

# ASI MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2023  
ISSUE #7



ANNE-SOPHIE PIC, GUY SAVOY AND  
COEN DIELEMAN  
Conversations from 'The Pass'

RAIMONDS TOMSONS  
Introducing the winner of  
the 2023 Best Sommelier of  
the World contest



# CHEFS & SOMMS







DIPLOMA



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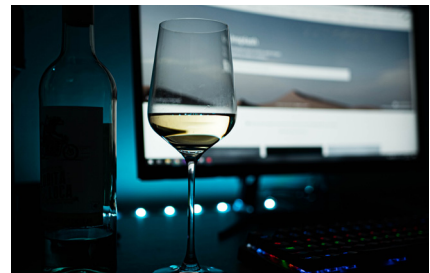
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**Editor, Content Manager:** Mark DeWolf  
**Director Partnerships & Marketing:** Claire Berticat  
**Marketing Assistant:** Xeniya Volosnikova  
**Administrative Assistant:** Juliette Jourdan  
**Translation:** Michèle Aström Chantôme, Manuel Negrete  
**Design / Layout:** Carissa Botha  
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**Contributors:** Mark DeWolf, Coen Dieleman, Evan Goldstein, Paz Levinson, Heidi Mäkinen, Victor Okolo, Anne-Sophie Pic, Josh Pointon, Madeleine Puckett, Marianna Ramírez, Véronique Rivest, Raimonds Tomsons, Giuseppe Vaccarini, William Wouters, Jessica Wood, Maciej Zimny

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**Magazine inquiries:** Mark DeWolf, ASI Content Manager  
 markdewolf@asi.info  
 General Inquiries: [www.asi.info](http://www.asi.info) | [info@asi.info](mailto:info@asi.info)



# Welcome!



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

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

I am excited to share with you this year's first issue of ASI Magazine. This edition follows in the footsteps of the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest, held earlier this month in Paris. After more than 3 decades of waiting, the contest finally returned to France, the cradle of sommellerie and the heart of gastronomy. The event was a truly momentous event for ASI and the USDF (Union de la Sommellerie Française) as it reminded the world why Paris, and all of France, is held in such high regard in the world of wine and hospitality.

First, I would like to congratulate Raimonds Tomsons on his victory. Winning the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World speaks to a lifelong commitment to learning. It also comes with a lifelong commitment to share that knowledge with others. I have no doubt Raimonds will be an amazing ambassador of sommellerie, not only in Latvia, but around the world, much the same way Giuseppe Vaccarini has been for the past 40 years both in Italy and across the globe. It was a great pleasure to recognise Giuseppe's lifelong commitment to sommellerie with the ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award at a tribute dinner hosted during the recent contest. Giuseppe's dedication to sommellerie and willingness to share that knowledge with others has few parallels.

Being a great sommelier is more than just wine knowledge. It is about cultivating relationships with customers, working in harmony with other service staff, and collaborating with the chef and members of the kitchen brigade. Ultimately, our roles as sommeliers are just one part of the orchestra that is the dining experience. In this issue, we share insights from some of the world's great chefs including words from our guest editors, Anne-Sophie Pic (La Maison Pic), Guy Savoy (Restaurant Guy Savoy), Hiroe Higuchi (Shima Kanko Hotel), and Coen Dieleman (Geranium). In our Sommelier Perspectives article, we ask Chef Sang Hoon Degeimbre, chef and proprietor of Belgium's celebrated L'Air du Temps, and Slovenian Chef Jure Tomič about their transition from sommelier to chef. It's a journey I and Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein both understand, as we have worked both as a chef and sommelier during our respective careers. Evan gives his unique insights on pairing food and wine in our ASI Education feature.

I encourage you to read our articles and share the magazine with your colleagues and coworkers. After all, our job as sommeliers, is to share our knowledge with others.



William Wouters, President ASI



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# Guest Editors

## Conversations from 'The Pass'

In this edition of ASI Magazine we speak to great chefs about the role drinks play in their restaurant and how they work with their sommeliers to deliver gastronomic experiences.



Anne-Sophie Pic

### Anne-Sophie Pic, Head Chef, Owner, Groupe Pic, France

For more than 20 years, Anne-Sophie Pic, Chef and Owner of Groupe Pic, accompanied by a loyal and dedicated team, including her husband David Sinapien, have created a group of restaurants that reflects herself. Anne-Sophie Pic is passionate, sensitive, free-spirited and determined. Her path exemplifies a unique strength of character, for as a self-taught woman, much conviction, perseverance, and faith were asked of her in order to establish herself in a firmly male-dominated universe. Little wonder why she is the most decorated female chef in the world, the recipient of eight Michelin stars, across her five restaurants.

**ASI:** You were on stage at the recent Best Sommelier of the World in Paris. Why was it important for you to be there?

**Anne-Sophie Pic (ASP):** I live in the middle of the northern Rhône valley. My father loved wine. We even have a vineyard in Saint-Peray. My best friend is a fantastic winemaker by the name of Christine Vernay and we have a lovely and historical cellar in Valence. Paz (Levinson) joined the team five years ago and we like exploring all beverages. We work with enthusiasm and creativity with the teams to give a fantastic, unique food and drink experience to the guest. The world of wine and beverages is integrated into my life as a chef. In our recipes we use: Champagne, sherry, sake, teas, coffee, gin and we also serve exceptional pairings for our dishes... We have a team of more than 35 sommeliers, with head sommeliers such as Edmond Gasser in Valence and Amandine Pastourel in Paris; sommeliers who have participated in competitions in the past.

**“My natural way is to think about food and its progression... the creative part about each dish, the intensity, the flavour, the balance.”**



**ASI:** How important is beverage service to your restaurant?

**ASP:** We place a lot of importance on beverages in all our restaurants. We are always looking for perfection, but also to give a global experience to the guest. We cannot do this if the kitchen, patisserie, sommeliers, and bartenders don't all work together.

With Paz and Edmond we explore all types of pairings. No matter if they have alcohol, are low in alcohol or non-alcoholic, all the pairings must be the best we can serve! We have fun creating these pairings and in doing so we have created fantastic combinations. Financially it is also very important as our average guest check has increased incredibly since we have implemented the wine and non-alcoholic pairing menus.

**ASI:** You have talented sommeliers such as Paz Levinson, Amandine and Edmond working with you. With such a talented team of drink professionals do you feel the need to participate in the selections of wine, and other beverages for your drinks programs, or do you leave those decisions to your sommeliers?

**ASP:** Working with wine professionals with such a passion and commitment is wonderful. We always trust our sommeliers, especially the direction selected by each of our head sommeliers. But, that stated, I also I like to get involved in tastings as much as possible to learn and understand the process and the origins of the wines and beverages we serve. That is also why I try to visit my friend, Christine Vernay, to see the harvest or walk and understand the vineyards of Saint-Joseph with Jean-Louis Chave, or to meet sake producers that visit Valence, for example. If I taste something

amazing in another restaurant I always share with Paz and Edmond and we exchange details about wine and beverages. Finally, we create different beverages together, ice tea and coffee blends bottled with the brand Anne-Sophie Pic, along with two lovely gins.

**ASI:** When running establishments of your standard there is a need to ensure the kitchen and front of the house are running congruently. How do you ensure you and your front of house staff, sommeliers, are delivering the same top level of experience? Do you believe in regular meetings between yourself and the front of staff at your various establishments?

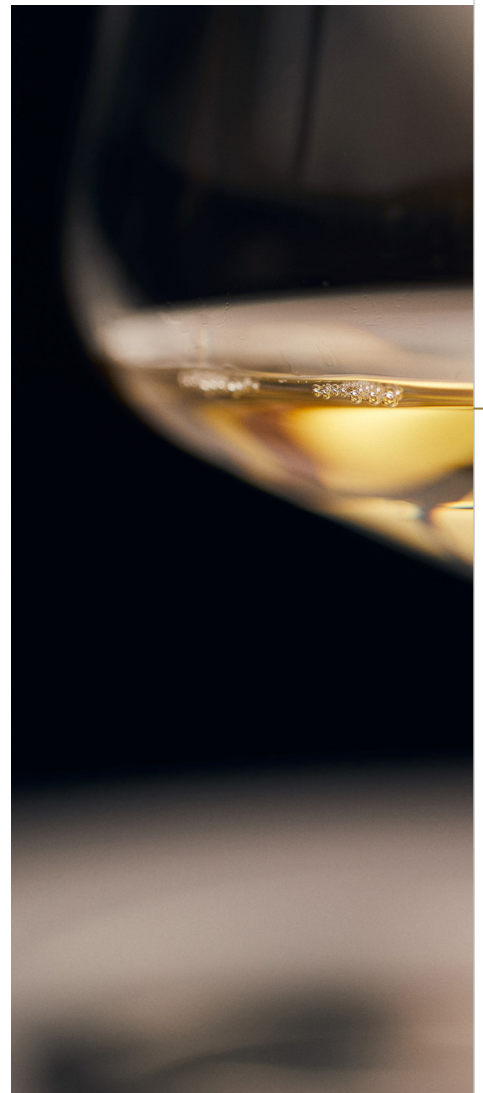
**ASP:** Absolutely, we host many meetings to communicate with each other, to help the teams to know and be aware about the most important news, visits, and new dishes. We have a big team, so we need to be very organised about that. Additionally, there are briefings before each service and there is a weekly operational meeting, in addition to meetings specifically about the kitchen.

**ASI:** When developing your degustation/ tasting menus does wine or drink pairings factor into your decisions with respect to what dishes or do you prefer to create the food menu first?

**ASP:** My natural way is to think about food and its progression... the creative part about each dish, the intensity, the flavour, the balance. With that said I'm ready to taste the pairings the team have proposed and if something very important needs to be changed to make it a wonderful experience, I will do it. For example, it could be the order of the servings. If it is better for the wine or the beverages to change the order, I will do it.

**ASI:** For La Dame du Pic London you've created a menu paired with non-alcoholic beverages. What compelled you to do this?

**ASP:** I love working with non-alcohol pairings and since Paz arrived at the restaurant group five years ago, we began doing it in all the restaurants. The most important change was in Valence, in 2020, when we started to have one main menu consisting of ten steps, courses. This allowed us to work with more focus and precision. Since 2020, in Valence, we also offered a very special non-alcoholic pairing for the menu. In all our restaurants there are interesting pairings with and without alcohol.





# AUSTRIAN WINE

The Art of Wine. *Down to Earth.*



## AUSTRIA:

## THE ART OF WINE.

## DOWN TO EARTH.

Austria is a small country nestled at the heart of Europe, reputed for its hospitality. Viticulture has played a highly significant role in Austria for thousands of years. The wine industry has become increasingly dynamic over recent decades due to the commitment of the country's winegrowers.

