

ASI MAGAZINE

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THE **N** Wine ISSUE



MARCOS SALAZAR, REBECCA HOPKINS,
NADIA FRITTELLA
A Balanced Glass: Life in Moderation



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MASON NG
Grapes and Grains



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Published by: Association de la Sommellerie Internationale
Editor, Content Manager: Mark DeWolf
Partnership Management: Ana Sofia Oliveira
Marketing & Communication: Xeniya Volosnikova
Administrative Assistant: Claire Monier
Translation: Michèle Aström Chantôme, Manuel Negrete
Design / Layout: Carissa Botha
Photography: iStock, Unsplash, Marcos Bacon
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Contributors:
 Mark DeWolf, Paulo Grifo, Nadia Frittella, Jeff Ho, Rebecca Hopkins, Atsuhide Hoshiyama, Alba Hough, Nick Lander, Mason Ng, Tom Nichol, Néli Pereira, Steve Pineau, Marcos Salazar, Hitoshi Utsunomiya, Jesse Vallins, Xeniya Volosnikova, William Wouters

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Magazine inquiries:

Mark DeWolf, ASI Content Manager
 markdewolf@asi.info
 General Inquiries: www.asi.info | info@asi.info

Welcome!



*William Wouters,
President ASI*

Beyond Wine

I recall my own early days as a sommelier. At the time, the role of most sommeliers equated to the service of wine, most often from classic French and Italian regions, and offering guests a glass of Port, Cognac, or an Eau de Vie served in double ice bowl glass after dinner. In the past few decades expectations of sommeliers has transcended the classic wine regions and grape-based spirits of the world. In terms of wines, a sommelier must now know, be able to explain, and identify a dizzying array of wine regions, and a dictionary of varietals, many of which veer to the obscure and very rare and can be specific to a singular, often very small place.

A sommelier must also be incredibly well-versed in other beverages. A whisky is not simply a whisky. A beer not just simply beer. Even classic broad definitions of whisky and beer styles are no longer sufficient bases of knowledge. Take India Pale Ale for example, itself a sub-style of Pale Ale, which counts British India Pale Ale, West Coast

India Pale Ale, Imperial India Pale Ale, Hazy India Pale Ale, as a just a few of its sub-classifications.

Add to this the continually more global nature of our industry. With it, other fermented beverages are expanding beyond their traditional boundaries. Take the globalisation of sake as a good example. In this issue we explore sake's place on the drinks list and how sommeliers can use it to enhance their guests' dining experiences.

We also talk about cocktails and beers' place in the fine dining world, including an exploration of the foraged cocktail movement in Brazil with a rockstar of the South American cocktail world, Néli Pereira. Finally, we chat gin with ASI Diversity Committee member Alba Hough, who recently launched her own brand of gin, and legendary distiller Tom Nichol. Nichol is the master distiller behind Tanqueray No. 10. He has recently come out of retirement to make The Gardener Gin for the partnership between Brad Pitt and the Perrin family.

With an ever more competitive restaurant landscape, the demands of the sommelier have never been greater and with it the pressure to perform often under stress. In this issue we explore ways for sommeliers to maintain balance in their life with Rebecca Hopkins (A Balanced Glass) and Nadia Fritella (Secretary General, Wine in Moderation). We also do a deep dive into the world of adult non-alcoholic beverages with our Guest Editor Marcos Salazar, CEO of the Adult Non-Alcoholic Beverage Association.

What better way to finish off a discussion than with some coffee and tea? In this issue we explore the rise of fine coffee and tea service. Singapore based mixologist and tea expert Jeff Ho shares his knowledge of tea, including the rise of single source tea and its role in the restaurant world.

Enjoy this issue of ASI Magazine dedicated to everything but wine and remember to share it with your colleagues.

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

William Wouters, President ASI



ASI General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland

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TORRES

Desde  1870

A FAMILY BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY

FIVE GENERATIONS AS WINEMAKERS HAVE GIVEN US A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE. WE BELIEVE THAT A NEW WAY OF UNDERSTANDING WINE IS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO FACE CLIMATE CHANGE. WITH THIS IN MIND, WE HAVE MANAGED TO REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT BY 36%, FROM 2008 TO 2022, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME RECOVERING OLD GRAPE VARIETIES AND COMMITTING TO ORGANIC AND REGENERATIVE VITICULTURE. BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY, OUR LEGACY IS TAKING CARE OF THE EARTH FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

Miguel A. Torres



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Guest Editors

MARCOS SALAZAR, NICK LANDER

A DISCUSSION WITH...



