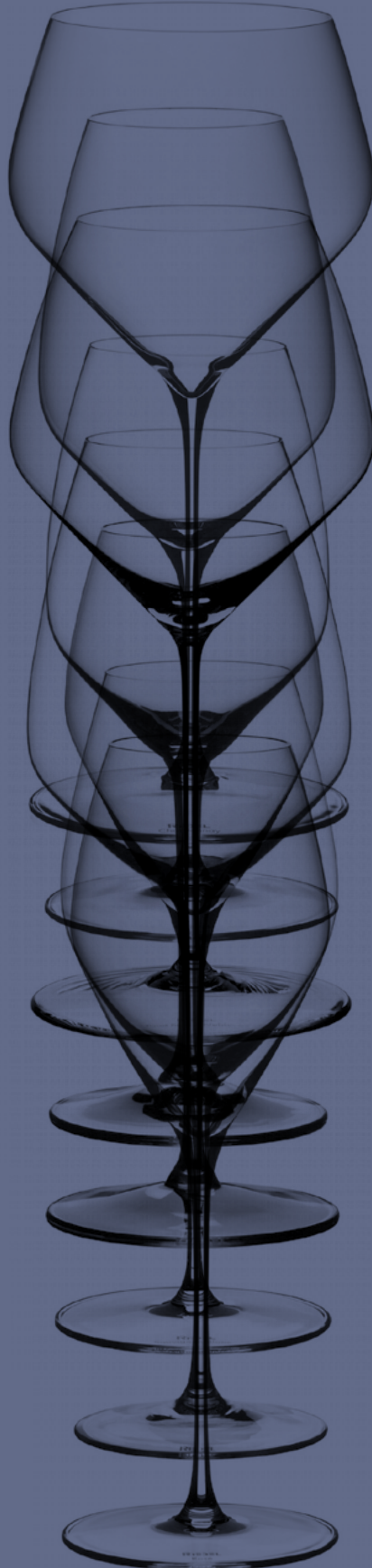


# 2025 UK Sommelier of the Year







PLEASE DRINK RESPONSIBLY.

# Welcome letter

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this year's IWSC UK Sommelier Competition – a celebration of the people, skills, and stories that shape the UK's vibrant sommelier community.

Now in our second year hosting the competition, the IWSC is proud to continue building on the legacy of this important event. What started as a leap of faith has now become one of our proudest endeavours – not just a competition, but a platform to spotlight talent, share knowledge, and support the future of our industry.

This supplement brings together highlights from the competition and stories from those who make it so special – from rising stars to established names, from generous sponsors to the judges and mentors who give their time and energy to nurture the next generation.

At the IWSC, our mission has always been to champion excellence. While we are best known for evaluating the world's best wines and spirits, this competition allows us to honour the people behind the service – the communicators, the connectors, the passionate professionals who bring bottles to life for guests. The role of the sommelier is as much about heart as it is about knowledge, and we are honoured to shine a light on that balance.

I'd like to thank everyone who has helped make this year's competition a success. Our sponsors, whose generosity ensures we can keep investing in this community. Our judges, led by Nicolas Clerc MS, who bring wisdom, integrity and joy to every stage of the process. And of course, the candidates – for your dedication, your courage, and your love of the craft. It's a privilege to watch your journeys unfold.

Hospitality remains one of the most dynamic and challenging industries, and yet it is also one of the most generous and inspiring. Through this competition, and everything around it, we hope to offer not only a moment of recognition, but also a sense of community – a network of peers, mentors and opportunities that will continue long after the final is over.

Thank you for reading, for supporting, and most of all, for being part of this story.

Warm wishes,

**Christelle Guibert**  
CEO, IWSC/Club Oenologique

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## Share the moment!

Post your thoughts, photos or stories and tag us: @theIWSC  
Use hashtags: #IWSC2025 | #UKSommelieroftheYear





# DISCOVER THE UKSA

## About Us

We are the go-to organisation for all UK based sommeliers, wine, F&B and spirits professionals of all fields.

A support network of fellow professionals eager to share, inspire and learn from one another.



Offering opportunities for networking, attending events, participating in competitions and examinations affiliated to our global partner ASI.

We are proud to support, mentor and connect UK wine professionals wishing to be members of our vibrant community.

## Benefits UKSA members enjoy:

- ✓ Free subscription to ASI mag, ASI YouTube links to videos and tutorials
- ✓ 20% off Wine Scholar Guild
- ✓ Discounted membership to Guildsomm (Exclusions apply)
- ✓ Free subscription to Club Oenologique
- ✓ 25% off Academie du Vin library\*
- ✓ Wine at trade prices at Flint Wines
- ✓ Corkage offers at various venues



### FREE ASI EXAMINATIONS

ASI Certification 1, 2 and Diploma



### EXCLUSIVE MASTERCLASSES AND TASTINGS



### NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

UKSA community and ASI international events



### DEDICATED REGIONAL CLUBS

UKSA Southern and Northern Clubs



### TRAINING, ADVICE AND MENTORING



### COMPETITION

IWSC UK Sommelier of the Year and ASI International competitions

As a not-for-profit and thanks to our sponsors, we offer subsidised annual membership for only **£40!**

**JOIN NOW >**



## Guest Judge Interview: Raimonds Tomsons

**Adam Lechmere speaks with the World's Best Sommelier 2023, who shares insights into his journey and what it takes to win.**

*Raimonds Tomsons, crowned the World's Best Sommelier in 2023, reflects on the dedication and mindset that led him to the top – and offers advice for those looking to follow.*

### What first drew you to the sommelier world?

It was pure chance. I didn't qualify for university and ended up studying bartending and waiting tables. During my apprenticeship at Vincent's restaurant in Riga, I opened a bottle of Lindemans Bin 65 Chardonnay and thought, "This is wine, but it smells of pineapple and mango and vanilla and butter. How can it be?" That curiosity changed everything. My chef, Mārtiņš Ritiņš, encouraged me to explore wine competitions, and as I always loved to compete – football, basketball – it felt natural.

### What does it take to become the World's Best Sommelier?

Obsession, in the most positive way. You need real passion and ambition for the wine world. You must ask yourself honestly: Is this what you want to do? If you want to be successful without obsession and passion, it's simply not possible. You need patience, perseverance and a bit of stubbornness – there are no shortcuts when it comes to wine.

### How should aspiring competitors prepare?

Start with theory – that's the base for everything. Take Austria, for example: I'd dedicate a week to it, studying geography, geology, climate, typical regions, sub-regions, winemaking, regulations, most famous producers, even rivers. You need to tackle all those topics systematically. Parallel to theory, taste as many benchmark wines as possible. Then take part in competitions because you'll gain experience, confidence and learn the right tactics.

### What's the biggest mistake young sommeliers make in competition?

Being overconfident and not listening enough. In competitions, you need to listen to every word to understand what they're asking of you and what the time limit is. These are crucial practical elements. Many competitors don't pay enough attention to the specific instructions.



### You famously froze during the 2019 final. How did that experience shape your eventual victory?

It was painful but revealed a weakness I wasn't aware of – how I reacted to pressure. I was shaking, couldn't work the beer pump – I couldn't even pour wine properly. For the 2023 competition in Paris, I paid attention not only to theory, blind tasting and service elements, but also to mental and physical health – how to manage pressure and stress.

### What advice would you give to someone starting their sommelier journey today?

You need to have the right characteristics: be goal-oriented, have perseverance and be patient. You need to listen, listen, listen and learn from great personalities. Set smaller goals to start – try qualifying for a national semi-final first. Most importantly, you need to listen to the beverage, whether wine or spirits. You need to focus and concentrate because preparation is everything.

Scan here to read the full interview on Club Oenologique





# The Candidates



## Andreea Sandu

**Sommelier**

*Maison Estelle, London*

Andreea transitioned into her first sommelier role at Maison Estelle in 2025, bringing with her several years of supervisory experience in London's high-end cocktail bars and restaurants. Her background includes roles at Fazenda Bishopsgate and Disrepute, where she honed her skills in guest service and beverage knowledge. Now, at Maison Estelle, Andreea is expanding her expertise in wine, working with an extensive and refined wine list, and providing tailored recommendations to a discerning international clientele.



## Andrea Gualdoni

**Head Sommelier**

*Core by Clare Smyth, London*

Andrea Gualdoni serves as the Head Sommelier at Core by Clare Smyth, bringing his extensive experience from previous roles, including Head Sommelier at Da Vittorio. His dedication to the craft has earned him recognition, such as being named Best Sommelier of Italy in 2020. Andrea's expertise and leadership continue to enhance the wine program at Core, contributing to its renowned dining experience.



## Antony Adinolfi

**Deputy Head Sommelier**

*Maison Estelle, London*

After spending one year working with Lucas Group for the largest opening in Melbourne last year, Antony Adinolfi is currently serving as Deputy Head Sommelier at Maison Estelle, where he helps shape one of London's most ambitious wine programmes. Antony brings a global perspective and technical rigour to every role. He holds the Advanced Sommelier certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers Europe and WSET Level 3. His experience includes time at Dinner by Heston and the Savoy Grill, and he's known for his calm authority, deep product knowledge, and commitment to elevating guest experience through thoughtful, confident service.



## Charlie Richards

**Sommelier**

*Claridge's, London*

Charlie Richards is a dynamic young sommelier combining scientific training with wine service excellence. After earning a BSc in Biochemistry from King's College London, he transitioned into hospitality, bringing a unique perspective to fermentation and winemaking. Now at Claridge's, he is pursuing his WSET Diploma, building on distinctions in WSET Spirits and ASI Silver. Prior roles at Frenchie Covent Garden and Purnell's honed his leadership and list-building skills. Charlie aspires to become one of the youngest MWs, pairing academic curiosity with genuine hospitality.



## Claude Millée

**Head Sommelier**

*The Glenturret Lalique Restaurant, Hosh, Crieff*

Claude Millée brings a decade of wine and hospitality experience to his role as Head Sommelier at two-Michelin-starred The Glenturret Lalique. A graduate of the Institut Paul Bocuse, he has worked at some of Scotland's most prestigious establishments, including Restaurant Andrew Fairlie and Martin Wishart. A Certified Sommelier with WSET Level 3 (Merit), Claude is currently pursuing his Diploma. Recognised by *Harpers* and *Sommelier Edit* as one of the UK's top sommeliers, Claude combines precision, calm leadership and an unrelenting drive to refine his craft.



## Daniel Stojcic

**Head Sommelier**

*Estelle Manor, Witney, Oxfordshire*

Austrian-born Daniel Stojcic is the Head Sommelier at Estelle Manor in Oxfordshire. Transitioning from a background in IT, Daniel has rapidly ascended in the wine industry, earning accolades such as Best Sommelier in Ireland (2020) and UK Chianti Classico Ambassador (2022). He holds an Advanced Sommelier certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers and was ranked No. 21 in the 2025 Sommelier Edit Top 100 UK Sommeliers. Daniel was the winner of IWSC's 2022 Emerging Talent in Wine Hospitality.