Today, Austrian wineries – which are known for their high-quality standards and respectful approach to natural resources – produce a wide variety of unique wines full of character. These wines are appreciated by wine lovers and professionals around the globe. Indeed, Austria is currently one of the world's most exciting wine-growing countries and its wines are some of the highest in demand – as proven by the continuous growth in annual export figures.

The wines have a fascinating, unmistakable character that is particularly worthy of note. Their uniqueness is the combination of seven critical factors, which can be defined as follows:

The convergence of different climatic zones; the land and its unique soil structure; the diversity of grape varieties; a history of viticulture stretching back thousands of years; a very environmentally conscious approach to the cultivation of vineyards; excellent value for money; and the freshness of the wines themselves.

This aromatic freshness, even when the grapes reach their full physiological ripeness, is achieved through the interplay of warm, sunny days and cool nights with northerly winds. There is simply nowhere else in the world that produces refreshing wines with such a concentrated flavour, or dense wines with such a light-footed character.

This unique character can be found in all of Austria's grape varieties – such as Grüner Veltliner, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Zweigelt and Blaufränkisch – which can mature into individual wines with great typicity of origin. Rarer varieties such as Zierfandler, Rotgipfler, Roter Veltliner, Wiener Gemischter Satz or Steiermark's (Styria's) rosé Schilcher produce equally impressive wines. Lake Neusiedl's noble sweet Prädikatswein and uniquely fresh sparkling wines (Sekt) complete Austria's impressive diversity of wines.

[austrianwine.com](http://austrianwine.com)





## Guy Savoy, Head Chef, Owner, Restaurant Guy Savoy, Paris, France

Chef Guy Savoy needs no introduction. His eponymous restaurant overlooking the Seine in Paris is consistently regarded as one of the, and by many, as 'THE', best restaurant in the world. A passionate lover of French gastronomy, Mr. Savoy was the patron of Wine Paris & Vinexpo Paris, held earlier this month, immediately following the 2023 ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest. At the event he, along with his Head Sommelier, Sylvain Nicolas, presented a seminar on food and wine pairings, under the watchful eye of Philippe Faure-Brac.

*The following content was provided courtesy of Vinexposium.*

*The full interview can be found on the Vinexposium website:*

[vinexposium.com](http://vinexposium.com) >

**“When you know this kind of detail, your taste buds approach a wine differently. And it’s important to have that kind of knowledge in mind.”**

**VE:** Wine has a special place in gastronomy. What role does it play with food in your restaurant?

**Guy Savoy (GS):** The definition of gastronomy is to pair wines and foods. And the first to play a role in gastronomy are chefs. We can thank Paul Bocuse, the Troisgros brothers, Michel Guérard... This new style of chef, in the 1970s, brought about change for gastronomy. Cuisine made a huge leap forward, and the range of products is the driving force behind such craftsmanship. Then, in a rapidly changing world of restaurants, sommeliers played a prominent role. The close bond between the sommelier and the chef has become vital. It was essential to leverage this extraordinary lifeblood that makes up our gastronomy and find the perfect match between food and wine.

**VE:** You have worked closely with your sommelier, Sylvain Nicolas since 2006. Do you choose the wines together?

**GS:** We move forward based on the dishes we produce and every time the menu changes, with the

seasons, we work together. He absolutely must taste the dishes and together, we find the wines that pair with them. I do not have his knowledge, but I know exactly what I like.

**VE:** Do you ever start with the wine to produce a dish?

**GS:** Absolutely! Sometimes winegrowers present us with wines and Sylvain and I design a dish that is in keeping, in harmony with the wines. There are times when the pairing is not initially obvious, like Yquem with *hare à la royale*, but it works.

**VE:** The sommelier knows what you enjoy!

**GS:** Of course! But I cannot constantly stick to the same tastes, otherwise I'd get stuck in a rut. It's terrible. And change is what leads to some amazing pairings, like serving *Château d'Yquem* with *hare à la royale*. At one stage, I even dreamt up red Mediterranean tuna, which I called 'every flavour' where I tried to put a crust of herbs and toast on top to replicate the flavours of Chardonnay. I just knew a top white



Burgundy would make the perfect match for the food. He also served me a Jura wine from Savagnin. It's not a 'vin jaune' exactly, but it does have the same characteristics. I have already imagined what will go with it. It's a real autumn wine.

**VE:** Are there any particular encounters with winegrowers that you have found moving?

**GS:** Of course. I remember the first times I met Hubert de Montille in Volnay. Though president of the bar (legal profession) in Dijon, you quickly realise that what makes him tick is more his wines than the law. The real challenges for him were the difficult years and that's where you'd fully see that his sensitivity and talent as a winegrower would be able to express themselves. I also think back to Pierre Gaillard, in Côte-Rôtie, who I would watch plough his incredibly steep

vineyards with a horse. Again, this helped me understand wine – the aspect of the vineyards, the climate and the skill of the winegrowers. Women also play an important part. It reminds me of Hubert de Montille again, who would religiously listen to his wife Christine when she was describing wine. He was the one involved in the wine, but what Christine said was essential. I remember one rainy vintage when Hubert dried all the grape pickers' baskets out in the courtyard. When you know this kind of detail, your taste buds approach a wine differently. And it's important to have that kind of knowledge in mind. It shows, yet again, that people are vital. Nature gives us what it has, but then it says – "right guys, get to work!" And that's what moves me with all these professions. It's a bit like a baker who, when the weather is damp,

will slightly change the recipe for his bread. That brings us back to craftsmanship. Observation and the sensitivity of men and women bring all this to light.

**VE:** Is there a wine that has made a particular impression on you during your lifetime?

**GS:** I have experienced emotions in every wine region. Not long ago, it was with a 2003 Petrus. The atmosphere around the table and the quality of the guests is also what makes the wine we're drinking magnificent. Frédéric Dard used to say about Yquem: "To celebrate Yquem, it takes three with the bottle and a friend from a great vintage", and he was right! Actually, everything has to be good – the company, the glass, the atmosphere, everything counts. A host of details is what makes this kind of occasion special.

A DISCUSSION WITH...

Anne-Sophie Pic, Guy Savoy and Coen Dieleman





### Coen Dieleman, Assistant Head Chef Restaurant Geranium, Copenhagen, Denmark

Coen Dieleman, originally from the Netherlands, enjoyed being in the kitchen at an early age. He loved the creativity involved in making the tastiest food possible. While attending culinary school, he worked in a one Michelin starred restaurant. In 2015, a visit to Denmark to discover Nordic cuisine resulted in an internship at Restaurant Geranium. Two months later he was hired as a chef *de partie* and promoted to assistant head chef in 2020.

**“It always starts with an idea for a new dish which we perfect until it is ready to be served.”**

**ASI:** How important is beverage service to your restaurant?

**Coen Dieleman (CD):** Just to show how important the beverage is, we offer 4 different wine pairings, a fruit & vegetable non-alcoholic pairing, alongside our wine list, which features roughly 14 000 bottles to choose from. But also, a variety of beers, homemade cocktails, and an extensive list of spirits is also available.

With the wine pairing the sommelier will serve 7 different wines throughout the meal, which means the sommelier is a quite present person during your stay at the restaurant, so it helps them to connect more with our guests.

**ASI:** The restaurant has a strong focus on ingredients sourced locally. How as a restaurant do you balance meeting diner’s expectations of rare and exclusive wines while also being true to your local ingredient concept?

**CD:** This is all said in the introduction of our wine list, written by Søren Ledet, Wine Director

& General manager, he says, “When contemplating the world of wine, I look back and see a long history of greatness, tradition, and technique, which leads me to a genuine appreciation of why wine is as it is today. When I look to the future, I see evolution, innovation, and a movement towards a more minimalistic approach.

A great wine list should embrace them all. It should celebrate the independent winemaker, who is making wine as natural and minimalistic as possible, as well as the more traditional winemakers of the great Domaines and Chateaux of the world, who have been defining winemaking for decades.

The exclusivity and prominence of our wine list embraces all these wines, culminating in a handpicked and diverse collection for wine lovers from around the world.”

Besides the great variety of wines from all over the world we have a selection of beers from small local breweries as well as our





fruit and vegetable pairing. Our fruit and vegetable pairing offers a great alternative instead of our wine pairing for our non alcohol drinking guest. All the drinks are made in house from locally sourced vegetables and fruits from organic farms. Based on a juice from a fruit or vegetable and then infused with roasted seeds, wood or dried flowers from the summer season to give them character and floral notes.

**ASI:** There is a growing demand and respect for non-alcoholic drink options. When building, developing these drinks is it a collaborative effort between the kitchen team and front of house/sommeliers?

**CD:** When developing the non-alcoholic menu, we first look at what fruits and vegetables are in season. Now in the winter season most are based on root vegetables, fruits like apple and pear, preserved berries and dried flowers. After, we will discuss which flavours the juice requires to get the most out of a dish and then we develop the juice. After this, we will taste the dish together with the juice and if needed change the flavours in the juice. The great thing about developing the non-alcoholic pairing and making it in house is that we can flavour the juices exactly to what the dish needs.

**ASI:** Do the chefs and the front of house team do regular tastings of food and wine and non-alcoholic pairings together?

**CD:** It always helps to understand both kitchen side and the service side of the restaurant. It gives a better understanding of what is needed to have the best possible teamwork between kitchen and service to give the guest a better experience. But especially when it

is creating the pairing for a dish to understand how the dish has been prepared and which flavor certain techniques give to the dish.

We meet regularly between kitchen and front of house to discuss how things can be done better and more efficiently between both sides of the restaurant.

**ASI:** Do you ever build dishes starting with the beverage pairing in mind? Or do you prefer to perfect the dish first and then work on the pairings after the dish is fully developed?

**CD:** It always starts with an idea for a new dish which we perfect until it is ready to be served. After that the sommeliers will taste the dishes and consider which wine to pair it with and then the juice is developed.

**ASI:** Do you have a favorite pairing on your current menu?

**CD:** We like to work with Champagne for our pairings. Currently we are serving NV Eric Taillet Le Bois de Binson (100% Pinot Meunier). This Champagne has been barrel fermented, followed by an additional 48 months of lees-aging and finished as extra-brut with only 1.5 grams of sugar. The complexity of this Champagne, with its depth and richness, without losing the freshness and acidity, is a beautiful combination with our bread serving; a fried bread pancake with caramelised onion, aged cheese, and truffle.



# The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award

## The man who opened the door to a new style of wine service

**“Basset helped change the perception of sommeliers from aloof to modern wine professionals seeking to enrich their customer’s experience.”**

**G**érard Basset’s legacy permeates the world of sommellerie. Even those sommeliers unfamiliar with his name, or unaware of his titles (which were many) have benefitted from his work and dedication to his vocation. Basset, who passed away from cancer in 2019, is the only person to simultaneously hold the distinction of being a Master of Wine, Master Sommelier, and an MBA in Wine Business. However, these are just a few of his distinctions which also include the Officer of the Order of the British Empire and the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World (2010), the latter a title that he had long competed for, before finally winning in

Chile, with his loving wife Nina and son Romané in attendance.