Marcos Salazar

"I have been an entrepreneur all my life, even as a little kid. I believe 'if you don't find what you're looking for, that's an opportunity to create it.'"

The Economics of No Alcohol: an interview with Adult Non-Alcoholic Beverage Association CEO Marcos Salazar

Marcos Salazar is an entrepreneur, speaker, and business coach. He's the founder of Be Social Change, which is a community of like-minded members from a variety of business sectors who seek purpose in their lives by creating positive social impact in what they do. He also has his own podcast, *For all Drinks*, which encourages listeners to drink different, explore the increasingly diverse and interesting world of adult non-alcoholic beverages. Finally, he's also currently the CEO of the adult non alcoholic beverage association.

Marcos' journey into the world of social enterprise began around 2010, when he was working for Girl Scouts of the USA, a large US-based non-profit. At the time Salazar was a researcher and a tech strategist. He says "I loved the organisation and people that I was working with, but felt like I could be doing more, and that I was meant for more. I wasn't really tapping into all my talents and abilities. And this was around the same time when you started hearing about social impact and social entrepreneurship." At the time Salazar was living in New York. As he went out to see what was available for events and classes or community around this concept of social entrepreneurship, and it just didn't really exist.

"I have been an entrepreneur all my life, even as a little kid. I believe 'if you don't find what you're looking for, that's an opportunity to create it.' I ended up launching a meetup group called "Be social change", which brought together diverse groups of people that wanted to create more meaning or purpose in their work. In our first meetup we had about 150 people join us just for happy hour, and I knew that I tapped into something." Over the next decade, Salazar ended up going from meeting up to non-profit and eventually transitioned it to a for profit company." The company would end up hosting three to five events, and up to ten professional development workshops, a month. It was this frequency that according to Salazar led to his exploration of non-alcoholic beverages, at a time when that industry was undergoing its own metamorphosis. Salazar decided to launch a company that hosted non-alcoholic pop-up speakeasies, dance parties, and karaoke. The pandemic forced Salazar to transfer to virtual events, which led to the For all Drinks podcast and a number of other pieces of content. "That's really where the association (Adult Non-Alcoholic Beverage Association) idea really emerged from, as I started to get to know the founders and the innovators and entrepreneurs who are creating these adult non-alcoholic beverages." Salazar began to see the business and regulatory challenges they were facing and recognise there was an opportunity and a need to create an association to really build out infrastructure, promote and protect the category as well as come together in a unified voice and community to grow this industry.



"I could work 16 hours a day non-stop and absolutely love every minute of it, but over time I recognised that it wasn't healthy for me. I needed to find balance."

The journey to creating an adult non-alcoholic beverage association was a personal journey for Salazar who says "as an entrepreneur, I could work 16 hours a day non-stop and absolutely love every minute of it, but over time I recognised that it wasn't healthy for me. I needed to find balance. (At the time) I was just going out to drinks in New York City with friends or partying on the weekends, and began recognising that alcohol not only for me personally, but an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence to support this, doesn't have a positive impact on your health. As of 2019 I began re-evaluating my relationship with alcohol. The challenge was I'm also the type of person that loves hosting. I'm a community builder and connector."

“It’s vital for the growth of the hospitality industry to be able to integrate those, not only from an economic perspective but also from a social responsibility standpoint.”



A DISCUSSION WITH...

While Salazar rarely drinks alcohol now, he says “there are occasions or situations that emerge that I may want to partake in drinking an alcoholic beverage. Over 80 per cent of people who purchase adult non-alcoholic products are moderators (drink both non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages). They may not want to drink during the week, or they may want to go to a restaurant or bar and have a meeting the next day and don’t want to feel bad or hungover or kind of groggy.” One such situation for Salazar was a recent visit to a steakhouse, where he might opt for a glass of ‘Cabernet.’ On this occasion “I didn’t want to drink because I had some meetings the next day. There were literally no (non-alcoholic) options that would complement the steak. So now part of the purpose of the association is really to ensure that there’s sophisticated adult non-alcoholic beverages in every type of social situation, so people always feel included, and always can be part of the experience.” Not having a suitable non-alcoholic option is a lost opportunity according to Salazar. “All they had was soda water and Diet Coke and a few other high sugar drinks. It was a missed opportunity for that restaurant to be able to serve me something better and earn more money.”