## Daniele Arcangeli

**Head Sommelier**

*Aragawa, London*

Daniele represents the pinnacle of Italian sommelier achievement, crowned Best Sommelier of Italy 2015 and representing Italy at the ASI World Championship 2019. Currently, a WSET Diploma student and Top 100 UK Sommelier 2025, his career spans three Michelin-starred venues, including The Fat Duck and numerous two-starred establishments across Europe. His impressive credentials include the ASI Diploma, the Court of Master Sommelier certification and Bar management trainings through IBA programmes in Singapore and the Czech Republic. Recent positions at Angler, River Restaurant by Gordon Ramsay, and 67 Pall Mall showcase his ability to create world-class wine programmes. Daniele serves as a wine judge for competitions, including Decanter World Wine Awards, London Wine Competition and Sommelier Wine Awards.



## Derek Scaife

**Head Sommelier**

*The Grand Hotel, York*

Recently promoted to Head Sommelier at The Grand Hotel – York, Derek is responsible for their wine offering across 4 outlets and brings nearly 15 years of fine hospitality experience to the fore. He has led award-winning wine programmes at some of the UK's top establishments, including Rockliffe Hall and Chester Grosvenor. A Certified Sommelier and WSET Level 3 holder, he combines a deep product knowledge with strategic leadership, staff mentorship, and a focus on guest experiences. Known for curating multiple AA Notable Wine Lists, Derek brings a thoughtful, service-led approach to every role, driven by the belief that great hospitality is as much about people and connection as it is about what's in the glass.



Dion Wai

Wine & Bar Manager

Raffles London at The OWO, London

Originally from New Zealand, Dion brings global expertise to his role overseeing the wine and bar programmes at Raffles London at The OWO. His résumé includes institutions such as Dinner by Heston Blumenthal, 67 Pall Mall and Hide & Hedonism Wines. Pursuing both CMS and WSET qualifications Dion has been a finalist in both the 2023 and 2024 UK Sommelier of the Year Competitions. His career reflects both technical excellence and a passion for advancing wine culture across continents.



Dolly Chao

Senior Sommelier

67 Pall Mall, London

Dolly Chao brings over a decade of international hospitality experience to 67 Pall Mall. Originally from Taiwan, she has worked in high-end venues across Singapore and London, including Madame Fan and Joël Robuchon. A Certified Sommelier and Certified Sake Sommelier, Dolly also holds the ASI Gold Diploma and was a semi-finalist for UK Sommelier of the Year 2023. At 67 Pall Mall, she manages wine-by-the-glass selections and leads staff training, combining technical expertise with warm, attentive service.



Edoardo Johet

Head Sommelier

Maison Estelle, London

Edoardo brings a wealth of international experience to his role as Head Sommelier at Maison Estelle. His career spans notable positions at Enrico Bartolini Restaurant in Milan and Terroni Restaurant in Toronto. Edoardo holds the Advanced Sommelier certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers and has a strong background in cellar management, staff training and curating diverse wine lists. His dual Italian and Canadian nationality enriches his global perspective on wine and hospitality.



Emma Denney

Director of Wine

Claridge's, London

Emma Denney is a leading figure in UK wine service, currently serving as Director of Wine at Claridge's. An Advanced Sommelier (CMS) studying toward her Master Sommelier qualification, she has curated 1,000+ bin lists, managed multi-outlet programmes, and mentored teams across Claridge's and Restaurant St Barts. Her accolades include winner of the 2024 UK Ruinart Challenge, top 6 in UK Sommelier of the Year 2022, and a top-5 ranking in *Sommelier Edit's* Top 100. Emma brings strategic leadership and deep technical knowledge to every table.



Fábio Monteiro

Head Sommelier

Restaurant 1890 by Gordon Ramsay, London

Fábio Monteiro serves as the Head Sommelier at Restaurant 1890 by Gordon Ramsay, located within The Savoy Hotel. Appointed in November 2023, he curates an exceptional wine program that complements the restaurant's fine dining experience. Fábio is also associated with the UK Sommelier Academy, reflecting his commitment to continuous learning and excellence in wine service.



Francesco Adamo

Sommelier

Birley's Club, London

Francesco brings infectious energy and a refined palate to one of London's most prestigious private clubs. His hospitality journey began behind the bar, where three years of high-volume service honed his customer relations and stress management skills. Now Sommelier at Annabel's, Francesco combines natural sales ability with growing wine expertise, providing expert recommendations and wine pairings that enhance the club's renowned dining experience.



Giovanni Andriulo

Assistant Head Sommelier

The Ritz, London

Giovanni brings charm and rigour to his role at Oswald's private club, where he contributes one of the city's most prestigious wine programmes. Originally from Italy, He began his career in luxury hospitality, gaining valuable experience in several 5-star hotels before joining the UK's fine dining elite. He spent over five years at the iconic Ritz London, where he rose through the ranks from Junior Sommelier to Assistant Head Sommelier an experience that honed both his technical expertise and leadership skills. A Certified Sommelier with strong credentials from the Italian Sommelier Association, He is currently working toward his Advanced CMS qualification.



Jake Garstang

Restaurant Manager & Sommelier

Etch. by Steven Edwards, Hove, East Sussex

Jake Garstang is the Restaurant Manager and Sommelier at etch. by Steven Edwards in Hove, bringing a strong track record across some of the UK's most acclaimed restaurants. Prior to joining *etch.*, Jake worked at Restaurant Story, Gwen Wine Bar, Ynyshir, and Wilson's in Bristol. With a background in both front-of-house leadership and wine service, he combines operational precision with a deep enthusiasm for guest experience. Jake's varied experience gives him a sharp eye for detail and a talent for creating warm, memorable dining moments.





Joanna Nerantzi

Head Sommelier

5 Hertford Street, London

Joanna stands among the UK’s top sommelier talents, holding titles including Advanced Sommelier from the Court of Master Sommeliers Europe, Certified Sake Sommelier by SSA, and ASI Diploma. She is currently pursuing her MS Diploma of Court of Master Sommeliers Europe while serving as Head Sommelier at 5 Hertford Street of RB Holdings. Her experience spans London’s elite private members’ clubs, notably 67 Pall Mall London, where she managed a wine list featuring eight thousand references, including a thousand by the glass, as well as roles at Maison Estelle and Estelle Manor. Joanna also judges for the London Wine Competition, balancing technical excellence with a passion for education and mentorship & has been included on the inaugural list of 2023 Top UK Sommeliers by Sommelier Edit. Recently, she was awarded the Curious Vines “Road to MS” Educational Support Program 2025 by Veuve Clicquot and was shortlisted for the prestigious IWSC Wine Hospitality Emerging Talent 2025.



Joshua Webber

Assistant Head Sommelier

Estelle Manor, Witney, Oxfordshire

Joshua Webber is the Assistant Head Sommelier at Estelle Manor in Oxfordshire. He is a Certified Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers Europe and holds a WSET Level 3 certification. Known for his quiet confidence and intuitive service style, Joshua brings a sense of ease to the dining experience, pairing deep technical knowledge with a genuine enthusiasm for connecting people to wine in thoughtful, unpretentious ways.



Jules Coppier

Head Sommelier

The Lanesborough, London

Jules Coppier brings nearly a decade of London fine dining experience to his role as Head Sommelier at The Lanesborough. Formerly at Clos Maggiore and Galvin at Windows, he has built and managed award-winning wine lists, led teams of up to 10 sommeliers/bartenders and hosted high-profile wine dinners. A Certified Sommelier (CMS) with WSET Levels 2 and 3, Jules also holds qualifications in spirits and cost control and is studying for the Advanced Sommelier certification. Known for his precision, warmth and team leadership, he is focused on progressing toward a future Wine Director role.



Julien Sarrasin

Head Sommelier

Hide, London

Julien Sarrasin brings over a decade of fine dining experience to his role as Head Sommelier at HIDE, Mayfair’s Michelin-starred restaurant. He joined HIDE in 2018 and quickly progressed to lead its celebrated wine programme. Trained in Bordeaux, Julien began his London career at Club Gascon, where he rose to Head Sommelier and earned third place in the UK Sommelier of the Year competition in 2017. With deep knowledge of French and international wines, Julien is known for his calm leadership, precise pairings and passion for hospitality at the highest level. He recently passed his Advanced CMS.



Julio D. Tauste

Head Sommelier

The Evolv Collection, London

Julio D. Tauste is a seasoned sommelier with 15+ years of experience in esteemed establishments, including Orrery Restaurant under D&D London. Ranked in the UK’s Top 100 Sommeliers of 2024, Julio holds certifications from the Court of Master Sommeliers, WSET Level 3 and the ASI Diploma, reflecting his commitment to excellence in the field.



Kadek Swijana

Head Sommelier

Four Seasons Hotel, Hook, Hampshire

Kadek Swijana brings over a decade of global hospitality experience to his role as Sommelier at Four Seasons Hotel Hampshire. His career began in Bali, progressing through esteemed establishments like the Grand Hyatt and W Retreat & Spa, before joining Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran. Kadek further honed his expertise aboard Viking Cruises as a sommelier. Known for his deep passion for storytelling through wine, his unique ability to create a meaningful connection with others, and a meticulous approach to inventory management, he was a quarterfinalist in the 2024 Best UK Sommelier competition.



Kamila Błaszczyk

Senior Sommelier

Maison Estelle, London

Kamila Błaszczyk serves as Senior Sommelier at Maison Estelle in London. She achieved the highest score in the Court of Master Sommeliers Europe Certified exam and was a finalist in the 2025 Chaîne des Rôtisseurs GB competition. Her approach to wine is marked by precision and poise, shaped by a deep respect for craftsmanship and a quiet determination to elevate each guest’s experience with grace and depth. Kamila was also awarded the Gérard Basset Trophy for Best Taster at this year’s Best Young Sommelier.



Kostas Vaitisidis

Sommelier

Brown’s Hotel, London

Kostas brings over 2 decades of Greek hospitality and London polish to his Sommelier role at Brown’s Hotel in Mayfair. A holder of WSET Level 3 in Wines, WSET Level 2 in Sake, WSET Level 1 Beer and Spirits and currently studying with the Court of Master Sommeliers. Kostas combines deep beverage knowledge with polished London service. His wine journey began in Thessaloniki and has since taken him through prominent roles in London including The Delaunay, Annabel’s Club and Harrods. Known for his thoughtful approach, precision, and guest-focused service, Kostas is regarded as one of the UK’s most promising sommelier talent.