While his other accomplishments are too many to list, his legacy extends beyond the mere words found on a resumé. Indeed, Basset helped change the perception of sommeliers from aloof, often intimidating traditionalists to modern wine professionals seeking to enrich their customer’s experience via informed guidance presented with humility, empathy, and an unwavering desire to serve: qualities he passed onto the many sommeliers he educated and mentored throughout his life.

In 2021, Nina and Romané Basset, along with Lewis Chester, a trusted friend of Gérard, created The Gérard



Basset Foundation, which offers scholarships and grants to people working in the sommelier field and wine industry who like Gérard have a passion for learning and sharing knowledge. The Gérard Basset Foundation has grown rapidly since its inception. As Nina Basset says “Romy (Romané) and I had never envisaged something as ambitious as what the ‘Foundation’ has become, but with Lewis’s involvement and complete commitment, as well as the hard work of our co-founding partner Alexander Lushnikov (Sasha), and the support of our fantastic trustees Jancis Robinson OBE MW and Ian Harris MBE, it has grown into something wide-reaching and special, of which we are immensely proud.”

Nina and Romané manage the day-to-day administration, providing them an opportunity to liaise with their scholars and grantees, but are quick to point out the immense contributions of all involved. According to Nina “we could not have achieved this without such a passionate and committed team, which also includes Liv Woodhouse, who brilliantly organises the Golden Vines Awards alongside Lewis and Sasha, and Vipool Shah, who manages all of the financial aspects, and Philip Sheikh, who is responsible for our creative assets. Special credit must go to Lewis, as our main fundraiser and the impetus behind what the Gérard Basset Foundation has become - we wouldn’t be here without him, for which we are very grateful and also our two fellow, brilliant trustees, Jancis and Ian. We are immensely privileged to have them be so committed and involved too.”

Basset was known for his openness and welcoming demeanour; Jancis Robinson, in a documentary about Gérard’s life (created by 67 Pall Mall) says “Gérard opened the door for a new style of wine service”. According to Nina Basset “Gérard



wanted to ensure that he, as a sommelier, offered a service to the guests that was friendly, open and unstuffy. He wanted his guests to trust him and feel they could discuss their wine choices with him and not feel overwhelmed by the list. He wanted wine to be a shared and greatly enjoyed experience.”

Considering the stereotype of sommeliers in the past century, Basset’s approach was in its own way revolutionary. It was said by many that Gérard loved people and was seen as a mentor and inspiration to a whole generation of

**“He (Gérard) wanted his guests to trust him and feel they could discuss their wine choices with him and not feel overwhelmed by the list. He wanted wine to be a shared and greatly enjoyed experience.”**

- Nina Basset



Jeannie Cho Lee MW

## “Bassets approach was in its own way revolutionary.”



Gérard Basset is awarded title of Best Sommelier of the World alongside wife Nina, and son, Romané

young sommeliers, eager to learn their craft under his tutelage and guidance. According to Nina “he not only inspired them, but he also empowered them and put a huge amount of responsibility on their young shoulders, but always under his watchful eye... as a result they flourished because they felt trusted and supported by him.

Basset’s mentorship was particularly strong within the ASI family. He was known as a patriarch within the association as not only did he act for a period as the Association’s Secretary General, and subsequently as Technical Director, but many ASI sommeliers also looked to him for mentorship and guidance. This familial relationship with ASI was a major factor in the family’s decision to create the ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement

Award. Nina Basset elaborates “he loved being part of the ASI family. Family to him was everything and so it is an honour for Romy and me to continue remembering Gérard and his love for ASI with this joint award.

The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award: The award which is designed to honour the work of someone that over their career gave back to the sommelier profession, is in recognition of an individual not just based on their resumé. Nina Basset says, “for me personally it is about their passion, their love of sommellerie, the people within it, and their ability to share their experience, their knowledge and their expertise in a kind and honest manner and to inspire professionalism, kindness and generosity in others.” Supporting the selection of this year’s recipient was a prestigious judging panel including Jancis Robinson OBE MW - a dear friend of the Basset family, as well as a Trustee of the Gérard Basset Foundation; Jeannie Cho Lee MW, another longstanding friend of Gérard’s; and Alice Feiring, acclaimed journalist and wine writer. Of the panel Nina says, “I know Gérard would be especially pleased to see three such influential, expert women judging this year as he was inspired by each of them in different ways throughout his career.”

At a ceremony held in conjunction with this year’s ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in Paris, Italian Giuseppe Vaccarini was presented

with the award. Hosting the event at the contest was befitting as both Basset and Vaccarini were recipients of the title of Best Sommelier of the World and according to Nina the contest had special meaning to him.

She says “Gérard loved competing. He loved studying, testing himself and he loved the excitement of preparing to compete, and of being amongst other competitors.

The Best Sommelier of the World title eluded him many times and it became a personal challenge and goal to achieve the title - he was so proud to eventually win in Chile. The fact that we awarded Giuseppe the ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award at the ASI Best Sommelier of World contest is very special to us. It is during a contest that Gérard loved being involved with and doing so amongst his fellow sommeliers and the broader sommelier family which he held so dear. For us it is simply the best place to be, where we feel closest to Gérard. Thus, it is the right event to award the winner of such a personal and special award.”



## An Interview with Giuseppe Vaccarini, 2023 ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient



Giuseppe Vaccarini

Giuseppe Vaccarini has been a fixture of ASI for decades. The Lombardy (Italy) born Vaccarini, ascended to the heights of sommellerie when he won the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World in 1978. Vaccarini is an advocate for education. While working for many prestigious restaurants in Italy Vaccarini also dedicated himself to teaching others, in Italy and abroad, about restaurant and hotel management and sommellerie. His teaching credentials included collaborations with hotel schools and universities in Italy, and around the world. Following a stint as ASI Secretary General, he served two terms as ASI President (1996 to 2004), and in 2007 founded ASPI, the *Associazione della Sommellerie Professionale Italiana*, which he has served as President. In his current role as Director of the ASI Exams committee he has been at the forefront of the development of the ASI Diploma and the recently launched ASI Certifications.

**ASI:** What does it mean to you to be recognised with such a prestigious award?

**Giuseppe Vaccarini (GV):** I am touched. Receiving an award for my long career is certainly a recognition that pleases me and one that makes me proud. I probably, could suggest, my tombstone reads about my "indomitable" desire to open up the world to the profession and culture of sommellerie.

However, this Lifetime Achievement Award in addition to being a recognition of my life's work, which makes me proud, also imposes on me an obligation to continue on this path in an even stronger, more professional way, always in search of the highest quality.

**ASI:** Describe the relationship you had with Gérard?

**GV:** Since the first day we met in Paris in 1992, at an international sommelier competition, Gérard and I always had a relationship based on mutual respect and professional esteem.

**ASI:** What qualities in Gérard do you think are also reflected in yourself?

**GV:** Both of us have been credited with changing the perception of wine service around the world, but also with providing extensive training, tastings, and mentorship to multiple generations of young sommeliers.

**ASI:** As you look back on your career, what do you want the global sommelier community to remember about Giuseppe Vaccarini and his impact on sommellerie?

**GV:** If I were to rollback the film that is my life, I would first mention my impact on the evolution of Italian, and international sommellerie. I have been described as a pioneer, since I have been passionate about wine, gastronomy, and approached the world of sommellerie, when I was a very young man in Italy, at a time when the term "sommelier" was still unknown.

Ultimately, I would like to be remembered for my curiosity, which stimulated me to continue studying and deepening the subject, my proverbial tenacity which allowed me to continue in the profession and overcome the most difficult moments and my vision of the development of the profession and my belief in young people coming after me.

**ASI:** Why is it special to be presented this award at the Best Sommelier of the World contest in Paris?

**GV:** The ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in Paris is the ideal stage to communicate important things and to make the values of sommeliers known to young and old all over the world, but it is also a time to thank those who have contributed to its development with an award that recalls the name of a great person who dedicated his entire life to it; namely Gérard Basset.



# Raimonds Tomsons

is the  
ASI 2023  
Best  
Sommelier  
of the  
World.

FEATURE ARTICLE



Raimonds Tomsons

There were just four competitors remaining on the large stage of Paris's La Defense Arena waiting to learn which of them would be competing for the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World in front of a crowd of more than 4 000 people in attendance, and thousands more watching via livestream around the world. The final four were all amongst the favourites, although the heavy weight of a nation laid upon the shoulders of France's own Pascaline Lepeltier. Denmark's Nina Jensen and Latvia's Raimonds Tomsons had been in this situation before, both competing in the finals of the previous ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in Antwerp, Belgium. The other amongst the final four was Reeze Choi of China, himself no stranger to competing at the highest level of sommellerie.

As host Vincent Ferniot announced Lepeltier's name as the fourth-place finisher a collective moment of anguish came across the mostly French crowd of wine lovers in attendance before a raucous round of applause erupted in the arena. As Lepeltier exited the stage with grace with many in the audience wiping away tears between claps and chants of 'Pascaline' the stage had been set for a grand finale with Choi taking the stage first, followed by Jensen, and Tomsons.

Choi performed admirably, entertaining and winning over the crowd with his modest charm and affable nature, but by the end it became clear the finale was a contest between two heavyweights of sommellerie.

Raimonds Tomsons is the ASI 2023 Best Sommelier of the World





Jensen had previously finished second at both the Best Sommelier of Europe & Africa contest and the Best Sommelier of the World contest in Antwerp. Tomsons had previously won the Best Sommelier of Europe & Africa and finished third behind Jensen and winner Marc Almert of Germany at the previous Best Sommelier of the World contest.

In the end both Jensen and Tomsons delivered near flawless final performances, showing a remarkable grace under pressure. Ultimately, William Wouters announced “the winner is Raimonds Tomsons.” And with that the world had a new sommelier superstar!

**ASI:** You are now the reigning ASI Best Sommelier of the World. Have you had time to absorb this?

**Raimonds Tomsons (RT):** For the first couple days it was a bit like a dream. I was a bit in disbelief. I had to ask my wife ‘is this a dream or real?’ Now that I am back to work, and trying to get back to normal life, the feeling is now unbelievable

**ASI:** How are you dealing with the attention?

**RT:** To be honest, I was not expecting all the attention and hype. I received an immense amount of positive and kind greetings and congratulations. This is of course really positive, but I probably was not ready for the intense attention of the press and media. Thankfully after the title was announced Marc (Marc Almert) gave me some good advice and my friends and colleagues at Barents Wine Collectors are helping me to manage the press.