Salazar stresses the economic benefits of incorporating non-alcoholic in to drinks programmes as those that don’t are according to Salazar, “are missing out on a large amount of money. Half to two-thirds of people going into a restaurant typically are not

thinking about drinking an alcoholic beverage, but they still may want something sophisticated. Do you want to serve a water or soda for three dollars or an adult non-alcoholic beverage for ten or even fifteen dollars. **It’s vital for the growth of the hospitality industry to be able to integrate those, not only from an economic perspective but also from a social responsibility standpoint.**” Anecdotally Salazar also says, “I’ll be honest, I know that people are seeking out these beverages, when they find a restaurant or bar that does serve them, they will go to that restaurant repeatedly, because they know that there’s always going to be an option that’s available to them.”

The growth of the category is undeniable. The rise of non-alcoholic was buoyed by Covid, along with e-commerce and the ease of shipping non-alcoholic beverages compared to the more regulated alcohol industry factoring into an increased awareness of craft non-alcoholic. Pre-covid the

category had been growing 15 to 20 per cent per annum, but according to Salazar, during the pandemic “we saw 60, 70 even 80 per cent growth and some brands even growing 100 per cent or more.” The Adult Non-Alcoholic Beverage Association has been working with data companies, as well as we’re going to start doing our own internal research to start helping to get clarity on that growth trajectory. According to Salazar, based on research gained from Drizly, while “beer historically has been the main category of adult non-alcoholic beverages, non-alcoholic wine grew 76 per cent over the last year, and spirits have grown 155 per cent since January 2022.” With the speed of growth post-pandemic stabilising, it has led to some brands seeking to increase on-premises sales.

Supporting the transition to on-premise has not only been the rising number of non-alcoholic brands, but also the quality of adult non-alcoholic options, with technology playing a key role in the industry’s ability to



produce continually more complex options. Producing high-quality non-alcoholic products isn't easy, as retention of complex aromatics and filling the textural void left by the removal of alcohol is challenging. Technology advancements and the ingenuity of craft non-alcoholic beverage producers has been key. In the case of wine Salazar says, "the dealcoholisation process that would typically strip complexity and body and, complexity of the flavour is getting better and better. And you're also starting to see other beverage brands that are not tying themselves to alcohol, or a previous alcohol production process, who are coming out with their own methods and processes. A lot of this is within the wine proxy category, where instead of tying production to the typical winemaking process, and then dealcoholising it, they're creating something based on other ingredients, whether it's vinegar, or other types of products to kind of create the same complexity and body of the of wine without it being wine."

As far as who is drinking adult non-alcoholic Salazar says "it is literally across the board, but for different reasons. You have some boomers and older people, with the disposable income to it, who had been accustomed to adult non-alcoholic beverages being not so great beer, and very sweet wine trying it again. You're also seeing a younger generation of Gen Z and Millennials that are also driving this as well. Partially because more and more are drinking less and less. According to a statistic by Nielsen, over 40 per cent of Gen Z, that are of legal drinking age (in the US) between the ages of 21 to about 25, have never consumed an alcoholic beverage. **They have literally never tasted an alcoholic beverage, but they still want to be drinking something sophisticated and delicious in social situations, so they're opting for adult non alcoholic beverages instead.**"

While the adoption of craft adult non-alcoholic drinks into beverage menus is still in its infancy, Salazar and the NABA is working to ensure its members are producing high quality products. The association holds members to codes of ethics, and they must abide to industry standards along with state and federal laws. **Additionally, according to Salazar, the next stage for the association will be "providing all the educational resources they need for food and safety production standards and making sure that they're creating shelf stable, high quality products.** And then the next phase going into next year will probably be some kind of verification system, both in terms of those, those kinds of checks and balances from food and safety, but also from a regular testing of the products as well; we want to progressively build that out."