## Léonard Lievin

**Head Sommelier**

*The Pass at South Lodge, Crabtree, Horsham*

Originally from France, Léonard began his journey in management before finding his calling in wine. With an MBA in Wine & Spirits Marketing and a newly completed WSET Diploma, he pairs analytical insight with hands-on excellence. His experience spans Montréal's Restaurant Europea to the UK's finest kitchens, including The Fat Duck and Lympstone Manor. Now head sommelier at the Michelin-starred Pass, Léonard is known for his rigour, humility and drive – earning recognition as a UK Top 100 Sommelier while preparing for the CMS Advanced and ASI Diploma, the latter of which he passed with gold ranking.



## Kristina Gladilina

**Head of Wine**

*Lita Marylebone, London*

Kristina brings over 16 years of food and beverage experience, with 12 years focused on wine service and programme management. Formerly Wine Director for the DuoBand group in St Petersburg – overseeing six acclaimed venues including *harvest.*, ranked in *The World's 50 Best* – she now leads the wine programme at Lita in London. A Certified Sommelier (CMS), ASI Gold Diploma holder and WSET Level 3 graduate, Kristina was named Best Female Sommelier of Russia in 2021. Her passion lies in artisanal wines, grower Champagne, and sharing knowledge through team training and service leadership.



## Luigi Conca

**Head of Wine**

*Corrigan Collection, London*

Luigi Conca is Head of Wine at the Corrigan Collection, where he oversees the group's wine programmes with a sharp focus on pairing, provenance and guest experience. Originally from Italy's Amalfi Coast, he moved to London in 2014 and has since held key roles at Bentley's Oyster Bar & Grill and Corrigan's Mayfair, where he progressed from Head Sommelier to Restaurant Manager. A WSET-certified sommelier and Chevalier de Champagne, Luigi is a wine lover and brings passion, precision and warmth to every glass – always seeking that perfect food and wine harmony.

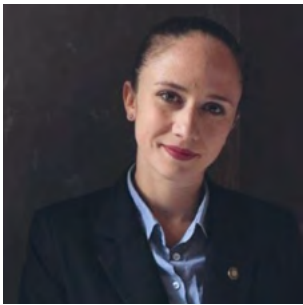


## Luca Bocca

**Assistant Head Sommelier**

*The Lecture Room & Library at Sketch, London*

Luca Bocca is a Sommelier from Oltrepò Pavese, Italy, where he grew up surrounded by vineyards and inspired by his uncle's winemaking. After completing a degree in biomolecular biotechnologies at the University of Pavia, he pursued his passion for wine and hospitality. He began his career as a Waiter and Barista while studying with ASI. In London, he gained experience at Brooks's Club before joining the 3-Michelin-star Lecture Room and Library at Sketch, where he became Assistant Head Sommelier. Luca is dedicated to continuous learning and sees wine not just as a profession, but as a lifelong passion.



## Maria Boumpa

**Restaurant Manager & Wine Director**

*Da Terra Restaurant, London*

Maria Boumpa is the Restaurant Manager and Wine Director at Da Terra, London's acclaimed two-Michelin-starred restaurant. An Advanced Sommelier (CMS Europe) and WSET Diploma student, she brings a sharp palate, deep technical knowledge, and a modern vision for hospitality. In 2024, she placed third in the IWSC UK Sommelier of the Year, won the Innovation Award for her pioneering work in low and non-alcoholic drinks, and was ranked among the UK's top five female sommeliers. Maria's career spans the UK, Greece, and Denmark – always driven by a belief that great service is both an art and an act of generosity.



## Łukasz Górski

**Head Sommelier**

*Cornus, London*

Łukasz Górski is the Head Sommelier at Cornus, a Michelin-starred restaurant in London. He achieved international recognition by winning the World's Best Young Sommelier title in 2023, following his national win in Poland in 2022. Łukasz holds an Advanced Sommelier certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers and a Silver Diploma from the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale, underscoring his dedication to the craft.



## Martin Kleveta

**Head Sommelier**

*Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, London*

Martin Kleveta leads the sommelier team at three-Michelin-starred Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, bringing extensive experience from Alain Ducasse, Hide, and Dinner by Heston Blumenthal. An Advanced Sommelier (CMS) and ASI Gold Diploma holder, he was runner-up at Taittinger UK Sommelier of the Year and winner of the UK Master of Port 2022. Martin manages lists of over 1,000 bins and oversees all wine-related financial decisions, from buying to P&L. Fluent in Czech and English, he is preparing for the Master Sommelier exam.



## Marius Plesa

**Head Sommelier**

*The Waterside Inn, Bray, Maidenhead*

Marius leads the wine program at The Waterside Inn, a prestigious three-Michelin-starred restaurant in Bray. With over eight years of experience, his career includes roles at Le Bistro Francais in Bucharest and La Petite Maison in Dubai. Marius is a Certified Sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers and holds a WSET Diploma. His expertise encompasses personalised wine recommendations, cellar management and hosting wine events, all contributing to exceptional guest experiences.





Melania Battiston

Wine Director

Cornus, London

Melania Battiston is Wine Director at Cornus, where she launched the wine programme from scratch, building a 300-bin list on a tight budget and earning a nomination for Drinks' List of the Year. An Advanced Sommelier (CMS) and prolific wine judge, Melania was named Best Young UK Sommelier 2023 and ranks among *Harpers'* Top 3 UK Sommeliers. Her career spans Medlar, Aman Resorts, and international events from LVMH to the IWSC. A published speaker and content creator, Melania brings vision, creativity, and global perspective to modern wine service.



Milos Forgić

Sommelier

The Emory, London

Milos's story spans continents and cultures – from the Adriatic coastlines where he began as a nautical technician to the luxury hotels and cruise ships that became his floating classrooms. Fluent in Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and English, he understands that wine, like language, connects us across borders. A Certified Sommelier (CMS) with WSET Level 3 and ASI Level 3 training, Milos is now based at The Emory, bringing with him a wealth of experience from Michelin-starred establishments and a deep-rooted passion for service.



Roman Barina

Head Sommelier

Rosewood London

Roman leads the wine programme at Rosewood London, bringing WSET Diploma credentials and deep cultural knowledge of Asia to one of the capital's premier hotels. His career spans prestigious venues including CUT at 45 Park Lane, Claridge's Foyer & Reading Room, and Galvin La Chapelle, alongside wine retail management at Pavilion Wine. Academically distinguished with a BA in Cultural Studies of China and a Diploma in Chinese Language from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Roman combines fluent Mandarin with advanced wine expertise. His experience at Gordon Ramsay's Hong Kong operations offers a distinctive East-meets-West perspective. His recent role as a judge for the People's Choice Wine Awards confirms his standing among London's sommelier elite.



Rudina Arapi

Director of Wine

London Hilton on Park Lane, London

Rudina Arapi's wine journey began in Florence in 2004, leading her to prominent roles, including Head Sommelier at Galvin at Windows. In 2024, she was appointed Director of Wine at London Hilton on Park Lane, where she also leads WSET Level 1 and 2 qualifications across Hilton properties in the EMEA region. Rudina was shortlisted for Sommelier OTY at the 2020 Cateys Awards and was named The Uncorking Your Wine Potential Champion for Hilton Hotels EMEA in 2021.



Vitor Silva

Head of Wine

Maison Estelle, London

Vitor is an accomplished sommelier whose career spans almost 10 years in the London Hospitality Scene, includes stints at The London Edition, Robuchon and Caprice Holdings, Now Head of Wine at Maison Estelle, he combines deep wine knowledge with polished service in a members' club setting. An Advanced Sommelier, ASI Diploma Gold holder and WSET Diploma student, His Portuguese heritage and broad industry experience make him a dynamic presence on the UK sommelier circuit.



Valentin Picon

Senior Sommelier

Restaurant Mauro Colagreco at Raffles, London

Valentin Picon brings a wealth of Michelin-starred experience to his role at Mauro Colagreco's restaurant in Raffles London. Having honed his skills at Gordon Ramsay and L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon, he blends classical training with a calm, guest-focused approach. Valentin is an Advanced Sommelier and WSET Level 3 holder with a background in international marketing. Fluent in French, English and Spanish, he brings both technical rigour and a warm, multilingual touch to one of London's most anticipated culinary destinations.



Thomas Walker

Commis Sommelier

The Vineyard Hotel & Spa, Stockcross, Newbury

Thomas Walker is a rising talent blending academic rigour with hands-on hospitality experience. A History graduate from the University of Winchester, he discovered a passion for wine while working at The George and Dragon, leading to his WSET studies. Now a Commis Sommelier at The Vineyard Hotel & Spa, Thomas brings poise, focus, and a team spirit honed through competitive sport – including Olympic weightlifting and rugby. With event experience at the International Wine Challenge, he represents a new wave of sommeliers driven by curiosity, service, and quiet determination.



Sofia Crepaz

Head Sommelier

Trivet, London

Sofia Crepaz is the Head Sommelier at Trivet, a two-Michelin-starred restaurant in Bermondsey. Originally from Italy, she is a Certified Sommelier and is preparing for her Advanced certification. Sofia began her journey at Trivet three years ago as a commis Sommelier and worked her way up to lead the wine program. Her experience spans both Italy and the UK countryside, bringing a broad and refined perspective to her role.





## Yancheng Liu

**Club Deputy Head Sommelier**

*Maison Estelle, London*

Yancheng Liu is the Club Deputy Head Sommelier at Maison Estelle, a private members' club in London's Mayfair. His impressive credentials include a WSET Diploma, Advanced Sommelier Certification, and French Wine Scholar designation. Yancheng's career path is notable for its transition from a legal background in China and Scotland to the hospitality industry, with experience at Sketch London before joining Maison Estelle. He achieved third place in the 2024 International Jeunes Sommeliers Competition and was ranked 10th in the IWSC UK Sommelier of the Year 2024.



## Zareh Mesrobyan

**Head of Wine**

*Estelle Manor, Witney, Oxfordshire*

Zareh Mesrobyan is Head of Wine at Manor, leading a forward-thinking programme shaped by both hospitality and distribution experience. He previously managed prestige accounts across Europe for Jackson Family Wines and held senior sommelier roles at Cliveden House and the two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Andrew Fairlie. Zareh's career began on the floor in London's luxury hotels, and his progression reflects a strong mix of technical skill, global perspective and commercial insight – all rooted in a deep respect for service and storytelling.



## Wilem Powell

**Head of Beverage**

*BiBi Restaurant, London*

Wilem Powell is the newly appointed Head of Beverage at BiBi, bringing a wealth of experience from leading roles at Quay in Sydney, Moor Hall, and Bar Valette, a sister restaurant to The Clove Club. An Advanced Sommelier (CMS) and WSET Level 3 in Sake holder, he has built a reputation for thoughtful list curation and exceptional guest experience. His freelance consultancy has seen him specialise in Champagne, Sherry and Australian wine. With a background spanning the UK and Australia, Wilem is known for both technical precision and warm, intuitive service.