**ASI:** How did you handle the pressure of competition?

**RT:** In this case the pressure leading into the contest was positive. I must thank my wife and family, my work family as well as the French

association (USDF) under the direction of Philippe Faure-Brac. The way Philippe and his amazing team organised and carried out the whole week took a lot of pressure off. They arranged some days off so we could relax a little bit. Also, of course, the organisation of the grand finale, in an arena filled with more than 4 000 people, was amazing. We speak of this like an Olympic event and thanks to the organisation, and the atmosphere in the arena, it felt like that.

**ASI:** When did you think winning this title was possible?

**RT:** The dream began in 2010, in Chile. It was my first world competition. I was very unexperienced and still quite young. I witnessed Gerard Basset. God bless him. I thought to myself, I want to be not like him. Obviously, I can’t be exactly like him, but I did want to stand on that podium like him. From that point on I started to build a plan for this vision. The turning point was 2016 in Mendoza when I qualified for the semi-finals, for the first time, ultimately finishing seventh, which was a great accomplishment for someone from Latvia and the Baltics. From

that moment I started to believe in myself, and I really started to believe that this is not a dream. It was really something that was possible which was confirmed by my success at the 2017 Best Sommelier of Europe contest in Vienna.

**ASI:** You went into Antwerp as a favourite. What did you learn from that experience?

**RT:** There was an immense amount of pressure on my shoulders in 2019 in Belgium. We all witnessed what happened there. I have no excuses for my final performance. This was a very painful but also very good lesson. I realised, I did not pay enough attention to my mental and physical health. I also realised with all the obstacles such as family life, work, and all the different things you need to manage, you need to have a good plan and you must stick to it. It was all too much in Belgium, but I learned how to handle it, thanks also to visiting a therapist who helped me to get rid of the trauma of Belgium. I also took time off with my family in the Maldives before this contest. This allowed me to come to the contest in a very positive frame of mind,

and in very good physical condition. As the competition drew closer there were some doubts, but that's just normal. We are human beings, not robots. But, thankfully, at the end of the day, everything went according to plan.

**ASI:** You had some great competitors alongside you in the finale, none of whom are from countries with long histories of wine production. How do you account for this?

**RT:** First, I think Scandinavia has always been comprised of economically wealthy, small countries with great wine cultures, and great restaurant scenes. This along with access to diverse wines

from around the world gives us an advantage. We also don't have this kind of patriotic attitude, emotional attachment, to our own wines, like some sommeliers from wine producing nations do. From that perspective being from China, Latvia, and Denmark our minds are free, and not biased by history, and maybe that gives us an advantage. We also, with respect to this contest, didn't have the pressure of being a French person, competing in Paris, like Pascaline did.

**ASI:** What's next for Raimonds Tomsons?

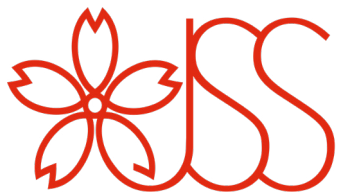
**RT:** Good question. As I look around me at the walls of my office which are still covered with

wine region maps and printouts of information about wine, I must ask myself that question. This is a little bit of a joke as I do have some plans which include giving back to the industry. I want to motivate other young sommeliers who are considering competing at this level. I'd also like to be a part of the ASI family, although I'm not sure in what capacity yet. Of course, I will continue to develop the businesses we have here in Latvia. We have a great fine dining restaurant, are building a nice portfolio of wines for our distribution business, and will be opening a really nice showroom and shop here in Riga soon.



**“I started to believe in myself, and I really started to believe that this is not a dream.”**





JAPAN  
SAKE AND SHOCHU  
MAKERS  
ASSOCIATION

The cherry blossom season at the end of March is particularly favorable for the foreign travelers to visit Japan. There are many visitors who are interested in learning more about Japanese beverages. JSS has an information center in the heart of Tokyo to offer visitors an experience of Japanese sake and shochu, authentic Japanese national alcoholic beverages.

The entrance to the JSS Information Center is decorated with a cedar ball, the symbol of the sake brewery. A big wooden tub for brewing sake is also displayed on the ceiling to give visitors a sense of scale.

The interior is like a small museum with sake barrels, paddles used to stir sake during fermentation, bottles of sake and shochu, and beautiful lacquerware and ceramic vessels on square wooden shelves. Two large screens constantly provide videos for production and a journey to the breweries and distilleries. Actual samples of raw materials for sake and shochu will help deepen your knowledge.

We have a tasting bar for visitors offering about 100 items of sake, shochu, and awamori. The tasting lineup consists of a wide variety of daiginjo, ginjo, Junmai, aged, sparkling sake from across the country.

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The JSS Information Center provides visitors with helps on any questions they may have regarding sake and shochu. For those looking for the latest information on experiencing sake and shochu in Japan, our staff can recommend breweries, distilleries, and events to visit.

We aim to create a place where visitors can experience something new and exciting about sake and shochu every time they visit.

Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center  
1-6-15 Nishishinbashi, Minato-ku  
Tokyo 105-0003, Japan

Hours: 10am – 6pm weekdays

+81-3-3519-2091

[jss-info@japansake.or.jp](mailto:jss-info@japansake.or.jp)

[japansake.or.jp/sake/en/Jss/information-center/](http://japansake.or.jp/sake/en/Jss/information-center/)





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## YOUR SUSTAINABILITY CREDIBILITY: PRO TIP

It's time to add one more item to your list of sommelier must-haves: a firm grasp of the role sustainability plays in a wine's quality and value. Customers want to know how sustainability fits in—and they're willing to pay for it.

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This one-hour course explores all areas of sustainable winegrowing and winemaking and helps wine professionals develop and test their understanding of California's sustainability initiatives. Participants gain first-hand knowledge about the practices making the greatest impact - from viticulture to winemaking.

California Wines and the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA) joined forces to create the California Sustainable Winegrowing Ambassador Course, an online programme that has certified more than 4,000 wine professionals from over 120 countries since 2015.

Accessible at [ambassador.discovercaliforniawines.com](https://ambassador.discovercaliforniawines.com)

the course is available at no charge as a stand-alone credential or as part of Capstone California, the comprehensive professional curriculum for California Wines.

Customer demand for information on sustainable wines is growing. Wine professionals who understand and can explain the key facts behind sustainability will lead their profession, and will join the thousands of growers and producers who are committed to our sustainable future.



Wine Institute's Export Program supports California Wines worldwide with a comprehensive calendar of education, marketing and promotional activities in **27 COUNTRIES** across the globe. The California Wines Export Program offers a robust calendar of seminars, market visits, tastings for trade, media and consumers and participation in international wine exhibitions. A team of **20 GLOBAL REPRESENTATIVES** conduct marketing programs for more than **250 WINE BRANDS EXPORTED TO OVER 140 COUNTRIES.**



# Somm Perspectives



*Chef Sang Hoon Degeimbre*



*European Lobster, Geranium and Jangajji tomatoes*

## From corkscrew to clever: Two sommeliers' journeys into the kitchen

**B**elgium diners are aware of Chef Sang Hoon Degeimbre prowess in the kitchen. The celebrated chef of L'Air du Temps, a restaurant set in a bucolic setting 50 kilometres southeast of Brussels, Belgium, has garnered a two-star Michelin rating for his restaurant, renowned for its artistic plating, and use of local ingredients. While the restaurant and country hotel are considered a national treasure, Degeimbre, who was born in Korea before being adopted and raised by Belgian parents, had originally planned to be a pharmacist, before later studying butchery and eventually transitioning to life as a chef.

Despite a passion for food, Degeimbre originally couldn't get hired as a chef and began life in the restaurant world as a waiter. It wouldn't be long before he turned his attention to wine. Degeimbre says, "I wanted more. I needed to improve myself. Knowledge is my quest. I tasted wine, for the first time, at the age of eighteen. It was a Chassagne-Montrachet from the 1969 vintage. It was amazing. A few days later, I tasted Chateau de

Marbuzet Saint-Estèphe 1975. To my inexperienced palate, it tasted horrible. I decided from this point on to discover why are there so many differences from a product produced from the same fruit. I started to study by myself and do a lot of tasting practice. By the time I reached the age of twenty-three I was not only a sommelier but finished in third place at the Best Sommelier of Belgium contest.



**"I wanted more. I needed to improve myself. Knowledge is my quest."**

Chef, Jure Tomič of Ošterija Debeluh in Slovenia was born into the culinary world. His journey to becoming a sommelier and chef, ran a little more concurrently than Chef Degeimbre. Chef Tomič's mutual love for food and wine came naturally. His father owned a bakery, which is where he would be introduced to many skills he still uses today. According to Tomič "it gave me the basis of knowledge to even allow myself to think about the passions, level of cooking, I would upgrade to later in my career. Even then, as a young boy, I fell in love with everything related to food, especially because from the bakery everything smelled so good." Tomič would later go on to study culinary arts, but he had another passion fermenting at the same time. Tomič grew up in a vine growing region of Slovenia, and he soon realised he also had a passion for wine. As he was getting his culinary education, he began intensive wine training, completing all three levels of the sommelier program offered by the Sommelier Association of Slovenia. He says "I later discovered, and tasted, the best wines around the world, and with this experience I was convinced that I could build on the rising wine culture in my home region. Due to my professional contact with wines, my passion became a lifestyle and my everyday life. When the opportunity came, we opened a family restaurant and Ošterija Debeluh was born."

Of his decision to move from the floor to the kitchen, it was an easy one for Degeimbre, as he says "I had one idea, a vision. That was to be a chef." Tomič on the other hand says, "over the years, I have alternately invested a lot of energy in both sides of the restaurant. However, we changed the type and style of food offered in the restaurant, moving from traditional Balkan dishes to modern cuisine,



Ošterija Debeluh

it was time to focus more on the kitchen, and creating dishes. Thankfully my sommelier training allowed me to complement them perfectly with wines. This is a winning combination. Even today, I am as devoted to the sommelier's apron as I am to the chef's cap!"

Both Degeimbre and Tomič are advocates of local ingredients, but the question arises, 'how does this apply to their beverage program?' While Degeimbre has a background as a sommelier, and continues to love discovering new products, both food and drink, he leaves the beverage list in control of Head Sommelier Stéphane Dardenne, who was recently crowned Best Sommelier of Belgium. Dardenne says, "Belgium is currently experiencing a real boom in wine production. Sometimes with all the lobbying involved to place local wines on the list, I decided to consider my selection of Belgian products and wines with the same level of scrutiny as I do for those produced outside our borders. I try to highlight products that convey certain ethical, biological, human values, resulting from cutting-edge and very personal productions. It will not be possible to drink with me



Jure Tomič





Stéphane Dardenne

the latest sparkling wine awarded in a competition, but rather you will have access to one that will really question us on a deep sense of quality, complexity, and exclusivity. Fortunately for me, local initiatives of this kind are numerous and very dynamic!"