While non-alcoholic beverages do not need to be the focal point of a beverage list, from our discussion with Marcos Salazar, we have become convinced that to not have a non-alcoholic strategy will leave money on the table and could alienate an ever-growing population of sober-conscious consumers.



Nick Lander

Upping the Beverage Game from Start to Finish

With Nick Lander, restaurant critic

Nick Lander, often referred to as “he who must be obeyed,” is a prominent figure in gastronomy. His expertise spans across various roles, including being the esteemed restaurant critic for both *the Guardian* and *the Financial Times*. Moreover, he is recognised as a chef and a food service consultant, lending his invaluable insights to an array of arts organisations and development projects.

“I was always told that ‘last impressions are the most important’. The tea, coffee offering has to be as interesting as the menu and the wine list.”

In 2012, Lander's book, titled *"The Art of the Restaurateur"*, received widespread acclaim. The book delves into the intricate craftsmanship and unparalleled dedication required to excel in the realm of restaurateurs. Lander takes readers on a captivating journey behind the scenes, shedding light on the challenges and triumphs that restaurateurs face in their quest to create extraordinary dining experiences.

Building on the success of his first book, Lander went on to publish *"On the Menu"* in 2016. This work focuses on the often overlooked, yet vital aspect of restaurant menus. With meticulous attention to detail, Lander delves into the thought processes and creative decisions that shape a menu's composition. Through his insightful analysis, he unveils the hidden psychology behind menu design and its impact on diners.

With this in mind, we asked Lander about the evolution of drinks programmes as a reaction to changes in consumption patterns, which is seeing marked interest in beverages beyond wine, even amongst fine dining consumers. According to Lander, the evolution is occurring amongst a variety of beverages including spirits, cocktails, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages and the demand for the

broadening of drinks programmes, is a “process started in the US and the rest of the world is playing catch-up.”

With changing drinking preferences, particularly amongst the Millennial and Gen Z generations, it begs the question if sommeliers, and beverage managers, we'll need to adapt and become more versed in all beverages to prosper in the next generation of fine dining restaurants. Asked if he thinks classic fine dining restaurants, even the most exalted Michelin 2-star and 3-star, need to ‘up’ their cocktail game, Lander retorts “I think that most restaurants, whatever their rating, are trying extremely hard. No press release comes today without the name of the mixologist.”

It's not just consumer demand for cocktails, spirits and beer that are leading to change at the world's best restaurants. An ever growing sober-conscious population, because of shifts amongst preferences amongst age groups and an increasingly cultural diversity amongst high-end diners is asking sommeliers and beverage managers to consider the role of non-alcoholic in their drinks programme. Restaurants such as Copenhagen's Geranium, New York's Eleven Madison Park, and Chicago's Alinea, the latter even producing a cookbook titled 'Zero' featuring exclusively non-alcoholic drinks, have jumped fully into the non-alcoholic pool. Lander agrees with their decisions. As he says, “I think non-alcoholic drinks are extremely important and particularly profitable. Anybody who ignores them does so at their peril.”

In recent years, there has also been a notable rise in the prominence of tea service in fine dining restaurants, marking a shift in the way beverages are perceived and appreciated in the culinary world. Traditionally overshadowed by wine and other alcoholic beverages, tea

is now garnering attention for its complexity, diversity, and ability to enhance the dining experience. Tea is also experiencing a rise in consumption thanks to consumers seeking healthier alternatives.

As will explore later in this issue, another contributing factor is the rise of specialty teas and the increasing demand for artisanal, single-origin, and rare tea varieties. Just as with wine, customers are becoming more discerning and curious about the origins, processing methods, and flavour profiles of teas. While traditional afternoon tea service as performed by the likes of London's Ritz Carlton, Hong Kong's The Peninsula, New York's St. Regis Hotel, and the Mandarin Oriental Bangkok are showcases of the traditional, other top restaurants such as La Maison Pic are also responding to this demand by curating extensive tea menus, featuring teas from different regions, and showcasing the expertise of their sommeliers. Tea, and coffee, are two items Lander suggests should not be an afterthought. He concludes “I was always told that 'last impressions are the most important'. The tea, coffee offering has to be as interesting as the menu and the wine list. But it must not be pretentious.”



