Wine at Atlantis Dubai. Gordana brings a wealth of experience, guiding one of the most luxurious hospitality destinations in the world through its exceptional wine programme. From curating an extraordinary wine selection to leading a team of sommeliers in delivering world-class service, she exemplifies excellence in her field.

Together, Joseph and Gordana will explore her inspiring journey, the unique challenges of managing a wine programme at an iconic destination such as, and the exciting innovations shaping the wine culture in Dubai and beyond.

Joseph Mounayer (JM): Your journey as a sommelier has taken you around the globe. Can you tell us how it all started?

Gordana Josovic (GJ): My passion for food and wine was cultivated at home in the former Yugoslavia, where I grew up surrounded by a rich diversity of languages, customs, and cuisines. That early exposure shaped my ideas about food and beverages and continues to influence the wine programmes I create today.

JM: Did you always know you wanted to work in the wine and hospitality industries?

GJ: Not initially. I studied Travel Business at Belgrade University and started my career in the tourism industry. What I loved most about the job was meeting people from different countries and understanding how geography and culture shaped their palates. Over time, I became more interested in hospitality, working with some of the most respected names in the industry. Along the way, I developed a deeper understanding of wine production, sustainable culinary practices, and the importance of locally sourced ingredients.

JM: When did you realise that wine was your true passion?

GJ: It happened gradually as I began traveling to wine regions to expand my knowledge and earn certifications. Those travels were incredibly enriching—I had the opportunity to connect with winemakers, fellow sommeliers, and wine ambassadors from across the U.S. and around the world. The more I learned, the more passionate I became about sharing that knowledge with others.

JM: How did you come to work as a sommelier in Dubai?

GJ: I moved to Dubai three and a half years ago from New York because of a unique job offer. To be honest, this part of the world wasn't initially on my radar, but at the time,



the pandemic was in full bloom, and I decided to take a chance. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to run the wine programme for two world-famous resorts and to create wine lists for a range of fantastic restaurant concepts.

When I started, the company only had one sommelier. Today, the wine team has grown to 36 sommeliers from 21 different countries, and the numbers continue to grow with the opening of new restaurants every year. I find it incredibly exciting to work with several Michelin-starred and celebrity chefs, as well as some of the most talented people in the industry.

JM: Dubai has a growing reputation in the wine world. Would you say there's a strong interest in the wine scene there?

GJ: Absolutely! To say there's a big interest in the Dubai wine scene is an understatement. Dubai is at the crossroads of cultures, languages, wine preferences, and

“It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to run the wine programme for two world-famous resorts and to create wine lists for a range of fantastic restaurant concepts.”

mentalities, which creates incredible opportunities for growth and innovation in this field.

JM: It sounds like there's a real passion for wine education in Dubai. Could you tell us more about that?

GJ: Absolutely, education is a big focus for me. I am passionate about wine education, not just for myself, my team but for the entire wine community in Dubai. When time permits, I teach classes outside of work because I believe in the importance of paying it forward.

JM: You also mentioned an initiative for women in the wine industry. Could you share more about that?

GJ: I recently launched Women in Wine Dubai, a community dedicated to supporting and empowering women in the wine industry. While women still represent a smaller percentage of professionals in this field, this initiative aims to provide them with the resources, mentorship, and support they need to thrive.

JM: How has Dubai's dining scene contributed to its wine culture?

GJ: The dining scene in Dubai has gained international recognition, especially with the arrival of The World's 50 Best Restaurants, the Michelin Guide, and Gault & Millau.

JM: Champagne seems to be very popular in Dubai. Is that something you are involved in?

GJ: Definitely. Champagne continues to rise in popularity, and one of my dreams has been to bring grower Champagne to Dubai. It took a few years of effort, but with the help of my wine comrade, Ben Koudier, better known as Ben Champagne, this dream became a reality.

JM: What about other beverage trends, like sake?

GJ: Sake is also becoming increasingly popular, largely thanks to the growing number of Asian fusion restaurants in the city.

JM: With Dubai attracting so many wine professionals and brands, do you get to meet winemakers or winery owners?

GJ: I do! Many winemakers and winery owners now visit Dubai at least once a year. With the rapid expansion of the wine community, it's still a challenge to meet everyone, but the opportunities are incredible. Just this week, I had the chance to taste Wine Spectator's number one wine with its winemaker and the world's most expensive wine with its owner.

That said, I wish there were more opportunities for sommeliers to travel and learn directly at the source.