As for Tomič he says, "we are known for creating bold flavours and our wine list is just as bold. Our philosophy comes from the local environment, where we want to preserve local flavours made

from autochthonous ingredients and upgrade the traditional recipes of our grandmothers. With modern techniques but not overly complicated plates, Ošterija Debeluh devotes itself to the basic flavours of the ingredients. In addition to viticulture, our region is rich in vegetables, fruit, fish and meat. It is not difficult to combine such fresh ingredients with wines, and we are proud that our wine list always has over 480 labels... we pay special attention to our local wines and in every season we pair at least one tasting menu with local wines. In recent years, quite a few of our local winemakers have grown from small family vineyards to bigger farms that work exclusively with viticulture and winemaking. I am pleased that our winemakers are standing alongside the other, better-known Slovenian wine regions. Many of them are also my personal friends and I can say that we have grown alongside each other, hand in hand". As for the wines themselves, Tomič highlights local orange wines and local sparkling wines that showcase lifted acidity, reflective of the terroir, made from both traditional sparkling wine varietals and local

grapes such as Rumeni Plavec, Zametna Crnina, and Blaufränkisch."

While Degeimbre has given up sommelier duties fully to Dardenne, Tomič prefers to stay connected to the floor. As he says "I prefer to maintain contact with the guests. It's that bond that builds into friendships. I also still do most of the work related to the purchase of wine myself, even though our employees are constantly being trained in the field of sommellerie."

With sommeliers at the helm of the kitchen it is not surprising that food and wine pairing plays a central role at both restaurants. Tomič says of his process, "when creating a dish, I already have the wine pairing in mind, but the dish is always born first and then we create the pairing. It is also for the obvious reason, that we first adapt the wine to the seasonal, local ingredients. With the range of wines on our list, the choice of pairing is almost never a problem. However, it is most important that there is a coordination of the kitchen and the sommelier. Of course, there are also special occasions when we want to present a certain wine

FEATURE ARTICLE

Somm Perspectives: From Somm to Chef



and then we can also work in the opposite direction. Above all, we like to support our winemakers when the region wants to present itself with certain premium wines. ”

As for Tomič's favourite food and wine pairing, it is their signature beef tartare dish. Formed into to the shape of cake, the dish consists

**“We are known for creating bold flavours and our wine list is just as bold.”**

of beef tartare marinated in nutmeg broth and topped with goose liver and quail egg, seasoned with coffee. According to Tomič “it pairs perfectly with the 2013 Cuvée Extreme from Bizeljsko, Lower Styria, Slovenia which is made from five white varietals including Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Traminer, Muscat Ottonel, and Riesling. It has incredible structure and body, and exceptional freshness for this vintage. This combination is always worth a visit! ”

Dardenne's preferred pairing highlights the local spring lobster season. According to Dardenne “Belgian lobster has a slightly sweeter flesh compared to Breton lobster due to the nature of the waters in which it lives. At the restaurant the chefs compliment it with geranium and tomatoes preserved in jangaji (pickles with soy sauce). While the classic pairing with lobster is white wine, we prefer to accompany it with a rather lively, nervous young red wine. I am thinking of particularly fine German Pinot Noir from the Baden region to pair with this dish. The floral and aromatic notes of the wine work wonderfully with the geranium while the wine's roasted notes, provided by time aging in barrel, match perfectly with the meaty character of the preserved tomatoes. It is quite an experience!”

While the journeys led them from the floor to the kitchen, the love of food and wine remains strong for both Chef Degeimbre and Chef Tomič, evidenced by the quality of the gastronomic experience at both their restaurants.





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# The Language of Food & Wine Pairing

## An Interview with Evan Goldstein, Master Sommelier



Evan Goldstein

**M**aster Sommelier Evan Goldstein says of himself he speaks “trilingual times 3:” He “speaks” three languages – wine, food, and wine-and-food pairings – and can do so in three languages to boot – French, Portuguese, and English.

Goldstein is an author, educator, and one of only a few hundred Master Sommeliers in the world. He is also a founding Board Member of BUSA – the Best USA Sommelier Association – co-owner of two wine companies, Full Circle Wine Solutions and Master the World™, in addition to being the first Master Sommelier employed with a North American major league sports team, the San Francisco Giants of Major League Baseball.

While now a noted sommelier he began his hospitality career in the kitchen, working at prestigious restaurants in the San Francisco area before moving to the floor, working as sommelier with Chef Joy Goldstein, who also happens to be his mom, at the celebrated Square One. He and his mother would later also partner on the book *Wine and Food Pairing and Perfect Pairings Practical Advice for Partnering Wine with Food* (University of California Press).

**“When it is done well there is nothing more outstanding from an overall dining experience than to have great wines with great cuisine.”**





**ASI:** How important is it for a sommelier to be able to pair food and wine?

**Evan Goldstein (EG):** The answer is not as obvious as the question might imply. The basic reality is for most people when enjoying wine at restaurants it is part of the great orchestration called a meal. I've always believed wine makes food taste better and vice-versa. Certainly, there are times when you can enjoy either in a vacuum, but more often we enjoy them together. As such being an intermediary between the guests dining with you and the kitchen, your job as sommelier is to ensure that things work well together.

Having sommeliers is important as chefs, by in large (and I do know many chefs that know a lot about wine), don't have formal wine training, or if they did, it was a couple days of classes early in their school career. Conversely, there are some sommeliers that are too absorbed only on the wine side.

The best sommeliers can be equally conversant in both elements. They may not be chefs themselves, but they understand what food is and how it is prepared. They also know how wine is not all created equally, and there are certain characteristics, attributes of wine, that are magnets to certain genres of food and your job as a sommelier is to be orchestrator of all this. When it is done well there is nothing more outstanding from an overall dining experience than to have great wines with great cuisine and everything is running on all cylinders. Conversely nothing is worse than getting the opposite experience because someone didn't know what was going on with respect to food and wine.

**ASI:** When you, and other sommeliers, are recommending food and wine pairing do you believe in absolutes or is there



*Fortified Dessert Wine with Hazelnut Torte with Coffee Buttercream*

**“I think my own most powerful food and wine experiences, were often unexpected and unforced.”**

more than one correct answer to any food, wine pairings situation?

**EG:** I believe in guidelines not rules, as all of our, and our guest's palates are different. As such we don't measure certain core attributes (sourness, heat, sweetness etc.) the same way, so it is therefore impossible for absolutes. There are certain things we can warn people about. If you have a very dry wine with sweet food, for example, we will all have a similarly adverse reaction. If you have a piece of fish, full of fish oil, with a super tannic red wine we'll all have the same (unpleasant) reaction.

Bar those extremes, most everything is a guideline. I like to try and share characteristics and qualities and articulate what



*Sparkling Dessert Wine with  
Lemony Ricotta Soufflé Cake  
with Raspberry Sauce*

**“I do believe in the adage ‘what grows together goes together.’”**

**ASI:** In 2010 François Chartier released “Taste Buds and Molecules” which places emphasis on finding flavour bridges via the organic compounds found in both wine and food. Does this level of depth of analysis of the flavour compounds of food and wine play into your pairing thought process? Do you focus more on structure or is there another guiding factor?

**EG:** I know Chartier well. I think it is amazing the way he thinks about things, but I also worry that the average Joe and Mary diner might find this approach scary and make them think deeper than they want to. I have tried a lot of the pairings that he, (Chartier) puts out there and they do intrinsically work very well. Part of that is the radical nature of what he does which fits in line with the molecular gastronomy, deconstruction movement.

While I don't systematically subscribe to this very molecular approach, I also do believe in flavour layering. I really enjoy how Niki Segnit (The Flavour Thesaurus and Lateral Cooking, Bloomsbury Publishing) approaches bringing flavours together. She does not link flavours via chemistry, or pure science, but she simply shows how certain flavours go together.

is likely to happen and not be so prescriptive, but that said, I also don't believe in preaching anarchy. I think we underestimate the average person's common sense. Our job is to help steer them into the right lane and give them some validation and permission.

**ASI:** How would you describe your methodology when it comes to food and wine pairing? Is it very analytic, scientific in process or do you place more emphasis on other intangible factors?

**EG:** Honestly, as sommeliers, we should take both a scientific and cultural approach. It is easy to take it over the top and overthink and dissect it scientifically. I do believe in the adage “what grows together goes together.” People enjoy

these pairings rooted in cultural traditions. By the same token, there are certain fundamental building blocks, with respect to food and wine pairing. It is important for sommeliers to understand core elements and core attributes and what they mean. This will allow them to know why food and wine pairings can go in different directions. The sommelier should then give their customer the information to go on the path of food and wine discovery and decide which way they want to follow, avoiding being overly prescriptive, but also respecting there are these guidelines. As an aside, taking food and wine pairing to the 'nth degree' can also scare customers off and take the joy out of it. Food and wine should be joyful.



That said, I don't get caught up in it (flavour bridges) although I will admit in certain genres of food, specifically molecular gastronomy, Chartier's approach is more critical and makes sense... I am a believer in the basic structure of taste, sweetness, sourness, saltiness, bitterness of food and wine and how they relate to each other. I don't believe hook, line, and sinker in umami, but we can discuss that more another time. I also believe texture and heat is important, literal temperature and Scoville heat units. Understanding those basic structural elements and the way they interact together is also an approach I think most guests can understand, so I tend to stay away from those higher planes.

**ASI:** If our roles as sommeliers is about curating experience, how does emotion and situation play into food and wine pairing?

**EG:** Honestly, I think 90 per cent of guests' experience relates back to the event, who they were dining with, what the occasion was, how much the sommelier played into that or how much even the sommelier knew to step back. I think my own most powerful food and wine experiences, were often unexpected and unforced. The people behind the curtain, so to speak, knew when to step back and just let it 'rock n' roll'. I think that is an enormous talent. I guarantee if you sit around the table and ask what everyone's best food and wine experiences were, the answers generally are very eclectic and rarely involved a vertical of Lafite, for example.

**ASI:** When you are having food and wine at home. Is it wine first or food first?

**EG:** Very often being a former chef, it is starting with food and specifically I am going to my local market and starting with the produce section, looking at what is seasonal. I build my meal around that and then the wine around that.

**ASI:** If you could pick any sommelier from anywhere in the world to do a degustation menu with wine pairings, who would it be?

**EG:** Hard question. I am going to counter what I said before and say my good friend in Barcelona, Ferran Centelles, the former sommelier and wine director at El Bulli. A bit of irony as there he dealt only with molecular gastronomy. That said, he is incredibly charming, and very unintimidating, but because he has traveled so much and knows so much about food and drink, I would feel incredibly comfortable having him not only select the wines but all the other beverages. He knows so much about cider, sake, and spirits and because he worked in such a challenging environment, he really had to work harder than everyone else when it comes to food and drink pairing.