Unveil

THE DELICATE CHARM OF FETEASCĂ ALBĂ

Feteasca Alba is an ancient grape variety cultivated for centuries. It originates from Transylvania, Romania, and has found a cherished home in the Republic of Moldova where it holds the first place among indigenous varieties. Its versatility shines through in producing high quality dry and sparkling white wines. Feteasca Alba wines are renowned for their light, floral aromas, offering a truly enchanting sensory experience. Feteasca Alba transports you to a world of refined elegance, where each sip tells a story of tradition and sensory pleasure.



WINE OF MOLDOVA

A LEGEND ALIVE



TASTE



AROMAS AND FLAVOURS



Discover

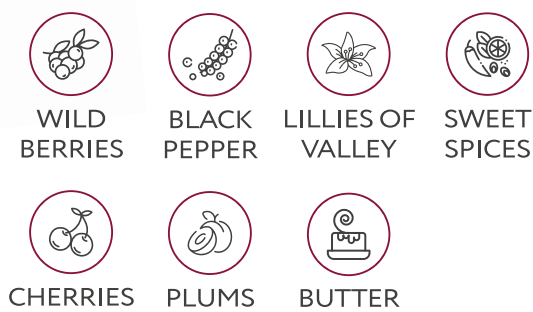
THE TIMELESS ELEGANCE OF FETEASCĂ NEAGRĂ

This variety is believed to be over 2000 years old, originating from the Prut River valley in the southwest of the Republic of Moldova, and it thrives in most regions of Romania and Moldova. Adapted to the continental climate, Feteasca Neagra flourishes in clay-sandy and clay-limestone soils. The grape showcases a remarkable ability to produce high-quality dry rosés and dry red wines that are intense and rich, characterized by fine tannins and exceptional character. With time, the flavor of Feteasca Neagra becomes even richer and more refined, adding to the wine's complexity and allure.

TASTE



AROMAS AND FLAVOURS



Moderation and Living a Balanced Life

With Nadia Frittella and Rebecca Hopkins

Table ten needs a bottle decanted, table seven needs another bottle of Champagne, you hear the faint sounds of an angry chef waiting to serve first course of the tasting menu, but you aren't even close to pouring the table's first wine selection. Then in walks a regular who you know will want to talk with you about wine for half an hour.....Finally, the shift is over. You survived, but your nerves are frayed. Everyone is going for a drink, again....do you go? The life of a sommelier can be a struggle for balance. ASI invited two industry professionals committed to finding, and promoting balanced, healthy lifestyles for their thoughts.

Nadia Frittella is a communications professional based in Bruxelles and the Secretary General at Wine in Moderation.

Rebecca Hopkins is an experienced wine communication strategist, speaker, moderator, host, and writer, with nearly three decades of professional experience in the wine business. Rebecca founded and launched A Balanced Glass in March 2018, with a mission to provide educational resources to industry colleagues to help maintain health and wellbeing while working in the beverage alcohol industry.



Nadia Fritella

ASI: Why and when was Wine in Moderation created?

Nadia Fritella (NF): Wine in Moderation was launched in 2008 when the European wine sector united under one common commitment for the first time. Since then, it has evolved from a European commitment to an internationally recognised programme.

Wine in Moderation works to inspire a sustainable culture of wine. Our mission, as the social responsibility programme of the wine sector is two-fold: providing wine professionals with the information and tools to responsibly present wine, and inspiring consumers to fully enjoy wine and its culture in a healthy, balanced, and convivial way.

ASI: Why did you launch A Balanced Glass? Was it your own personal experience? Or did you have observations going on in the industry that kind of led you to want to do this?

Rebecca Hopkins (RH): I grew up in Australia, and have been in the wine business in Australia, since the

“I can already tell you that wine professionals are one of our main target groups when it comes to the message of moderation and responsible drinking.”

– Nadia Fritella

early 90s. At the time, moderation wasn't really something we talked about. I came to the US in 2007, and I'm still here in San Francisco. When I arrived, I came into a big corporate wine role that had a lot of travel, pressure, and a lot of people to manage. I wasn't really coping well. So, I was finding ways to deal with it myself.