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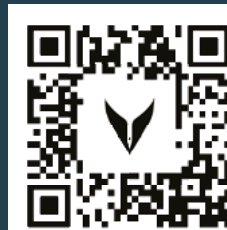
# World Leaders in Wine By-The-Glass Systems

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# The Judging Process

## How the UK Sommelier of the Year Competition Works

The IWSC UK Sommelier of the Year competition is one of the most rigorous and rewarding challenges in the hospitality calendar. Designed to identify and nurture exceptional talent, the competition unfolds across multiple stages, combining theoretical knowledge, tasting accuracy, and real-world service skills – all assessed by a panel of the UK’s most respected professionals.



## Stage One: The Online Entrance Exam

The journey begins with an online entrance exam, open to sommeliers working in the UK. This preliminary stage assesses a candidate’s breadth of knowledge and critical thinking through three components:

- A *theory test*, focusing on wine regions, viticulture, vinification, and service standards.
- An *opinion-based section*, where candidates articulate their views on the role of a sommelier, current trends, and the evolution of the profession.
- A *tasting exam*, requiring written analysis and identification based on images and descriptions.

This stage is designed not only to test technical competence but also to gauge how candidates think, communicate, and engage with the broader world of wine and hospitality. Each application is reviewed by the Technical Committee – a panel made up primarily of former competition winners and experienced educators. From over 60 applicants, 42 were selected to proceed to the next stage.



## Stage Two: The Two-Day Judging Event in London

Those who pass the first stage are invited to a two-day live judging event, held in London. It’s here that the competition becomes truly immersive, with candidates tested on a wide range of practical, technical, and interpersonal skills.

### Day One – Quarter-Final

All selected candidates participate in:

- A written theory paper
- A written blind tasting exercise
- A practical exam simulating restaurant and service scenarios

These tests are designed to reflect the realities of life on the floor – fast-paced, high-pressure, and customer-focused. From this group, the top candidates are invited to move forward to the semi-final round.

### Day Two – Semi-Final and Final

The day begins with the semi-final, where the top candidates must complete:

- A practical service task
- A blind tasting (wine and spirits)
- A surprise task to test adaptability and composure

After a short deliberation, the top three are announced and prepared for the afternoon *final*, held in front of a live audience.

## The Final

In the grand finale, candidates must complete a series of timed, on-stage tasks simulating real restaurant situations:

- 1 *Wine List Correction* – spotting and explaining errors across a multi-slide restaurant wine list.
- 2 *Blind Tasting* – identifying and describing wines and spirits using both technical and commercial language, plus a spirits tasting.
- 3 *Bar Service Task* – performing a service scenario and engaging with “guests” played by the judges.
- 4 *Service Tasks* – guiding a table through drinks recommendations based on a food order.

The final concludes with the *Champagne Pour Challenge*, a crowd-favourite where all three candidates return to the stage to pour glasses from a magnum of Champagne. Precision, consistency, and grace under pressure are essential – once a glass is poured, there’s no going back! Before this final task, candidates must also complete a *Timed Visual Quiz*, testing their recognition of key industry figures, wineries, equipment, and iconic wine moments. This rapid-fire round adds a layer of pressure and fun while highlighting each finalist’s cultural awareness and industry knowledge. Judges observe every move closely, with marks awarded for both technical execution and hospitality finesse. The room is kept in near silence during performances, allowing the candidates to fully focus, while the audience and sponsors observe the talent on display.





#### Recognising Excellence Beyond the Podium

At the IWSC, we believe in celebrating more than just the overall winner. In addition to the UK Sommelier of the Year title, we also recognise the *top 10 performers*, as well as those who excelled in individual components, including:

- Best performer in the theory exam
- Best performer in the practical service task
- Best performer in the food and wine matching task
- Best performer in the wine tasting exam
- Best performer in the spirits tasting exam

This multi-award approach ensures that a range of skills are acknowledged and that up-and-coming sommeliers receive valuable recognition, even if they do not make the final three.

#### A Platform for Growth

Throughout the competition, the focus remains on nurturing talent and creating opportunities for professional growth. Finalists and top candidates are given mentorship and visibility, with the winner offered ambassadorial roles and the chance to represent the UK at international competitions.

Above all, the judging process reflects the true nature of hospitality – knowledge, yes, but also warmth, generosity, adaptability, and composure. It is an honour for the IWSC to provide a stage for such talent to shine.

*Gabriel-glas*



#### THE GABRIEL GLASS

A universal glassware range loved and used by the UK's favourite restaurants and hospitality groups.

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RESTAURANTS



# Introduction to Judging Committee

We are so excited to introduce you to the Judging Panel for this year's competition – a group of dedicated professionals who not only bring exceptional talent and knowledge to the process, but also volunteer their time to support and guide the next generation of sommeliers.

At the heart of the competition is our Technical Committee (TC), which plays a pivotal role in maintaining the integrity, fairness, and international standard of the programme. The TC works according to an international framework – the “Grid” – developed and updated annually by ASI to ensure we remain aligned with global benchmarks.

The committee is structured into three specialist panels, each led by a Head of Panel. Tasks are created collaboratively by members of each panel and then submitted for approval to the Head of the Technical Committee, Romain Bourger, who is now in his second year in the role.

Many members of the TC are past winners of the competition, bringing invaluable insight, empathy, and high standards to the judging process. Several – including Eric Zwiebel MS, Christopher Delalonde MS, and Alexandre Fréguin – continue to work on the restaurant floor, which helps us stay connected to the fast-evolving hospitality scene and maintain real-world relevance, especially within the practical elements of the competition.

To ensure the committee remains dynamic and inclusive, the composition of each panel is reviewed every three years, allowing individuals to rotate within the TC and making space for new voices. A key focus for us is mentoring the next generation: last year's winner, Philipp Reinstaller, is already contributing to the design of the theory quiz and wine list correction for the final. In his second year, he will be invited to formally join the TC to build experience as a judge while mentoring and guiding future competitors.

It is important to note that the Head of the Technical Committee and all Heads of Panel are not permitted to train candidates, in order to maintain complete impartiality and avoid any conflict of interest.

Nicolas Clerc MS, who has been involved with the competition since 2013, began working closely with the late Gérard Basset OBE MS MW, who entrusted him with developing the judging structure we use today. Nicolas now supports Romain in overseeing the smooth delivery of the competition days, and continues to manage the judge rota, briefing materials, and the overall logistics behind the scenes. He also plays a key role in helping the Technical Committee select the best possible candidates to represent UK at international competitions.



**Agnieszka Swiecka MS**  
2023 UK Sommelier OTY



**Alexandre Fréguin**  
2018 UK Sommelier OTY



**Claire Thevenot MS**  
2006 UK Sommelier OTY



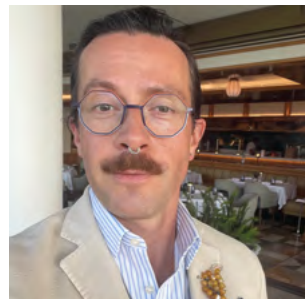
**Eric Zwiebel MS**  
2004 UK Sommelier OTY & Talent and Development Director – UK Sommelier Academy



**Gearoid Devaney MS**  
2008 UK Sommelier OTY



**Isa Bal MS**  
2008 Best Sommelier of Europe



**Jan Konetzki**  
2012 UK Sommelier OTY



**Kathrine Larsen MS**  
2014 UK Sommelier OTY



**Matt Wilkin MS**  
2005 UK Sommelier OTY



**Matthieu Longuère MS**  
2000 UK Sommelier OTY



**Nicolas Clerc MS**  
2007 UK Sommelier OTY & Co-Founder and President – UK Sommelier Academy



**Nigel Wilkinson MS**  
1998 and 1999 Runner-up



**Nina Basset**  
Co-Founder & Vice President – UK Sommelier Academy



**Olivier Marie**  
Treasurer – UK Sommelier Academy



**Philipp Reinstaller**  
2024 UK Sommelier OTY



**Raimonds Tomsons**  
2023 Best Sommelier of the World



**Romain Bourger**  
2019 UK Sommelier OTY & Head of Technical Committee – UK Sommelier Academy



**Romané Basset**  
General Secretary – UK Sommelier Academy



**Salvatore Castano**  
2021 Best Sommelier of Europe and Africa



**Tanguy Martin**  
2015 UK Sommelier OTY



**Vincent Gasnier MS**  
1997 UK Sommelier OTY



**Vincenzo Arnese**  
2022 UK Sommelier OTY



**Xavier Rousset MS**  
2002 UK Sommelier OTY



## Alliance Wine / H2Vin



**Alliance Wine champion bold and inspiring winemakers who share our values - our passion for expressive, high-quality wines and our commitment to embracing sustainable winemaking practices. We work to forge long-term relationships with customers across all UK sales channels. We strive to maintain our outstanding customer service. Our portfolio not only offers exceptional quality and a wide range of choices designed to drive commercial success for our customers, helping them to thrive in a competitive market. By building trust, delivering quality, and providing exceptional service, we aim to create a better world of wine.**

Contact: Matt Wilkin MS | matt.wilkin@alliancewine.com

### **Riesling Spätlese ‘Norheimer Kirschheck’ Dönnhoff, Nahe, Germany 2022**

Riesling (100%) [RS: 62 g/l] 3x150cl 8% ABV. £65.21  
Widely regarded as the Nahe Valley’s top cellar and one of the world’s finest Riesling producers, recent vintages highlight the power, intensity and minerality that define these wines.

### **Saumur Blanc ‘Brézé’ Domaine Guiberteau, Saint-Just-sur-Dive, Anjou-Saumur Loire, France 2021**

Chenin Blanc (100%) 6x75cl 12.5% ABV. £53.10  
Just 12km south of Saumur in Saint-Just-sur-Dive, Romain Guiberteau crafts natural wines from superb vineyards. A former Clos Rougeard apprentice, he produces age-worthy Saumur Rouge and vibrant, mineral Saumur Blanc with minimal intervention.

### **Savennières ‘Clos du Papillon’ Domaine des Baumard, Rochefort-sur-Loire, Anjou-Saumur Loire, France 2020**

Chenin Blanc (100%)  
One of the Loire’s most acclaimed producers, Florent Baumard is Savennières’ *enfant terrible*, known for challenging tradition. He champions minimal intervention to let each vintage express its unique character.

### **Rias Baixas ‘Albariño’ Pazo Señorans, Meis, Galicia, Spain 2023**

Albariño (100%) 4x150cl 13% ABV. £39.86  
One of Rías Baixas’ leading producers, Pazo Señorans helped establish the DO and recognised Albariño’s potential early on. Their coastal vineyards showcase an ageing ability few can match.

### **Enalia (PDO Santorini) Gavalas Winery, Megalochori, Santorini, Greece 2022**

Assyrtiko (100%) 6x75cl 14% ABV. £42.49  
The Gavalas family focuses on limited-production wines that showcase Santorini’s unique terroir, with a deep respect for local varieties like Assyrtiko, Aidani, Mandilaria, and Mavrotragano.