**ASI:** If there was one chef and restaurant in the world, you would want to be the sommelier doing the pairings which would it be?

**EG:** I don't even know where he is now, but I would say Chef George Morrone. George got his start at the Fifth Floor in San Francisco. He is the only chef I have ever known, outside perhaps the late, great, Charlie Trotter and my mom, that really understood food and really understood wine and the way they go together. I can't think of any other chef that took as many restaurants from no Michelin stars to a Michelin star or a four-star rating to a five-star rating. I would love to work with him.

**ASI:** What is the toughest ingredient or dish to pair with wine?

**EG:** Ammonia, as found in really ripe cheese. When cheeses get very ripe and hit a level of ammonia, they can be incredibly pungent,



Syrah with Korean Short Ribs

which can be part of their charm, but makes them incredibly difficult to pair with wine. I am fearful of that. Give me fermented foods, artichokes, or asparagus. They are all child's play in comparison.

**ASI:** What is the best food and wine pairing of your life?

**EG:** My best experiences were in France. One was at the 3-star Michelin Maison Pic in Valence dining with the late great Gerard Jaboulet. Having never been to a 3-star Michelin restaurant before, it was a revelation to know that a '3-star' could be at once crisp yet still have a sense of local rusticity. The people understood the food and wine there and delivered it with so much care. It was also my first time encountering a cheese sommelier. Secondly dining at *Domaines Les Crayeres* in Reims with George Poirier. He introduced me to new Champagne and food combinations that I would have never thought about.

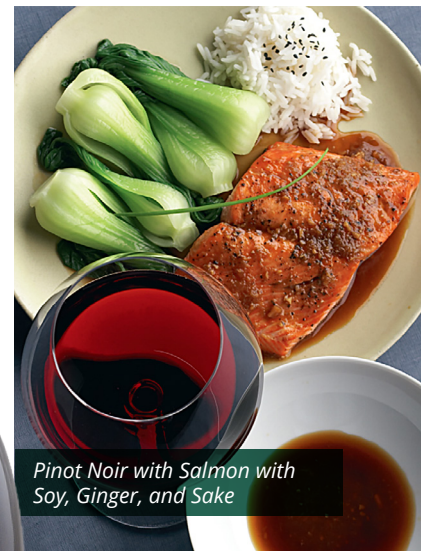
**ASI:** What is the worst food and wine combination you've tried?

**EG:** I won't name anyone, but I will say I have had a couple train wrecks from people trying to be shock jocks of cuisine in the kitchen and at the table, trying to match extremes of acid and extremes of sugar, for example. I walk out going what were they thinking?

**ASI:** What is your favourite beverage other than wine to pair with food and why?

**EG:** I like cider a lot including the off-dry styles from France and funkier dry versions from Spain. I also love sake, which currently I just have enough knowledge of to be dangerous. I like certain spirits, specifically Scotch whisky, as I like them in combination with certain cheeses and first courses. Of course, beer with cheese and genres of spicier foods is amazing. Admittedly I am not a fan of cocktail and food pairing.

2021 Melville Estate  
Pinot Noir, Sta.  
Rita Hills, California



### Evan's Tasting Notes

**Appearance:** Light, translucent, light ruby core with slightly pink rim

**Nose:** The nose is complex with tart red fruit such as raspberry, pomegranate and cherry. There are some floral elements, reminiscent of jasmine, a touch of inorganic earth and a saline character. The oak on the nose is minimal.

**Palate:** Immediately an herbal, nori, kelp-like character comes through along with some shrill red fruit which is just on the edge or ripeness. The wine is dry, and the acid is medium plus, almost high. Even though the alcohol says 14 percent on the label, I think really believe it is more likely about 13.5 per cent. The tannins are fine. The finish is long. This is a very good wine that needs a couple years to fully unravel.

### The Pairing: Roast Quail with Farro, Pomegranates and Wilted Greens

I chose this wine because it has elevated acidity, I know it is going to cut through heat, cut through salt, cut through richness, fat. As this wine is not super okay, I don't have to worry about the oak dominating the wine. I note because the tannins here are present, but super fine, I have some flexibility in terms of protein because I don't have to worry about counterbalancing the tannins, which means I can serve this wine with fish, shellfish, or poultry. Since there is no sugar, I want to minimise any sweetness in the dish, and I want no sweet sauces such as a glaze or reduction. My recommendation is a lightly roasted quail, that has been seasoned with some light herbs, accompanied by a side of farro tossed with pomegranate seeds and finished with some light, not too bitter or powerful, wilted greens with roasted garlic and a light drizzle of aged balsamic vinegar.





# *Hospitality Heroes*



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## MEET FINE DINING LOVERS' HOSPITALITY HEROES

Given recent turbulent times for the industry, we at Fine Dining Lovers wanted to celebrate those individuals or businesses that truly understand how hospitality can impact an experience.

Those that go above and beyond to make dining out extra special.

That's why we are launching our Hospitality Heroes list: 20 stars of the industry from across the globe who embody the noble art of service and are helping to shape the future of hospitality for the benefit of all.

Stars such as Amanda Cohen, the pioneering chef who has consistently challenged the status quo in the industry, abolishing tipping at her New York City restaurant Dirt Candy in favour of a fairer model that promotes better pay and work-life balance for staff. Or Neil Heshmat, a legend of the London restaurant scene, who has been working the dining room at Oslo Court Restaurant for over 40 years.

There are incredible stories of kindness, like the restaurant team that went out of its way to help a blind patron celebrate her birthday, making headlines around the world. There are grande dame restaurants, community restaurants and chefs, maître d's and restaurateurs for whom service is an all-consuming passion, shining beacons for all that is good about eating out.

The list was chosen by respondents to the recent Fine Dining Lovers Front of House Survey, which was distributed to over 10,000 hospitality workers and consumers. Respondents were asked to nominate a hospitality hero in addition to completing the survey. A long list was then whittled down to a final selection of 20 by the Fine Dining Lovers team.

Fine Dining Lovers' Hospitality Heroes list is available now as a free download. Let's celebrate the people who put the sparkle in service and make restaurants feel like home.

[WWW.FINEDININGLOVERS.COM/ARTICLE/HOSPITALITY-HEROES-LIST-DOWNLOAD](http://WWW.FINEDININGLOVERS.COM/ARTICLE/HOSPITALITY-HEROES-LIST-DOWNLOAD)

# Make Me a Match

## Iconic Dishes and their Perfect Pairings



Chef: Enrique Olvera



Sommelier: Marianna Ramirez

### About the Dish

Pujol's world famous Mole Madre, Mole Nuevo is a unique combination of a mole prepared daily (Mole Nuevo) and the mother sauce (Mole Madre), the latter made from blending in freshly made mole into a base mole, that is heated every dinner service. The result is a mole that over time evolves, becoming at once more complex and subtle. This dish which consists only of the sauces is a legendary dish not only in Mexico but around the culinary world.

### About the Pairing

This wine from Jeréz (Spain) has abundant aromas of dried fruits, and deep flavours that match the ingredients and flavours of the Mole Madre which include, for example, elements such as nuts and mature fruit, with moderate spiciness and delicate notes of chocolate. The Mole Nuevo has more acidity and is less sweet compared to the Mole Madre. Combining the two moles makes for an even more complex mix of flavours. The Jeréz lends flavour to the palate and adds to the depth of the Mole Madre, giving it roundness while also highlighting its ingredients.

### About the Sommelier

Marianna Ramirez, is from Puebla, Mexico. From an early age she has been interested in the wine universe. After finishing her education, she travelled and lived in many cities, all the while strengthening and refining her knowledge of wine. Since 2021 she has been the Beverage Director at Pujol, a place that gives her the freedom to try different things. As she says "I like that Pujol is a space that allows me to be creative. I feel confident in what I do, and the connection created between my vision and the philosophy of the restaurant."



**Restaurant:** Pujol  
**Chef:** Enrique Olvera  
**Sommelier:** Marianna Ramirez  
**The Dish:** Mole Madre, Mole Nuevo  
**The Pairing:** 2020 Ximenez-Spínola Pedro Ximénez 'Exceptional Harvest', Jeréz, Spain

MAKE ME A MATCH!

Iconic Dishes and their Perfect Pairings



### About the Dish

This dish consists of a toasted rice milk purée, basil and charred spring onion salsa, rice baked in fish stock, pan-fried fish, puffed rice, toasted rice powder, yuzu, a rice paper veil, basmati, and lemongrass spiced cream.

### About the Pairing

The 2009 Naude White, which is a blend of Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chenin Blanc works wonderfully for this dish as it's a complex wine with an array of flavours and great texture. On the nose its herbaceous characters compliment the basil and charred spring onion salsa. On the palate there are dried mango and dried apricots notes along with undertones of dried green citrus fruits and a hint of creme fraiche. The sweetness in the wine counteracts the acidity in the dish and elevates the flavours of the rice, while the wine's weighty mouthfeel can hold up to the meatiness of the line fish. The undertones of citrus keep your palate refreshed. The hope here is that the wine pairs on every aspect of the dish - a pairing in perfect balance.

### About the Sommelier

Victor Okolo is the award-winning sommelier at the critically acclaimed Salsify at The Roundhouse, in Camps Bay, Cape Town. Born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, he moved to South Africa in 2009. His consummate front-of-house demeanour paired with expert knowledge and genuine passion for wine sees him impress guests with his impeccable and innovative pairings. While he acknowledges that there are of course the basic rules and regulations to follow, he also knows when it's suitable to break them. Often



**Restaurant:** Salsify at The Roundhouse  
**Chef:** Ryan Cole  
**Sommelier:** Victor Okolo  
**The Dish:** A Study of Rice and Fish  
**The Pairing:** 2009 Adoro Wines Naudé White Blend, South Africa



Sommelier: Victor Okolo

allowing spontaneity and a sense of adventure to guide how he curates the wine list or pairs the restaurant's menu - a process he works on together with Salsify executive chef and owner, Chef Ryan Cole. In 2022, he was the recipient of the Eat Out Wine Service Award.



Chef: Ryan Cole

MAKE ME A MATCH!

Iconic Dishes and their Perfect Pairings

# A New Language of Wine?

## Relating wine information and knowledge to a new consumer

**M**adeline Puckett and the team behind Wine Folly revolutionised how wine information and wine knowledge are digested by a broader consumer base. They have used bold colourful design, the worldwide web and social media to take the language of wine out of its centuries' old slumber into a vibrant new era of reimagined ways of thinking about how sommeliers can relate wine information and knowledge. This wasn't lost on a trio of young New Zealand sommeliers eager to translate this language away from the prose of wine writers into the tweetable, shareable language of emojis. In fact, their business Wine-oji® seeks to eliminate words almost entirely.