JM: Dubai is known for its luxury, but what about the wine drinking culture? Is it only about expensive wines?

GJ: That's a common misconception. While wine prices in Dubai are high, and we hope that will change soon, there's much more to the wine culture here. For example, I love

“Dubai is at the crossroads of cultures, languages, wine preferences, and mentalities, which creates incredible opportunities for growth and innovation for this field.”





surprising guests with allocated wines that are rare and hard to find even in other major markets. Some of these treasures are imported specifically for individual restaurants when famous chefs or brands come to Dubai.

On the other hand, not everyone in Dubai drinks expensive wine. The expats here travel extensively and are excited to explore trends like low-intervention, biodynamic, and low-alcohol wines right here in Dubai.

JM: How would you describe the sommelier community in Dubai?

GJ: The sommelier community here is vibrant and continuously growing. More talented and knowledgeable professionals are moving to Dubai from all over the world. For example, the UAE Sommelier Challenge, organised by one of the suppliers, has been held for the past three years and attracts a significant number of sommeliers.

The community would be honoured to compete internationally and showcase the passion, knowledge, and unique strengths of Dubai's sommeliers.

JM: It sounds like an exciting time to be part of the wine world in Dubai!

GJ: Absolutely. There's a sense of momentum and growth here that makes it a very special place to work in wine.

JM: You've worked in some incredible places, including with Thomas Keller's restaurant group in New York. What did you take away from that experience?

GJ: Working in New York was a fantastic experience—it's truly a gastronomic paradise. With Thomas Keller's group, I had the chance to deepen my understanding of pairing exceptional wines with world-class cuisine, all while collaborating with some of the most talented professionals in the industry.

JM: You've also been an educator. What was that experience like?

GJ: Teaching has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my career. As the Wine Director at the San Francisco Wine School, I worked with a diverse range of students, from industry professionals to employees of Fortune 500 companies. It was exciting to see people from all walks of life develop an appreciation for wine.

JM: You hold numerous certifications and accolades. Which ones stand out to you?

GJ: I've earned certifications like French Wine Scholar, Italian Wine Scholar, Beverage Specialist, and Advanced Sommelier, among others, from institutes like the Wine Scholar Guild, the Napa Valley Wine Educators Academy, and the Society of Wine Educators. Each one represents a step in my journey of continuous learning, which is something I deeply value.

JM: What's next for you in your career?

GJ: Right now, I'm preparing for the Master Sommelier Exam at the Court of Master Sommeliers. It's a rigorous process, but I'm excited about the challenge. Alongside that, I'm mentoring, teaching, exploring new wine trends, and continuing to pursue my passion for wine.

JM: It sounds like you've had an incredible journey. What advice would you give to someone aspiring to follow in your footsteps?

GJ: Stay curious, never stop learning, and don't be afraid to take risks. The wine world is vast and full of opportunities—you just must be willing to explore it.

BEST USA SOMMELIER ASSOCIATION

Elevating Sommellerie and Hosting the ASI Best Sommelier of the Americas

The **Best USA Sommelier Association (BUSA)** stands at the forefront of advancing the sommelier profession in the United States, providing a platform for talent to flourish on both national and international stages. As the official body responsible for selecting and preparing the USA's representatives for regional and global competitions, BUSA is committed to excellence, integrity, and inclusivity in the world of wine service.

Beyond its competitive role, BUSA is a driving force for positive change in the hospitality industry. Recognising the historical marginalisation of people of colour and other underrepresented groups, the association actively works to amplify diverse voices. BUSA's leadership reflects this commitment, embracing racial, ethnic, gender, and LGBTQ+ diversity to create a more equitable landscape for professionals in the field.

A strong ethical foundation is central to BUSA's mission. The association enforces a zero-tolerance policy against discrimination and harassment, ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all members. Clear reporting channels allow grievances to be addressed confidentially, fostering trust and accountability. Additionally, BUSA upholds rigorous ethical standards in its competitions and certification processes, eliminating conflicts of interest and safeguarding the credibility of its programmes.

Supported by industry sponsorships and member contributions, BUSA continues to elevate the sommelier profession by championing education, professionalism, and inclusivity. This commitment makes it the ideal host for the ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the Americas 2025, where it will welcome top sommeliers from across the Americas to Sonoma, California. With ASI board members, committee leaders, and esteemed guests in attendance, the event promises to showcase the highest levels of skill and knowledge while celebrating the evolving and diverse future of the sommelier profession.