*Note: Trade prices*

### **Saumur Champigny ‘Les Poyeux’ Antoine Sanzay, Varrains, Anjou-Saumur Loire, France 2021**

Cabernet Franc (100%) 6x150cl 13% ABV. £84.16  
Antoine crafts wines with a strong sense of terroir and respect for tradition, defined by vibrant fruit, tension, and precise, focused style.

### **Brunello Di Montalcino DOCG San Polino, Montalcino, Tuscany, Italy 2019**

Sangiovese (100%) 6x75cl 14.5% ABV. £45.01  
A small biodynamic estate producing balanced, luscious wines. Praised by critics and peers as having “incredible clarity and pure fruit expression – unequalled in the region”.

### **Pinot Noir Bell Hill Vineyard, North Canterbury, New Zealand 2019**

Pinot Noir (100%) 6x75cl 13% ABV. £109.54  
Bell Hill Vineyard, nestled in North Canterbury’s Weka Pass, thrives on 2ha of lime-rich soil, producing exceptional Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Established in 1997, it follows Burgundian techniques along with high-density planting.

### **Jasper Raats Family Wines, Stellenbosch, South Africa 2022**

Cabernet Franc (49%), Malbec (35%), Cabernet Sauvignon (9%), Merlot (3.5%), Petit Verdot (3.5%) 6x75cl 13.5% ABV. £19.25  
Since founding his winery in 2000, Bruwer Raats has showcased the potential of his granite-based terroir – now recognised as one of Stellenbosch’s finest, producing some of South Africa’s top wines and world-class varietal expressions.

### **Châteauneuf du Pape Rouge ‘Les Trois Sources’ Domaine de la Vieille Julienne, CNDP, Rhône, France 2019**

Grenache (80%), Syrah/ Cinsault (18%), Counoise (2%) 6x75cl 15% ABV. £55.40  
Jean-Paul and Antoine Daumen produce very serious wines with 10 hectares of vines at the very northern part of Châteauneuf du Pape and 5 hectares of Côtes du Rhône, they are never the blockbusters produced by so many others. Vieille Julienne wines are unique, and understandably sought after.

### **Fermentacion Lenta Bodegas Ximénez-Spínola, Jerez, Spain 2023**

Pedro Ximénez (100%) 3x75cl 14% ABV. £29.65  
Working solely with Pedro Ximénez, the Bodegas produces a selection of fascinating dry wines, making them true masters of the grape and a producer of some truly exceptional wines

### **La Bota No 118 Palo Cortado ‘Pata de Gallina’ Equipo Navazos, Jerez, Spain NV**

Palomino Fino (100%) 6x50cl 20.5% ABV. £40.87  
Born from a group of friends’ passion for authentic Jerez wines; sourced from rare, overlooked soleras and casks from Andalusia’s most prestigious bodegas.

*Note: Trade prices*

## Amathus Drinks



**Amathus Drinks is a family-owned importer, distributor and retailer, supplying the UK’s on-trade with a comprehensive range of wines and spirits. Our range spans the major wine-producing regions and a diverse range of hidden gems, with an increased focus on organic and sustainably produced wines, from entry-level through to fine and rare. We work directly with over 150 wineries from across the globe, including a wide range of Greek wines. Recently we have been so excited by the diversity and quality of the Eastern European wine scene that we have added several new producers from this area, some of them available to taste today.**

Contact:

Jeremy Lithgow MW jeremy@amathusdrinks.com  
Ana Jackson MW ana@amathusdrinks.com

### **Carassia Blanc De Blancs Brut NV**

**NV, Romania, Crisana.** £14.90  
Romania’s best sparkling wine producer. 100% Chardonnay; 25% Reserve wines, 8g/l RS, 24 months on lees. It has a rich and impressive profile with fresh and delicately fruity, floral and biscuity notes on the palate.

### **A.Bergère Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Extra Brut NV, France, Champagne.**

£36.30  
A high quality grower Champagne house based in the Côtes des Blancs. Made from 100% Chardonnay, part barrel-fermented with low dosage. Powerful and flavoursome with layers of ripe peach, nuts and minerals, complex, multi-layered finish.

### **Azores Wine Co. Arinto dos Acores**

**2023, Portugal, Azores.** £19.11  
The Arinto dos Acores is a taut, saline dry white wine with tangy grapefruit and green herb notes loaded with minerality.

### **Domaine Sauveroy Savennieres Clos de 7 Quartiers**

**2023, France, Loire.** £24.70  
Fermented and aged in concrete eggs. Honeysuckle, yellow plum, almond and salty minerals. Beautifully textured with a creamy mid-palate and a long, concentrated, stony finish. Delicious now, will evolve over the course of a decade or more.

### **Chateau du Cray Montagny 1er Cru Cornevent**

**2022, France, Burgundy.** £21.17  
A single vineyard barrel fermented Chardonnay. Weighty ripe orchard fruits, hints of hazelnut and smoke and toasty oak, alongside underlying minerality.

*Note: Trade prices*

### **Territorio Luthier Blanco de Guarda**

**2022, Spain, Ribera del Duero.** £39.79  
90 year old Albillo fermented in ceramic pots and aged for 20 months in Hungarian oak. Incredible complexity and concentration of fruit, oak and minerality – a world-class white wine.

### **Dorcha Orange**

**2024, Slovenia, Štajerska.** £14.18  
Gelber Muskateller and Traminer. Spontaneous fermentation with native yeast. 21 days fermentation on skins. 5 months on lees. Fantastic orange wine with a creamy texture, light, soft tannins, apricot, jasmine tea, lychee, clean and precise.

### **Keush Zulal Areni Classi 2021**

**2021, Armenia, Vayots Dzor.** £12.45  
This is a delicious unoaked red, grown at 1500 metres , old ungrafted vines, medium-weight plum and cherry fruits, black pepper, orange rind, game soft tannins – drinks like a cross between Pinot Noir and Grenache.

### **Weingut Rieger Pinot Noir Alte Rebe**

**2022, Germany, Pfalz.** £16.35  
Old vine biodynamic Pinot Noir from southern Germany, packed with dark cherry, plum and long, ripe tannins.

### **Papaioannou Old Vines Agiorgitko**

**2015, Greece, Peloponnese.** £18.24  
From this historic Greek organic estate’s oldest Agiorgitiko vineyards, this is packed with spicy damson and plum fruits and a long, complex finish.

### **Albino Rocca Barbera D’Alba Superiore Gepin**

**2022, Italy, Piedmont.** £20.18  
Old vine barrel aged red from leading Barbaresco producer. Rich, dark juicy blackberry and damson fruit flavours.

### **Val di Suga Brunello di Montalcino**

**2019, Italy, Tuscany.** £26.55  
Val di Suga age their Brunello di Montalcino for 2 years in large oak barrels, a year in concrete tank and year in bottle before release, resulting in a refined, elegant red with compleing aromas of mulberry, bay and savoury spice.

*Note: Trade prices*



AXA Millesimes



Founded in 1987, AXA Millésimes brings together nine prestigious vineyards worldwide to diversify and enhance its heritage. Its properties include Château Pichon Baron, Château Suduiraut, Château Pibran and Domaine de l’Arlot in France, Quinta do Noval and Quinta do Passadouro in Portugal, Disznókő in Hungary, Outpost Wines, and Platt Vineyard in the USA. Under the leadership of Christian Seely, the company focuses on quality, innovation, and sustainability, producing exceptional wines that honor their terroirs and winemaking traditions.

Contact: Corinne Ilic  
c.ilic@axamillesimes.com

**Outpost True Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2022**  
£390  
This Cabernet Sauvignon comes entirely from our True Vineyard (Outpost Wines – Napa Valley) located at 1,800 feet in elevation. Wines are neither fined or filtered allowing for the full expression of the vintages’ potential.

**Château Pichon Baron 2022**  
£167  
Château Pichon Baron, a 2nd Grand Cru Classé from Pauillac, is crafted from the estate’s oldest vines. It reveals black fruit, spice, and exceptional elegance with impressive depth, intensity, and a long, refined finish.

**Les Tourelles de Longueville 2018**  
£55  
Les Tourelles de Longueville, named after the château’s turrets, is a charming second wine from Pichon Baron. Mainly blended with Merlot from Sainte Anne, it is an intro to the spirit of the Château.

**Lions de Suduiraut Blanc Sec 2024**  
£19  
This Bordeaux dry white produced by Château Suduiraut is gourmand,fresh and offers an immediate pleasure. We selected a specific plot of Château Suduiraut vineyard, planted with Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Sauvignon Gris vines on average 20 years old.

**Château Suduiraut Vieilles Vignes Grand Vin Blanc Sec 2023**  
£49  
Château Suduiraut Vieilles Vignes Grand Vin Blanc Sec comes from select 45-year-old Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc vines on our Premier Cru Classé terroir, revealing exceptional elegance, depth, and concentration.

**Château Suduiraut 2017**  
£49  
Classed Premier Cru Sauternes in 1855, Château Suduiraut is crafted from the estate’s finest terroirs. Meticulously made, it offers finesse and complexity. Ready to drink now, it can be kept for a long time.

Note: Retail prices

Berkmann Wine Cellars



Berkmann Wine Cellars are proud to be the largest family-owned and family-run wine importer in the UK. They have been selling wine to restaurants since 1964, and today are led by second-generation Rupert Berkmann, who embodies the family’s commitment to service, hospitality, and the culture of wine. Their stellar portfolio is made up of top producers from 21 countries who share Berkmann’s ethos: progressive and fiercely independent.

Contact: Alex Hunt MW  
Purchasing Director alex.hunt@berkmann.co.uk

**Champagne Jacquesson, Avize Champ Caïn 2009**  
£140.00  
The pioneer of numbered non-vintage cuvées also makes very limited quantities of spectacular single-vineyard champagnes. The power and precision of this Côte des Blancs Chardonnay are complemented by an Extra Brut dosage of just 1.5g/l.

**Yarra Yering, Chardonnay, Yarra Valley 2021**  
£39.50  
The founding winery of the modern Yarra Valley may be better known for Bordeaux- and Rhône-inspired blends, but the estate also has some exceptional Chardonnay blocks, including the original 1969 plantings that contribute magnificent depth.

**C&G Boillot, Meursault Les Clous 2022**  
£113.65  
This is the debut vintage for Guillaume Boillot, who trained under his father Henri before starting his own domaine. Les Clous is a very well sited lieu-dit, high up the slope between Vireuils and Tillets.

**Arnaud Ente, Bourgogne Chardonnay 2018**  
£135.53  
Arnaud Ente is, in the words of Michel Bettane, “an exceptional talent” who has “achieved mastery in viticulture and winemaking”. Echoing his mentor Coche-Dury in both approach and scarcity, Arnaud’s wines epitomise crystalline Burgundian precision. \*Available on allocation only

**Lucien Le Moine, Griotte-Chambertin Grand Cru 2017**  
£220.26  
Gevrey-Chambertin’s smallest grand cru achieves a beautiful expression here in the hands of superstar micro-négociant Lucien Le Moine. The long *élevage* and minimal sulphur allow the full complexity of the terroir to shine through.