For Puckett it is important to make a clear distinction between wine information and wine knowledge. Puckett says, "wine Information is the technical information (meta information) associated with a vintage of wine, while wine knowledge is the learning, know-how, practical, and theory around wine, that helps people understand what they like and how to find more about it.

With respect to wine information Puckett says, "at Wine Folly, we've found this information incredibly helpful and useful in order to critically assess and recommend wine." Wine Folly created its own



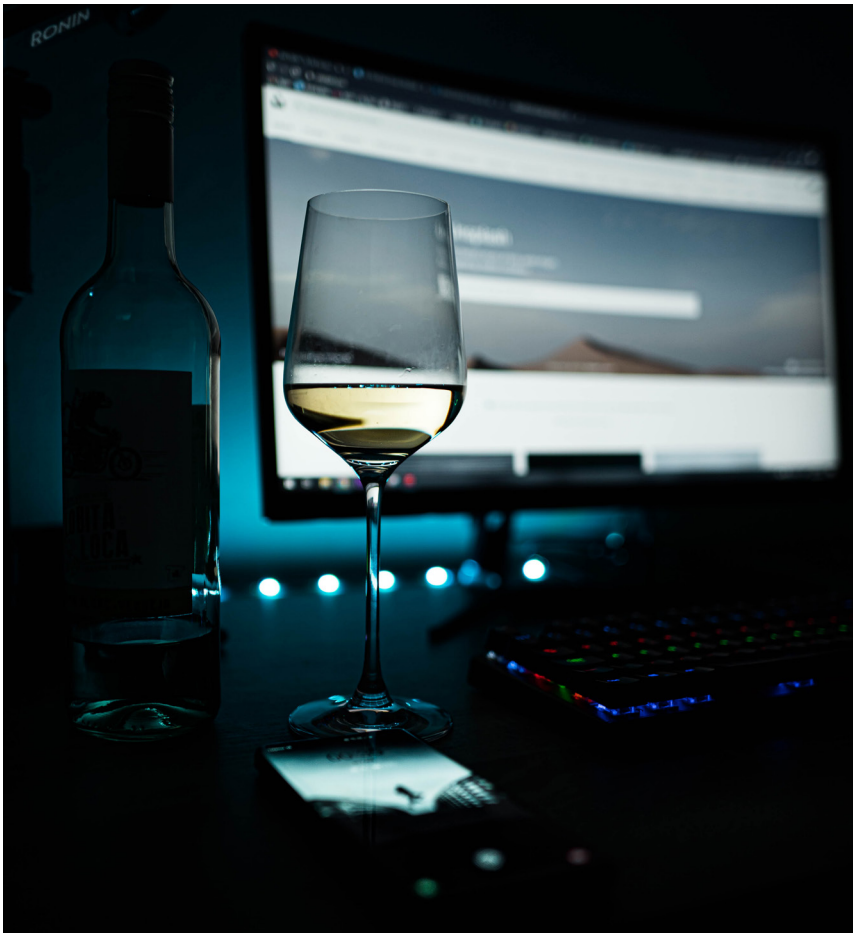
unique database, complete with its signature, distinctive graphics. The [database](#) tool they use allows them to share information about a wine with their wine club members and via QR codes for wines referenced in their videos. Puckett elaborates "it's so important to share high quality information that we made the tool free for wineries". The [tool](#) also allows wineries to share that information with their sommelier customers in a simple, consistent way.

In terms of wine knowledge, Puckett always starts from the perspective of why people want knowledge. Puckett says "for example, Wine Folly's wine resource has always included answers to questions that most traditional wine education resources do not. For example, someone might ask 'how many carbs in a glass of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc?' That question



Madeline Puckett





In an era when sentences have been reduced to acronyms and symbols, known as emojis, it is perhaps not surprising that enterprising New Zealand-based sommeliers, Maciej Zimny DipWSET, Josh Pointon DipWSET, founders of Noble Rot Wine Bar, along with their Head Sommelier and Restaurant Manager, Jessica Wood created Wine-oji®. As you might guess Wine-oji® is a tool used to communicate wine information via the use of emoji-like characters. With increasingly global nature of wine using a visual application that can transcend spoken language and can therefore be understood in any country, make sense, providing immediate understanding of wine for all wine lovers, regardless of their background.

According to Jessica Wood “deciphering what a wine tastes like for the average consumer has presented an opportunity for us to develop a new global concept for wine communication. We recognise that wine is a beverage which is notoriously complex and sometimes intimidating, and needs a modern, instant communication tool to help consumers take the guesswork out of choosing wine.”

Pointon elaborates “a visual profile saves time in identifying wine’s individual components, for example levels of acid or oak, or whether the wine is vegan. Because this process is so convenient, it further encourages consumers to branch out and explore alternative varieties and regions based on their taste preferences”.

The trio hope their new language will give consumers better understanding and enjoyment of wine based on their taste preferences using a language and communication style that has become part of our daily lives. According to co-founder Josh Pointon “Wine-oji® enables wine producers and retailers to

hints at a deeper intent of the reader, and it also asks us to think differently as sommeliers.”

And to answer the question, Puckett elaborates “if the wine has 15 grams per litre of residual sugar (RS) then it has 2.25 carbs per 5

ounce serving, assuming it’s a popular commercial-style brand of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, which often have about 10 to 15 g/l RS”. Of course, the team at Wine Folly have made a colourful chart for those who prefer not to do the math: [The Wine Folly Carb Chart](#).

To summarise, Puckett says “wine information helps us better understand what’s inside the bottle on a technical level. Wine knowledge helps us better guide the reader through the world of wine to gain confidence – answering simple questions that lead to greater concepts in wine”.

**“As you might guess Wine-oji® is a tool used to communicate wine information via the use of emoji-like characters.”**


provide a visual representation of their wine across their digital marketing platforms and website for selling wine online. Meanwhile at the cellar door, point of sales are enhanced through using printed Wine-oji materials for staff training and customer tasting, meaning a deeper, more prolonged engagement with the wines. The Wine-oji® profile helps wine drinkers identify individual aromas or flavours without the pressure of guessing the wine's characteristics incorrectly, making the whole process more engaging and fun."

Wine retailers are seen as a primary customer for the new company. According to Maciej Zimny "during our market research we posed the question: What tools do we currently provide to help anyone who buys wine to identify what's in the bottle? Buying wine at the supermarket can be overwhelming, facing a wall of wine - different labels, price points etc. What is out there to help consumers make a more informed choice? Since our initial supermarket trial period, those franchises who have chosen to engage with Wine-oji in-store at retail point of sale have enjoyed over 10% increase in sales of those wines using the Wine-oji Shelf Talker at retail point of sale... Wine-oji gives consumers the confidence to purchase wine based on their taste preferences, encouraging repeat sales of their favourite brands." Wood also believes their emojis have a place on wine lists as she says, "the profile presents exactly what's in the bottle, everyone can learn to pick individual characteristics and learn about a wine's structure, making it a very accessible tool for wine novices and experts alike."

As for the question "is the old-school wine review description dated?" Zimny responds "although comprehensive tasting notes work for professionals, they don't have much meaning for new wine drinkers. As a result, in an attempt to appeal to more consumers, wine language has been modified to be more poetic, using phrases which don't have much connection with wine itself. Another disadvantage is lack of scalability. Although most people can imagine what high acidity means, when describing a wine it's difficult to accurately translate complex terminology,

such as diminished, supporting, zesty, lively, refreshing. Very often, going through written descriptions of wine can be an intimidating experience, not being able to fully understand what you're buying or whether you will like it. In conclusion, wine language has become old fashioned and outdated, meaning that we are no longer communicating effectively about wine in a world where modern trends are important."





2018 LEEUWIN ESTATE  
**Art Series Shiraz**  
MARGARET RIVER  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA, SOUTH WEST AUSTRALIA

14%  
ABV

3.32  
pH

7.17  
TA

RS

**Growing Conditions**  
Winter of 2017 was typically wet and windy. Chardonnay was the first variety to experience bud burst in late August, followed by the Riesling and Cabernet through September. Flowering in all varieties was approximately ten days earlier than in vintage 2017. Conditions in spring were generally mild, with the usual showery and sunny periods resulting in excellent set across most varieties.  
Temperatures throughout summer were warm, with very few hot days. Veraison occurred two weeks earlier than in 2017. 2018 was a spectacular year for flowering of the local Marri trees, which kept birds away from the ripening vineyards.  
An excellent vintage with standout varieties being Riesling, Chardonnay, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon

**Harvest**  
Harvest commenced in the Riesling in the middle of February, followed by Chardonnay a week later and Sauvignon Blanc in the first weeks of March. Shiraz and Cabernet harvest commenced in the last week of March and into the third week of April. After



# Sommelier battle

## The influence of different vessels used in winemaking and ageing

Vessels are very important to define the style of wine. Some vessels, such as cement vats, stainless steel tanks, and wood, such as oak, are quite common, while others are starting to become trendier. Vinexposium asked three great ASI sommeliers, Heidi Mäkinen MW, Véronique Rivest, and Paz Levinson to select a vessel to present and defend, explaining its effects on a wine.

We asked each sommelier prior to the event to provide their insights on the effect of a vessel on the style of wine, and its ability to shine a light on the varietal, the wine's origin, and terroir.

The discussion was moderated by ASI President William Wouters, in front of a packed audience. Of the opportunity Wouters says “we have a great partnership with Vinexposium, which is only solidified by discussions like this which place sommeliers in front of an educated, global audience of wine professionals.”



Paz Levinson

**ASI:** What vessel did you select to present and defend at the recent Sommelier Battle at Vinexpo Paris? And why?

**Heidi Mäkinen (HM):** I will be defending concrete over stainless steel and/or oak barrels. I like how concrete allows the nature and the quality of the grapes to be reflected, yet also adds its influence on the primary aromas and the structure that the grapes solely would give to the wine. Concrete is not as fiercely neutral as stainless steel

is and often, the integration of the wine's structural elements is better compared to steel, thanks to the so-called breathing capacity of concrete. However, it does not add aromatic compounds to the wine, unlike oak barrels.

**Véronique Rivest (VR):** I chose wood (or oak as we'll concentrate on that mostly). In part because no one else wanted to and I like defending the underdogs. Also, because people's aversion to wood,

is mostly them not liking too much wood. Too much of anything is never good. We also have to stop making generalisations about wine. You can't just say, 'I hate wood.' You don't like great Burgundy? Or Rayas? They all use wood.

There are many advantages to using wood, when it's done sensibly, but I think one of the most significant is the slow micro-oxygenation it allows: the wines become more 'whole', more supple, better

integrated and more harmonious. I also believe it equips them better to withstand ageing and further exposure to oxygen.