BUSA's role as host is more than an honour—it is a testament to its dedication to fostering excellence and equity in wine service across the Americas.



ASI Contest
Best Sommelier of
the Americas 2025
Feb 17-21 | Sonoma, California

Meet the Competitors

With competitors set to take the stage in Sonoma at the **ASI Contest Best Sommelier of the Americas Sonoma 2025**, we would like to introduce you to the candidates.



Andrea Donadio, Argentina



Javier Beltran, Bolivia



Wallace Neves, Brazil



Joris Gutierrez Garcia, Canada



Marcelo Arriagada, Chile



Nicolas Reines, Colombia



Rafael Alexander Sanchez Espinosa,
Dominican Republic



Guilhem Renaud, Ecuador



Miguel Angel Maldonado, Mexico



Dixie Martinez, Panama



Valeria Franco Cattoni, Paraguay



Joseph Ruiz Acosta, Peru



Jeronimo Tellarini, Uruguay



Mark Guillaudeu, USA



Claudia Drastrup, Venezuela

Scan the QR code
for more information



Member News



Amber Deshmukh, Jai Singh and Pankaj Singh



Jai Singh

Jai Singh Crowned Best Sommelier of India in Historic Inaugural Competition

Mumbai witnessed a landmark moment as the Sommeliers Association of India (SAI) hosted the grand finale of the inaugural SAI Best Sommelier of India 2025 competition at The LaLIT, Mumbai. This first-of-its-kind event marked India's growing presence in the global wine industry.

After a rigorous competition featuring top sommeliers from India and abroad, **Jai Singh** emerged as the champion, with **Pankaj Singh** and **Amber Deshmukh** securing second and third places. The top three winners will attend the ASI Education Boot Camp in Singapore this July. Jai Singh will further represent India at the 2025 ASI Best Sommelier of Asia & Pacific in Malaysia and the 2026 ASI Best Sommelier of the World in Portugal—an unprecedented milestone for Indian sommellerie.

SAI Co-Founder and President **Amrita Singh** celebrated the event's success, stating, "This competition sets a new benchmark for Indian sommeliers. We are honoured to have had global wine icons on the judging panel, ensuring international standards."

Judges included **Saiko Tamura-Soga** (ASI Vice-President, Asia & Oceania), **Nina Basset** (Co-Founding Trustee, Gérard Basset Foundation), **Sonal Holland** (India's first and only Master of Wine), **Henri Chapon** (French Master Sommelier), **Mattia Antonio Cianca** (former Best Sommelier of Italy and Best Sommelier of Australia), **Salvatore Castano** (Best Sommelier of Europe and Africa 2021) and **Cyril Thevenet** (ASI Diploma Gold), among other distinguished experts from the global sommelier community.

Mattia Antonio Cianca, SAI Vice-President, hailed the competition as a "great beginning for Indian sommellerie," while **Saiko Tamura-Soga** commended the talent and dedication displayed, affirming that "Indian sommeliers are ready for the global stage."

Founded in 2024, SAI is dedicated to advancing wine education and industry standards in India. This competition serves as a stepping stone for Indian sommeliers to compete on the world stage, solidifying India's place in international wine culture.

Celebrating 25 Years of Excellence

By Natalia Torres

The Argentine School of Sommeliers (Escuela Argentina de Sommeliers, EAS), the first educational institution for sommellerie in Argentina, closed 2024 by celebrating its 25th anniversary.

The school was founded in 1999 by Marina Beltrame, the first sommelier educator in the country and the first president of the Argentine Association of Sommeliers. After working in the hospitality industry and receiving professional training in France, she decided to share her knowledge at a time when Argentine wine was entering a significant phase of development.

Currently, EAS has branches in the Argentine province of Mendoza as well as in Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Brazil, and Peru. Some of its distinguished graduates include **Agustina De Alba**, a two-time winner of the Best Sommelier of Argentina competition; **Florencia Rey**, head sommelier at Maido (the best restaurant in Latin America according to 50Best); and **Laura Hernández Espinosa**, currently recognised as the Best Sommelier in Latin America by 50Best.

The anniversary was celebrated with a grand event at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, featuring wines from 12 vintages specially selected to represent milestones in the school's history.

"It seemed almost impossible for the profession to take off like this; I still remember when we had to patiently explain what sommellerie was," Beltrame reflected during the event. "These have been years of effort, study, and the training of teachers who not only had to educate but also convey to students the importance of the role and the passion for service."