Note: Trade prices



Bibendum Wine



Bibendum has stood at the forefront of the drinks industry as wine distributors for the past 40 years, and we continue to pave the way today. We're the UK's leading premium wine specialist and distributor, inspiring our customers to discover the world's most exciting, authentic and mindful winemakers.

As an On Trade specialist, we work with a huge range of customers, from Michelin-starred restaurants to cocktail bars. We shake up the sustainable status-quo, partnering with mindful producers, while pursuing a positive impact on the planet and our communities.

Lacourte-Godbillon Mi-Pentes 1er Cru NV
£50.57
The Weyborne Oriana 2019
£44.88
Markus Huber Ried Berg Gruner Veltliner Erste Lage 2021
£38.35
Sancerre Les Chailloux Biodynamic Domaine Fouassier 2023
£29.89
Les Cassagnes la Nerthe Organic Cotes du Rhone Blanc 2022
£20.66
Patz and Hall Chardonnay 2019
£38.92
Shannon Mount Bullet 2020
£33.56
Robert Mondavi Winery Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
£62.85
Talenti Brunello di Montalcino Piero 2016
£61.06
Grand Tokaj Terroir Selection Tokaji 5 Puttonyos Aszú 2019
£22.20

Note: Trade prices

Chateau d'Esclans



Château d'Esclans is a renowned wine estate located in Provence, famous for its refined rosé wines. Its iconic rosé, created by Sacha Lichine, has revolutionized the wine industry with its elegant and modern style. The Rosé de Provence from Château d'Esclans is crafted from local grape varieties such as Grenache and Vermentino, resulting in a fresh, fruity, and mineral-driven wine. Its most famous cuvée, Whispering Angel, is globally recognized for its delicacy and complexity, alongside Rock Angel, Château d'Esclans Estate, Les Clans, and of course Garrus. Under the leadership of Sacha Lichine, Château d'Esclans has become a key player in the world of premium Provence rosés.

Contact: Ronan Lieugard  
rlieugard@chateaudesclans.com

Château d'Esclans, Whispering Angel 2024
Côtes de Provence, France
Château d'Esclans, Estate 2022
Côtes de Provence, France
Château d'Esclans, Les Clans 2022
Côtes de Provence, France
Château d'Esclans, Garrus 2022
Côtes de Provence, France



Friarwood Wines & Spirits



Friarwood Fine Wines is an independent importer and distributor, established in 1967, supplying the UK trade with wines of character and provenance. Our portfolio is built on close relationships with family-owned domaines and respected producers across France, Italy, and beyond. Each wine is selected for balance, typicity, and its ability to elevate a list – whether classic, contemporary or cutting-edge. With a focus on exclusivity, consistency, and service, Friarwood supports restaurants, hotels and bars looking for wines that speak clearly of where they come from – and why they belong on your list.

Contact: Ben Carfagnini  
info@friarwood.com

**Champagne Gruet Selection Brut NV, Côte des Bar, France**  
£21.80  
Bright and elegant with fine bubbles, notes of white peach and zesty citrus. A lively, approachable Champagne – perfectly balanced and award-winning, offering outstanding quality from one of Champagne's historic family houses.

**Albarino ‘Tambora’, Vina Costeira, 2022, Rías Baixas, Spain**  
£12.82  
Bursting with tropical fruit, citrus zest, and crisp green apple, this vibrant Albariño delivers bright acidity and subtle minerality. A refreshing, expressive white – classic Rias Baixas with a modern, seafood-loving edge.

**Chablis 1er Cru ‘Vosgros’, Jean Pierre et Alexandre Ellevin, 2022, Burgundy, France**  
£24.63  
Elegant and expressive with orchard fruits, white nectarine, and zesty citrus. Vibrant acidity balances generous fruit weight. A pure, focused Premier Cru Chablis – rich yet refreshing, with true Vosgros vineyard character.

**Pouilly Fuissé 1er Cru ‘Sur la Roche’, Domaine Guerrin & Fils, 2023, Burgundy, France**  
£ 27.93  
Elegant and vibrant with white peach, acacia, and hazelnut. Chalky minerality and bright acidity balance creamy texture from lees ageing. A precise, expressive Premier Cru Chardonnay from the limestone slopes of Vergisson.

**Chardonnay, Sequoia Grove, 2020, Napa Valley, USA**  
£27.45  
Vibrant Napa Chardonnay with citrus, golden apple, and sour pineapple. Subtle oak spice and creamy texture meet bright acidity. A refined, non-malo style balancing richness and freshness from Oak Knoll District and Carneros Lake vineyards.

**Spatburgunder Hechtsheimer, Weingut Stenner, 2021, Rheinhessen, Germany**  
£15.11  
A silky, fruit-driven German Pinot Noir with forest berries, gentle oak spice, and a whisper of dark chocolate. Elegant yet approachable – perfect slightly chilled and a true showcase of Rheinhessen's rising potential.

**Barbaresco DOCG, Vinchio Vaglio, 2020, Piedmont, Italy**  
£20.23  
An expressive, fruit-forward Barbaresco with floral notes, dried herbs, and gentle spice. Youthful structure meets elegance, with refined tannins and a long, savoury finish. A classic Nebbiolo from Monferrato's rugged hills.

**Monteregio di Massa Marittima Riserva, Conti di San Bonifacio, 2020, Tuscany, Italy**  
£16.93  
A polished Super Tuscan with red berries, blueberry, cocoa, and spiced oak. Smooth and savoury with impressive length, it showcases Sangiovese's charm from Maremma under the expert hand of Luca d'Attoma.

**Rioja Reserva, Vega Caledonia, 2016, Rioja, Spain**  
£13.58  
A classic Rioja Reserva with layered dark fruit, cocoa, and vanilla from extended oak ageing. Structured yet smooth, with a long, elegant finish. A refined expression from old vines in Rioja Alta.

**Amarone della Valpolicella DOCG, Grotta Del Ninfeo, 2016, Veneto, Italy**  
£ 34.90  
Rich and full-bodied with layers of dried cherry, fig, sweet spice, and vanilla. Aged 30 months in French oak, it's a powerful yet balanced Amarone with a long, warming, and luxurious finish.

**Brunello di Montalcino DOCG, Capanna Cencioni, 2019, Tuscany, Italy**  
£ 35.54  
A poised Brunello from Montosoli, revealing dried cherry, rose petal, and pomegranate aromas. The palate is structured yet elegant, with refined tannins and vibrant acidity, culminating in a long, mineral-driven finish.

**Barolo ‘Ravera’ DOCG, Reva, 2019, Piedmont, Italy**  
£54.43  
A powerful yet refined Barolo from Novello's prestigious Ravera cru. Layers of red cherry, rose, spice, and tobacco unfold over firm tannins and mineral tension. Elegant, age-worthy Nebbiolo at its finest.

Note: Trade prices

Jascot Wine Merchants



Jascots have an incredible range of exciting, delicious and iconic wines with a focus on Regional Hero producers. We are proud to represent artisan growers from around the world who produce amazing wines with passion, respect for the environment and authenticity of style. We are leaders in supplying Fine Wine, with benchmark wines specially selected with the On-Trade in mind. We are utterly customer-focused, priding ourselves on our consultative account management, reliable service and seamless delivery. Last year we were awarded Highly Commended Wine Supplier of the Year 2024 by IWC and ranked 9th in the Harpers Top 50 Drinks Wholesales 2024.

Contact: Jess Walker  
Jessica.walker@jascots.co.uk

**Blanc de Blancs, Bolney Wine Estate,**  
West Sussex, England, 2021. £26.58  
Bolney Wine Estate has over 50 years of experience crafting elegant traditional-method premium sparkling. Their BdB 2021 has 25 months lees-ageing with citrus and apple fruit, brioche and hazelnut aromas complementing the smooth creamy finish.

**Alfred Gratien Cuvee Paradis Brut**  
The Angel's Share, Champagne, France, 2015. £60.68  
Champagne House Alfred Gratien age their wines entirely in oak barrels. The Paradis 2015 is comprised of 65% Chardonnay and 35% Pinot Noir with no malolactic fermentation and after a decade of ageing is intensely refined.

**Génération XIX Sancerre Blanc 2020**  
Les Vins Alphonse Mellot, Sancerre, Centre Loire, France, 2020. £56.22  
Alphonse Mellot's wines are powerful and intense, and not afraid to use oak ageing to add breadth and heft. Generation XIX Blanc has a pithy intensity from the extended fine lees contact.

**Meursault 1er Cru Poruzots, Domaine Vincent**  
Latour, Meursault, Burgundy, France, 2022. £106.80  
Vincent and his wife Cécile run the 9-hectare domaine. The wines are aged for 12 months in used 600-litre oak barrels to add a nuttiness and toasty bouquet to this concentrated, pure and mineral Meursault.

**Silberlack, Riesling, Jeraboam, Schloss Johannisberg**  
Rheingau, Germany, 2013. £144.49  
This Grosses Gewächs was fermented in 1200l barrels from Schloss Johannisberg oak and aged on the fine yeast for 7 months. A complex bouquet of candied lime peel, nashi pear, orange, quince and intensive minerality.

Note: Trade prices

**Absolu Provence Rosé, Château d'Astros**  
Provence, France, 2023. £18.98  
Chateau d'Astros is our Provençal partner and 100% Certified Organic. Their top cuvée Absolu is a balanced, gastronomic and complex rosé with notes of lemon and tropical fruits, with a refreshing mineral note.

**Mirto, Ramón Bilbao, Rioja, Spain**  
2018. £31.10  
Mirto is made exclusively in exceptional years, using old vines from eight villages near Haro. Fermentation is separate, and then just one or two vats are selected. This wine is perfect for those seeking Rioja excellence.

**Frans K Smit Red Blend Magnum**  
Spier Wine Farm, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 2017. £107.58  
Spier Wine Farm's Frans K Smit 2017 is one of the best years ever, for Helderberg Cabernet Sauvignon which makes up 61% of the blend with Cabernet Franc bringing in fresh florals and Malbec adding brightness.

**The Visionary Cabernet Sauvignon**  
Wakefield Wines, Clare Valley, Australia, 2016. £57.05  
The Wakefield family's original vision was to create wines that rivalled the best of the 'old world'. In this pursuit they set about planting Australia's largest Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard. The Visionary is the pinnacle of their Cabernet wines.

**Chateau Leoville Poyferre 2014, St Julien**  
Bordeaux, France, 2014. £75  
Château Leoville Poyferre is located in the prestigious appellation of Saint-Julien and this was an excellent late-ripening vintage with a ripe and generous blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc

**Barolo Rocche dell'Annunziata Riserva**  
Rocche Costamagna, Piedmont, Italy, 2019. £53.14  
Rocche Costamagna Estate has been the hallmark of quality since 1841. It's distinctive personality of the renowned Rocche dell'Annunziata, a very high-quality microterroir, that produces elegant, powerful, floral and perfumed wines.