**Paz Levinson (PL):** I didn't select my vessel per se. I was the last to choose a vessel to defend. Since stainless steel was not selected by Vero or Heidi, I got the challenge of defending it as an aging vessel.

I really like all types of aging vessels. For the discussion, I thought about wines that are aged in amphora as it would be an interesting discussion given so many producers are selecting using type of vessel. There are amazing and very complex wines made by aging in amphora, but for educational purposes we are keeping our discussion to oak, concrete or stainless steel, as amphora and concrete could be similar in terms of taste comparison.

Stainless steel is not fashionable today, as we witness many wineries coming back to concrete or using other vessels to ferment and age wine. While this is a trend that I have seen in many wineries, I think that for certain types of wine, stainless steel is excellent, and it can be the best choice. It really depends on the region and the style. In Argentina, concrete has been used for a long, long time so was integrated into the way of making the wine there. In the late 90s in Argentina, and many other wine regions, there was an invasion of stainless-steel tanks. Modernity arrived as stainless steel, never to leave again!

**ASI:** If we argue that fine wine reflects its terroir then why is your vessel the best at transmitting that to the final wine? Or is it? And, if that isn't your definition of fine wine, what is?

**HM:** It's impossible to take the human element out of winemaking, yet human input should be as considerate as possible. I feel concrete has great capacity to continue transmitting the story of place, the variety and the terroir. However, I don't think any type of vessel is the sole solution, or the right choice for all wines. Instead, I trust great winemakers to understand the nature and the quality of their grapes and their origin well enough to choose the best possible methods, to end up with a great, or at least, the best possible wine. Concrete is good

at supporting what's inherently there in the raw material, but it can also enhance it without masking it too much.

**VR:** Again, it depends a lot on how it is used. Of course, ageing in new, highly charred oak can overpower any expression of terroir. And let's not forget that terroir is not just a place: it is people and traditions. The making of barrels (and everything that comes before it, such as cutting the trees, cutting the "merrains") is quite an art and has evolved alongside grape growing and winemaking. I do think that sensible use of oak lets the wine and the place speak, by taming a bit of its more fruity, youthful character, and letting its complexity shine through.

**"Too much of anything is never good. We also have to stop making generalisations about wine."**

- *Véronique Rivest*



*Veronique Rivest*



## “Many winemakers start with what they have, or what they can get.”

- Paz Levinson

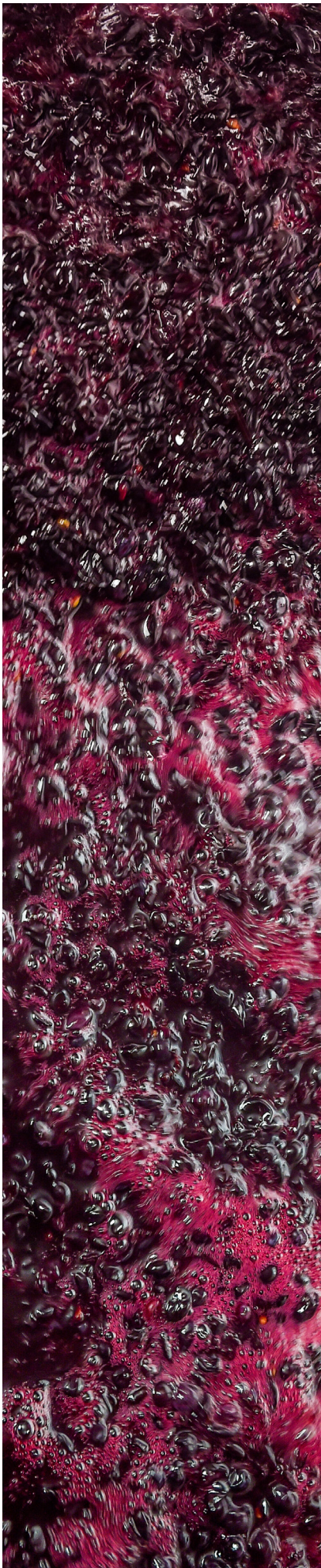
**PL:** For young wines that will be on the market in a short period of time, stainless steel is a great vessel because the wine stays out of any possibility of contamination, in a protective ambience and with the temperature control. So, for wines that need to preserve all the fruit intensity this is one of the best containers. That said, I don't think there is a precise vessel that can age, or not, fine wine, but normally winemakers choose another option for their finest wines.

**ASI:** In the last decade there has been a marked increase in natural winemaking and a parallel rise in the use of ancient fermentation vessels (amphora, qvevri, for example) and modern inventions that embrace ancient design (concrete eggs, for example). Do you see vessel as a representation of winemaking philosophy or simply a means to an end?

**HK:** From my experience most winemakers work with different types of vessels to create various styles of wines. Rather than having dogmatic philosophies, great winemakers choose between different options and listen to the wines they are making without following a specific recipe year after year. Any chosen vessel can be used, both to the benefit and to the disadvantage of a wine, so it's not just a matter of using something, but more of how it's being used.

**VR:** This would be way too long to explain in a short article. Vessels most probably started as a means to an end, but quickly became much more. They are part of a time, a place, a market, and a vision of what wine should be. Just the evolution of the trade has had a big impact on the vessels being used. Today they are still all that, but yes, of course, can also represent the philosophy of a vigneron. Sometimes it can be as simple as what one can afford or has access to. But if that is not an issue, I do hope, and think, that most good vigneron will choose a vessel in function of what they believe will lead to the best terroir expression of their wines.

**PL:** I think the vessel is the choice of the winemaker, when they can make the choice economically speaking. Many winemakers start with what they have, or what they can get. Then with more experience and more money there is a possibility of buying what they really like using to make their wines. In the world of natural winemaking stainless steel was the choice of many due to its hygienic nature and for temperature control amongst other characteristics of these tanks. In a winery we can find many types of vessels that suit different objectives for each cuvée. There are winemakers that radically turn to a specific type of vessel and when that happens it reflects their philosophy.





Heidi Mäkinen

**“I tend to focus much more on the structure of the wine over its aromas and flavours, and thus the delicate presence of oxygen can give to the wines.”**

- Heidi Mäkinen

**ASI:** Is your choice of winemaking vessel also a reflection of you as a sommelier and the choices you make in wines to serve and recommend to your guests?

**HK:** Concrete does somewhat support the fact that I tend to prefer wines where the origin and the variety (ies) used can be tasted. Wines that are too masked with winemaking and, or ageing choices are not often the ones I enjoy the most. I tend to focus much more on the structure of the wine over its aromas and flavours, and I like the structural completeness and integration concrete, and thus the delicate presence of oxygen can give to the wines. Also, thanks to it, the most primary aromas and flavours tend to be toned down a bit allowing the wine to lose its baby fat (most primary notes) to make it a bit more characterful and balanced wine.

**VR:** There is a wine, and a vessel, for every different occasion and consumer. I will not judge a wine based on its vessel, no more than on its grape variety or on its provenance. There is such a thing as bad Burgundy. I have even bad Vosne-Romanée. In fact, there is good and bad everywhere. As such we cannot reduce a wine to its vessel. But understanding them, and the effect they have on wines, is one step more in helping us better understand wine altogether. As with everything wine, it's never simple. And that's why we love it so much, we never stop learning and experiencing new things.

**PL:** As a sommelier I like to choose wines made in all sorts of different vessels. I have some personal preferences, but I want to have a lot of choices for my client's varied tastes. In this sense I would rather choose different kinds of vessels to age wines, but always the most important is how the wine tastes and performs beyond in what vessel it has been aged.



# Member News

## Portuguese Sommelier Association Celebrates 50 Year Anniversary

This past November the Portuguese Sommelier Association celebrated its 50 Year anniversary with a gala dinner held at the Convento de São Paulo Hotel, Redondo, Alentejo. Over two days of celebrations, they also hosted their 2022 Best Sommelier of Portugal competition and the Fernando Ferramentas National Contest. Marc Pinto, current sommelier and head sommelier at Fifty Seconds by Martín Berasategui Restaurant, in Lisbon, won the title of Best Sommelier of Portugal, besting Diogo Sanches Pereira, and Ricardo Ferreira in the final. At the Fernando Ferramentas National Course nine candidates were recognised including gold medals given to Artur Simões, sommelier at Alentejo Marmòris Hotel & Spa in Vila Viçosa and Pedro Bonito, head sommelier at Quinta do Quetzal, Vila de Frades. Numerous other awards were presented during the weekend.



## Croatia Announces Best Sommelier and New President

In December, sommelier Ivan Jug from Zagreb won the 25<sup>th</sup> Croatian Sommelier Championship organised by the Croatian Sommelier Club, held at the Hotel Ambassador in Opatija. Jug, who also won the 2021 contest, is a co-owner of the Michelin star NOEL restaurant in Zagreb. Kristijan Harjač was the runner-up at the contest, while Monika Neral placed third. The previous day, at the annual assembly of the Croatian Sommelier Club, Veljko Ostojić was elected as president of the association. He will hold this title until 2026.



## In Case You Missed It

The top 17 candidates (semi-finalists) at the recent ASI 2023 Best Sommelier of the World in Paris:

1. Raimonds Tomsons (Latvia)
2. Nina Jensen (Denmark)
3. Reeze Choi (China)
4. Pascaline Lepeltier (France)
5. Wataru Iwata (Japan)
6. Valeria Gamper (Argentina)
7. Jo Wessels (South Africa)
8. Andrea Martinisi (New Zealand)
9. Suvad Zlatic (Austria)
10. Sotiris Neophytidis (Cyprus)
11. Tom Ieven (Belgium)
12. Réza Nahaboo (Switzerland)
13. Kai-Wen Lu (Taiwan)
14. Manuel Schembri (Iceland)
15. Mark Guillaudeu (USA)
16. Francesco Marzola (Norway)
17. Chuan Ann Tan (Malaysia)

## Kamil Prokeš is best Czech sommelier for the third time

The winner of the Czech national sommelier championship was recently announced. Kamil Prokeš, sommelier and owner of the eponymously named winery, convinced the jury of experts that his knowledge and skills should earn him the title of Sommelier of the Year for 2022.

This is the third time that Prokeš has won the title as the nation's best sommelier – and in doing so has achieved the highest attainable honour in his profession in the Czech Republic. Only five sommeliers have earned this “hat trick” in the competition's history: Ivo Dvořák, Libor Nazarčuk, Tomáš Brůha, Jakub Přebyl and David Král.

“Naturally, I immensely value this title, as well as the success of earning it thrice. Winning the first time is perhaps the easiest, because nobody has any expectations of you yet, the second time is harder, and the third the hardest,” noted Prokeš after the competition.







**4-5 JULY 2023**

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Helsinki, Finland**

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