Georgina Estrada Becomes First Woman to Lead the Association of Mexican Sommeliers

The Association of Mexican Sommeliers A.C. (ASM) marked a historic moment this past December when sommelier **Georgina Estrada** was sworn in as the organisation's president for the 2025-2028 term. Estrada becomes the first woman to hold this position since the ASM was founded in 2010. The ceremony took place at Hermitage restaurant in Mexico City, attended by partners, sommeliers, members of the board of directors, and prominent figures from the wine and gastronomy industries.

Estrada succeeds sommelier Miguel Ángel Cooley, who handed over the leadership while acknowledging the accomplishments of his term and highlighting the challenges faced by the organisation in a constantly evolving landscape.

With over 25 years of experience in the beverage industry, Estrada plans to focus on four key areas: training and education through the Mexican Academy of Sommeliers, promotion, representation, and strategic alliances. She will work closely with the Advisory Council to strengthen and unite the community.

Mauritius's Olivia Ravat Shines at the 2024 Ubuntu International Sommeliers Trophy

The 2024 Ubuntu International Sommeliers Trophy concluded with a spectacular display of skill, knowledge, and passion for fine beverages.

Held at the prestigious Lanzerac Hotel in Stellenbosch, this year's competition marked a milestone as it welcomed Team Mauritius for the first time, alongside the established teams from South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Organised by the Sommeliers Academy under the management of **Jean Vincent Ridon**, current Best Sommelier of South Africa and co-founder of the Sommeliers Association of Zimbabwe, the Ubuntu Trophy is Africa's only international sommelier competition. Since its inception in 2020, the event has been supported by Stellenbosch Wine Routes, solidifying Stellenbosch as a hub for wine and sommelier excellence.

The competition's unique team format highlights collaboration and camaraderie, true to the spirit of Ubuntu. This year, Team Mauritius made an unforgettable debut, taking home the championship trophy. **Olivia Ravat** of Mauritius earned the distinction of Highest Scorer, showcasing her unparalleled expertise.



Olivia Ravat



MEMBER NEWS

The Association of Sommeliers of the Slovak Republic (ASSR) Welcomes a New President

After serving for more than two decades (14 years as Secretary General and the last nine years as President), **Beata Vlnková** has stepped down from her role with the Association of Sommeliers of the Slovak Republic (ASSR) to dedicate more time to her position as Secretary General of ASI.

Reflecting on her decision, she stated: "Taking on the role of ASI Secretary General is very exciting, but it also comes with a significant time commitment. To maintain balance in my professional life and still find time for personal activities like biking and yoga, it was important for me to pass the torch to someone with the time and energy to continue growing the ASSR."

Succeeding her as president is **Miroslav Jajcay**, a seasoned sommelier and the owner of *Penzión Karolína*, a guesthouse and restaurant with a strong focus on wine.



Miroslav Jajcay

Celebrating Portugal's Champions



Marc Pinto

Marc Pinto claimed victory in the 19th National Sommelier Contest, while **Ana Banha** won Gold in the 6th Fernando Ferramentas National Contest, held by Escanções de Portugal on 24-25 November in Palmela, within the Península de Setúbal region. This annual event, which includes the association's gala and contests, celebrates camaraderie, professional growth, and the art of sommellerie.

The National Sommelier Contest saw 14 participants compete through theoretical and practical exams. The top three finalists, **Marc Pinto**, **Diogo Pereira**, and **Vasile Grebencea**, faced challenges such as identifying wines, organoleptic exams, cocktail service, and beer pairing. Pinto, head sommelier at Fifty Seconds in Lisbon, triumphed for the third consecutive year, earning the title of Best Sommelier of Portugal 2024.

In the Fernando Ferramentas National Contest, also featuring 14 finalists trained throughout 2023-2024, the Gold Medal was awarded to **Ana Banha**, wine tourism manager at Tapada de Coelheiros.



Soohyeon Heo Wins Best Sommelier of Korea Title

Soohyeon Heo, Head Sommelier at Restaurant Allen, recently won the 2024 Korea National Sommelier Contest, organised by KISA (Korea International Sommelier Association) in November. The prestigious competition brought together the country's top sommeliers, testing their expertise in blind tasting, service, and theoretical knowledge. Heo's victory solidifies his status as one of Korea's leading wine professionals, reflecting his dedication, skill, and deep understanding of wine. His success at this national level may pave the way for future international competitions, further raising the profile of Korean sommellerie on the global stage.



ASI General Assembly 2025

24 – 25 May 2025

Cape Town, South Africa