**Naturalis Historia Irpina IGP, Mastroberardino**  
Campania, Italy, 2009. £47.50  
Mastroberardino is without doubt the pre-eminent family of Campanian wine. Their Naturalis 2009 is aged in French oak barriques for a period of 24 months & bottle for at least 30 months for a luscious character.



# Moët Hennessy

Moët Hennessy UK presents a curated selection of Champagnes, each with a rich history and commitment to quality, ideal for any sommelier. Offer your patrons the legacy of Moët & Chandon, a house synonymous with celebration since 1743, or the innovative spirit of Veuve Clicquot, known for its pioneering techniques. Explore the prestige of Dom Pérignon, a vintage-only Champagne embodying unparalleled excellence, and the refined elegance of Ruinart, the first established Champagne house. And introduce the uncompromising craftsmanship of Krug, revered for its exceptional blends and individual expression. Each brand offers a unique story and character, crafted with meticulous attention to detail, providing a diverse range of tasting experiences for your clientele.

Contact: Jacqueline Kobald  
Champagne Ambassador jkobald@moethennessy.com

Moët & Chandon Collection Impérial Création N°1

A limited-edition release showcasing the house's innovative approach to blending and aging, resulting in a unique and expressive champagne.

Ruinart Blanc Singulier 19th Edition

An exceptional Blanc de Blancs that exemplifies the purity and elegance of Chardonnay, capturing a specific year's unique terroir expression.

Dom Pérignon 2015

A vintage champagne embodying the house's commitment to excellence, revealing a harmonious balance of fruit, acidity, and a refined, lingering finish.

Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame 2018

Crafted in honor of Madame Clicquot, this prestige cuvée showcases the house's Pinot Noir heritage with elegance, structure, and aging potential.



Margaret River is one of the Earth's most pristine and geographically secluded coastal wine regions. This breathtaking destination of ancient landforms, lush forests and distinct Ironstone gravel soils enjoys a 'textbook perfect' climate for fine wines, a consistent Mediterranean climate and intense maritime influence from the Indian and Southern Oceans.

Scarce and sought-after worldwide, Margaret River wines represent only 2% of Australian vineyards. The elegant and powerful Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay are grown with a 'light touch' approach and typically ripen with superb balance and structure. Artisan, family-owned producers dominate, and handcrafted winemaking and respectful creativity shine through.

Contact: Amanda Whiteland  
amanda@margaretriver.wine

Cherubino Margaret River Chardonnay 2023

Hatch Mansfield. £23.42  
The palate is focused, powerful and creamy. Multi-layered and complex with spice, nuts, stone fruit and green apple. The finish is clean and refined.

McHenry Hohnen Hazel's Vineyard Chardonnay 2023

Louis Latour Agencies. £27.70  
From the single vineyard range. Located in southern Margaret River, Hazel's vineyard is defined by regenerative farming, free draining ironstone gravel soils, a cooling maritime influence, and a north-facing aspect ensuring optimal exposure to sunlight.

House of Cards 'Ace High' Chardonnay 2023

The Vinorium. £34.15  
The 2023 Ace High Chardonnay is barrel selected to create the highest quality and most expressive Chardonnay the single organic vineyard can produce. This vintage showcases intense fruit has incredible balance and finishes long and precise.

Fraser Gallop Estate Parterre Chardonnay 2021

Corney and Barrow. £24.56  
Typical expression of barrel fermented Margaret River Chardonnay, hand-picked, 100% Gingin clone, no malolactic fermentation, fresh and vibrant, great fruit expression and oak balance, with crisp natural acidity giving it extraordinary ageing potential.

Passel Estate Chardonnay 2020

Fredericks Wine Company. £17.30  
Perfect ripening conditions in 2020 led to outstanding fruit quality. Single vineyard; fermented in French oak barriques, matured in barrel on lees for 10 months. A powerful, yet rounded and soft wine, presenting fabulous typicity.

Vasse Felix Heytesbury Chardonnay 2020

Fells | DPD £37.00  
100% Gingin Clone Chardonnay. Vasse Felix's most unique small vineyard sections where aspect and soil interplay with the Gingin Chardonnay in such a way to ignite stunning varietal and wild yeast influence.

Xanadu Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2022

Hallgarten & Novum | DPD £52.80  
Sourced from the finest Cabernet Sauvignon parcels across Margaret River. Refined and concentrated, this wine is defined by its power and poise. Rich dark forest fruits, cassis and graphite, underpinned by beautifully structured, ripe tannins.

Cullen Diana Madeline 2022

Liberty Wines. £71.67  
The 2022 Diana Madeline was hand harvested from 50 year old dry grown vines, spent 14 months in 55% new oak. Final Blend is 89% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 3% Malbec.

Cloudburst Cabernet Sauvignon 2021

Berry Brothers Rudd. £168  
Ethereal, red-fruited and "moreish". Profoundly perfumed with plum sugar and tobacco. Intensely concentrated red berries like an electric Ribena. Vibrant bursts of tart, tangy hawthorn and liquorice, lithely framed by ghost tannins.

Moss Wood Cabernet Sauvignon 2021

Jeroboams. £52.22  
A cooler vintage, similar to 1975 and more recently, 2017 and 2019. The final blend is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot.

Cape Mentelle Heritage Cabernet Sauvignon 2020

Bancroft. £28.25  
Heritage Cabernet Sauvignon is the culmination of a detailed approach to vineyards and grape selection. From vigour and soil mapping techniques to identification of select parcels and hand harvesting, we ensure gentle handling throughout.

Voyager Estate MJW Cabernet Sauvignon 2020

Pol Roger Portfolio. £44.05  
Named in honour of Voyager Estate's founder, Michael John Wright, a farmer and regional pioneer, who from the moment he dipped his shovel into the gravelly soils, knew he had found a special place.

Note: Trade prices



# Edmond de Rothschild Heritage



Edmond de Rothschild Heritage is constantly investing in family heritage, with a focus on 3 main areas: wines, hospitality, and nature. At the heart of this vision lies its winegrowing activity, with 500 hectares of vineyards across some of the world's most prestigious terroirs – Bordeaux, home to the iconic Château Clarke, as well as New Zealand, Argentina, Spain, and South Africa. Each estate reflects a deep respect for the land, combining craftsmanship and character to produce wines that awaken the senses and express the soul of their origin.

Contact: Emilie Cechet  
e.cechet@edr-heritage.com

**Amistà Rosé, Cru Classé**  
Côtes de Provence 2024. £17.90

**Le Merle Blanc de Château Clarke**  
Bordeaux Blanc 2023. £23.85

**Château de Malengin Eve**  
Montagne Saint-Émilion 2020. £23.00

**Château Clarke**  
Listrac-Médoc 2018. £25.90

**Château des Laurets**  
Puisseguin Saint-Émilion 2017. £14.45

**Château des Laurets Sélection Parcellaire**  
Puisseguin Saint-Émilion 2016. £35.65

Note: Trade prices

# Craft Irish Whiskey



Craft Irish Whiskey isn't just creating exceptional whiskey, it's transforming how it's experienced. By focusing on barrel craft, each ultra-rare release is guided not by age, but by peak flavour. This dedication to taste continues tableside through our 'Perfect Serve', a ritual that uses patented glassware to enhance aroma, obsidian stones to chill without dilution, and a precision pipette to unlock hidden flavour. Every detail is designed to elevate the experience. In the world's finest restaurants and curated environments, this thoughtful approach ensures each whiskey is served at its peak, honouring the craft and delivering flavour exactly as intended.

Contact:  
Craft Irish Whiskey  
ciwc@craftirishwhiskey.com

Rosie Dawson, Director  
rosie@craftirishwhiskey.com

**The Donn**  
£134.40  
Triple-distilled Single Malt matured in Bourbon, Tawny Port, deep-staved toasted Virgin Hungarian Oak, and finished amongst a series of Pedro Ximénez barrels. Revealing rich walnut, dark chocolate, raisin, and caramel notes with a creamy, full-bodied mouthfeel.

**The Taoscán, Tableside Experience**  
£600  
A first-of-its-kind triple-distilled Single Malt, The Taoscán matured in Bourbon and Sherry Oloroso hogsheads, then was split-finished in Tawny Port and Chestnut casks for notes of rich spice, vanilla, and roasted s'mores. Designed for 'The Perfect Serve'.

**The Brollach**  
£4,800  
An ultra-rare, double-distilled Single Malt, The Brollach was matured in Bourbon casks and finished in 125L and 68L Madeira casks. Created in honour of founder Jay Bradley's father, it reveals apricot, dark cherry, and caramelised banana.

**The Devil's Keep, 2023 Edition**  
£7,200  
An award-winning, ultra-rare whiskey that earned Double Gold at the John Barleycorn Awards 2023. Triple distilled and matured in Bourbon-soaked American Oak, Tawny Port, Pedro Ximénez Sherry, and finally Hungarian Virgin Oak casks, it offers a rich, warming interplay of sweet golden honey, Amarone, dark cherry, and a dusting of rich dark chocolate.

Note: Trade prices



## WineBug / Vine Revival



WineBug and Vine Revival are two personal projects born from a shared love of wine and people. WineBug was founded by Christelle Guibert and her partner, Chris, and showcases the wines of long-time friend Antoine Sanzay from Saumur. These wines are distributed in the UK via H2Vin/Alliance Wine, and Carte Blanche.

Vine Revival is Christelle's own winemaking journey in Muscadet, created in partnership with vigneron Vincent Caillé – a project rooted in saving old vines, showcasing the potential of Muscadet, and built on deep friendship and shared passion.

Contact: Christelle Guibert  
winebuguk@gmail.com

We're delighted to share a few special magnums with you:

- Terre de Gneiss, Muscadet 2017 Magnum
- Terre de Gabbro, Muscadet 2017 Magnum
- Domaine Antoine Sanzay, Les Salles Martin, Saumur Blanc 2020 Magnum
- Antoine Sanzay, La Paterne, Saumur Champigny 2020 Magnum

## Scott Smith



Scott Smith is an award-winning silversmith whose work explores meditative craft through carving, raising, and casting. Using precious metals and reclaimed wood, he draws on ancient Scottish techniques to reflect on early Pictish carvings and the authenticity of replicas. His handheld silverware is designed for both dining tables and the wild Scottish landscapes that inspire him. Smith's recent work highlights a deep responsiveness to environment and instinctive making, embracing materials, spontaneity, and reflective practices rooted in a passion for meditative processes.

Contact: Scott Smith  
hello@scottsmithdesign.co.uk

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# The Winning Formula: Lessons from Five Champions

What does it truly take to win one of the UK’s most esteemed sommelier titles? We gathered insights from five recent winners—**Vincent Gasnier MS (1997)**, **Claire Thevenot MS (2006)**, **Vincenzo Arnese (2022)**, **Agnieszka Świącka MS (2023)**, and **Philipp Reinstaller (2024)**—to uncover the drive, discipline, and mindset behind their success.



**Vincent Gasnier MS**, UK Sommelier of the Year 1997, fell in love with wine as a teenager working in Paris, eventually training under legendary sommelier Philippe Bourguignon. His career took off in the UK when he joined Hotel du Vin and found a lifelong mentor in Gérard Basset. “Preparing for the competition is like training for a marathon,” he says, recalling 7am blind tastings and months of relentless study. Winning opened doors – from becoming Head Sommelier to launching a media career, authoring *Drinks* and consulting for Soho House globally. Now a respected wine consultant and IWSC judge, Vincent believes humility, curiosity, and connection are key to the sommelier craft. “You need to speak to people on their level – wine isn’t about showing off.” Still chasing knowledge, he’s eyeing the Master of Wine qualification and dreams of one day settling near the vines in California or the South of France, closer to the heart of winemaking.



**Claire Thevenot MS**, winner of the UK Sommelier of the Year in 2006, began her journey in the vineyards of Beaujolais and found her calling while studying in Tain Hermitage. A pivotal moment came when Gérard Basset offered her a position at Hotel du Vin, launching a career that would see her become the first French woman to achieve the Master Sommelier title. Claire’s approach to competition success – transforming weaknesses into strengths – remains a hallmark of her career. “Judges don’t want a robot,” she says. “Let your personality shine and your challenges become assets.” Now the founder of French wine importer Vins-Clairs, Claire champions Loire and Roussillon producers while mentoring the next generation. Whether serving royalty at Buckingham Palace or preparing service scenarios in the shower, Claire’s humour, grit, and passion for learning have defined her 20+ year career. “Having knowledge is one thing,” she says. “But sharing it – that’s far more important.”



**Vincenzo Arnese**, crowned UK Sommelier of the Year in 2022, blends calm precision with relentless curiosity. Now Director of Wine at Raffles London at The OWO, his career began with an internship at The Waterside Inn at 17, where he fell in love with the craft of service. From Head Sommelier at Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester to representing the UK at international competitions, Vincenzo’s journey reflects quiet ambition and methodical preparation. “It’s not about what you like,” he says. “It’s about listening and creating a connection.” Winning the competition unlocked new opportunities – judging, mentoring, and leading one of the country’s most prestigious wine programmes. A certified WSET educator, he is now focused on training the next generation through structured courses and role play. “Stay in your lane, don’t rush,” he advises. “Sommellerie is a long game. The best success comes when you’re ready for it.”



**Agnieszka Świącka MS** won the UK Sommelier of the Year title in 2023, after placing runner-up the year before. Head of Wine at Mount St. Restaurant and The Audley in Mayfair, Agnieszka brings intensity, humility, and structure to everything she does. “I built a training plan like an athlete,” she says, with weekly blind tastings, theory drills, and muscle-memory service practice. In 2024, she became one of the youngest professionals in the world to earn the Master Sommelier title. Her journey from banking to wine was inspired by her grandfather’s advice: follow your passion. That spirit remains core to her message. She mentors rising talents, judges internationally, and encourages others to see vulnerability as part of growth. “True success is measured by effort and inner strength,” she says. With her sights now set on the Best Sommelier of the World competition, Agnieszka is fast becoming one of Europe’s most inspiring wine professionals.





**Philipp Reinstaller**, Crowned last year's UK Sommelier of the Year, Philipp Reinstaller blends calm precision with laser focus. Originally from Austria, his passion for wine was ignited while working at Tantris in Munich under Justin Leone. He refined his craft at Dinner by Heston and Trivet, where Isa Bal MS – “the best sommelier I know” – became a defining mentor. After his win in 2024, Philipp joined the opening team at LaBombe, a new Mayfair concept from the founders of Trivet, where he now curates a progressive, authentic wine list. “The best training is being on the floor – every day is different,” he says. Preparation for the competition meant structure, sacrifice, and mental rehearsal. “Winning gave me confidence – but not complacency.” With the Master Sommelier exam in his sights and ambitions to compete internationally, Philipp is also giving back – mentoring 2025 hopefuls while continuing to learn himself. And yes – he once served Krug to Morgan Freeman.

## Common Threads: The Champion's Blueprint

Across these five stories, a clear pattern emerges:

- **Structured, athlete-style preparation:** From blind tasting to theory drills and mock service, every champion followed a regimented routine.
- **Mentorship at critical junctures:** Each benefitted from guidance – from Gérard Basset, Justin Leone, Vincenzo Arnese, and each other – highlighting hospitality's supportive nature.
- **Mental resilience under fire:** Marathon-like preparation, boots-on-the-floor focus, and emotional control – especially under spotlight – prove essential.
- **Service excellence & guest empathy:** Impeccable guest experience outweighs flawless technique.
- **Humble self-awareness:** Recognising one's shortcomings and turning them into strengths creates genuine growth.
- **“Giving back”:** Post-win, each champion dedicates time to mentoring, judging, and reinforcing the community ethos; “You don't win alone,” Vincenzo reminds us.

## Advice to Future Contenders

- **Simulate service pressure:** Sit in a restaurant seat – even on stage – and treat it as real. It refines both mindset and flow.
- **Assemble your support team:** A mentor, training partner, study group – competition prep is a shared act.
- **Balance knowledge and mindset:** Theory and tasting are keys, but they're only one half; performance under pressure completes the picture.
- **Mind your psychology:** Athletes and sommeliers alike need resilience – breathe, refocus, and adapt.
- **Stay generous and grounded:** Remember those who helped along the way. Give back.



### Grow Your Career with the IWSC

Ready to take the next step? The IWSC offers a range of opportunities for the industry to develop their skills and gain industry exposure.

### IWSC Judging Opportunities

Each year, the IWSC invites sommeliers to join its expert judging panels. It's a rare opportunity to sharpen your tasting skills, benchmark your palate, and learn from industry leaders.

We also run Global Judging sessions around the world – combining in situ judging with curated visits and producer meet-ups. An immersive and inspiring experience for any sommelier.

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### Emerging Talents Bursary

Our Emerging Talents programme supports the next generation of hospitality professionals through development bursaries, international study trips, and advanced training.

Over £20,000 awarded annually to support career development. Applications open in the autumn. Don't miss out – follow us and sign up to stay informed.

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### Bootcamp: Masterclasses, Workshops & Tastings

Our exclusive bootcamp training sessions help you prepare for sommelier competitions and exams, with practical advice and tasting tips from past UK Sommelier of the Year winners and other leading professionals.

Each bootcamp is run in small groups, offering hands-on training and a unique opportunity to learn from – and connect with – your peers.

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# Beyond Wine: Raimonds Tomsons Champions the Art of Whisky

**Adam Lechmere speaks to the World's Best Sommelier 2023 about his passion for whisky and the founding of the Guild of Whiskey Sommeliers.**

After claiming the world's top sommelier title in 2023, Raimonds Tomsons turned his attention to a new frontier: whisky. The Latvian master has partnered with The Craft Irish Whiskey Company to co-found the Guild of Whiskey Sommeliers – a new platform dedicated to elevating whisky service and education.

## A Natural Partnership

"I see so many connections to the wine world, which you don't often find in spirits," explains Raimonds. "They're really obsessed with quality. There are no shortcuts about their whiskeys, and they pay attention to how whisky should be served – the right glasses, the temperature – just like we do with wine."

This attention to detail resonates deeply with someone who believes knowledge brings confidence. Aside from education, the Guild represents how the industry is transforming whisky service. "We'll be able to bring the best sommeliers on board and make them more passionate about whisky, educate them as well and make them great ambassadors," he says.

## Wine Meets Whisky

The parallels between wine and whisky fascinate him. Both require understanding structure, complexity and pairing principles. "The structure of the beverage – be it wine or whisky – should align with the structure and richness of the dish. They should share certain aromatics and flavour characteristics." He speaks enthusiastically about aged cheeses with aged whisky, or smoked salmon paired with smoky expressions – combinations that showcase whisky's sophisticated potential.

## Elevating Whisky Culture

Beyond tasting notes, the Guild's mission addresses a gap Raimonds identified in spirits service: "There is a lot of room in the spirits world where we sommeliers need to pay as much attention as we do for wine. Service first – the way we present wine, we pay attention to temperature, to glass – it's not the same in the whisky world."

This represents a new challenge for someone driven by constant learning. "The more you learn, the more you understand how many things you don't know, actually," he reflects. It's this intellectual curiosity that made him the perfect ambassador for elevating whisky culture.



## A Spirited Mission

The Guild offers structured education across all whisky categories – Irish, Scotch, Japanese and American – covering business, marketing, history and production. Each element influences the final spirit, much like terroir shapes wine. For Raimonds, it's about "bringing people on board and making as many sommeliers as possible passionate about whisky."

After years of relentless competition preparation, this collaborative approach energises him. The Guild represents his evolution from champion competitor to industry educator, using his platform to elevate standards across the spirits world.

*To find out more about the Guild of Whiskey Sommeliers and the Craft Irish Whiskey, go to <https://www.guildofwhiskeysommeliers.com/> and <https://craftirishwhiskey.com/>*

*The Guild of Whiskey Sommeliers is offering complimentary access to its Level 1 Whiskey Sommelier Certification course. To start your journey toward becoming a certified whiskey sommelier, visit [www.guildofwhiskeysommeliers.com](http://www.guildofwhiskeysommeliers.com) and enter the code IWSC1UKSOMM at registration.*



THE GUILD OF  
WHISKEY SOMMELIERS



**The Guild of Whiskey Sommeliers was founded by Craft Irish Whiskey and Raimonds Tomsons to raise the standard of whiskey education and service in the On Trade.**

While wine has long embraced storytelling, decanting, and elegant service, whiskey, even at premium levels, is too often poured behind the bar into a basic tumbler. Level 1 of the Whiskey Sommelier Certification addresses this gap. It covers whiskey history, production, maturation, tasting, and, uniquely, service. The goal is to empower professionals to deliver more refined and memorable guest experiences. Raimonds Tomsons, A.S.I. Best Sommelier of the World 2023 and one of the world's most respected wine experts, brings both credibility and a deep passion for learning to this new frontier. After all, you wouldn't serve a fine Bordeaux in a pint glass, so why treat a world-class whiskey any differently?

Designed for all experience levels, Level 1 offers a strong foundation for anyone in the industry. Levels 2 and 3, currently in development, will build on this with deeper insights into tasting, barrel craft, and advanced service skills.

The Guild of Whiskey Sommeliers is offering complimentary access to its Level 1 Whiskey Sommelier Certification course. To start your journey towards becoming a certified whiskey sommelier, scan the QR code or visit [www.guildofwhiskeysommeliers.com](http://www.guildofwhiskeysommeliers.com) and enter the code: IWSC1UKSOMM at registration.



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