Eventually I was looking for ways to find balance. I took up meditation and practicing yoga, and finding other ways to navigate this kind of crazy life I was living. In 2017, I went to an industry conference. And no one was talking about alcohol. There's a lot of discussion around career development and opportunities and early, nascent discussions about diversity and equity but not about alcohol. I thought to myself 'this is a problem, because this is at the very core of what we do.' In 2018, I decided to launch it (A Balanced Glass), mostly out of just frustration. I teamed up with Kathy Huyghe, who was a friend and a meditation, yoga teacher. We started to write about it and try to offer up some resources we knew about. It blossomed from there. Now there are about 2000 people in the community.

ASI: Do you believe people working in the hospitality, beverage alcohol industry are subject to greater risk of alcoholism and maintaining a balanced lifestyle?

NF: Today we know that the vast majority of consumers enjoy wine in moderation, unfortunately there remains a minority that misuse alcoholic beverages in ways that can be damaging to themselves and that can harm others around them. I suppose we can imagine that some wine professionals would also find themselves in this situation. However, we do not have access to official numbers or research. As a matter of fact, I am not even sure such numbers exist.



Rebecca Hopkins

“It’s an industry with long hours, and generally low pay. It’s physically demanding, and it can be a stressful, high-pressure environment...”

– Rebecca Hopkins

Notwithstanding, I can already tell you that wine professionals are one of our main target groups when it comes to the message of moderation and responsible drinking. Not only because they are often first in line when speaking with consumers and should therefore have all the knowledge on the topic, but also for their own interest.

RH: It’s a difficult question to answer, but I think the easy answer is yes. I think what really sets industry professionals aside from consumers is the access to alcohol. It’s part of what we do in our everyday life. In this industry you are never far away from access to wine, spirits, or beer. While our industry looks glamorous from the outside to someone who’s not worked in a restaurant, a winery, a tasting room, or for an agent or distributor, I think there’s a big disconnect

between what is seen and what it is in reality. It’s an industry with long hours, and generally low pay. It’s physically demanding, and it can be a stressful, high-pressure environment. As a result, it can become an environment where people look for ways to cope. Part of that way to cope obviously has to be in a company with other alcohol professionals which can put us in some unsafe environments. Another point is alcohol being used as a currency. In our industry, it’s either, for example, free beer at the brewery or it’s after shift drinks, free wine samples etcetera. I think it’s the combination of those factors that really does leave us a lot more vulnerable.

ASI: Are there warning signs? What are some of those resources out there that you think that those that are looking for more balanced lifestyle?

NF: Moderation, as with everything in life, is key. It is therefore important to always keep an eye on warning signs and redirect the person in question to the



appropriate organisation or medical entity. At Wine in Moderation, we are currently working on a responsible service training targeting wine professionals around the world. Our goal is to give professionals all the tools they need to offer their customers a responsible wine experience, and we are thrilled to say that the training was also very well received by important people within the sector such as former WSET CEO Ian Harris.

RH: In terms of tools, I think we have now more than ever, and thank goodness for the devices that we have in our hands. We have 24/7 access to stuff, but I think the challenge again, for us as an industry, is credible industry resources that really understand the reality of what we work with. There's The Drinks Trust out of the UK (United Kingdom) which have a phenomenal range of both industry access tools and communities that you can join and be part of that. There's Healthy Pour, which is based out of Chicago, that have a lot of resources on hospitality wellbeing, including everything from how to manage drinking to managing workplace relationships, etcetera, that are specifically designed for the hospitality industry. And then there's Lauren Taylor and she's really leading this

whole conversation, about how we talk about the people that matter. Of course, there are also more traditional support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and various government funded organisations, which provide therapy and counseling. The most important thing, if you're thinking about what your relationship is with alcohol, and the hardest step, is to sit down and be honest with yourself.

You need to ask yourself why do you want to make this change? How much are you really drinking? How do you feel? What are the relationships you're having? From there, it's important to connect into a trusted community and start to have those conversations.

ASI: Do you think wine media, and the wine industry in general, haven't done a good job in terms of identifying wine as a drug with addictive qualities? Do you think there's like a socio-economic bias that perpetuates wine o'clock culture as acceptable and makes overconsumption of wine, in some ways, perhaps more socially accepted?

RH: Let's be clear, any form of any alcohol is dangerous. It's a drug. I think wine has benefited from the kind of socio-economic bias you describe. Throughout history, wine has been associated with

wealth and privilege, ceremony, and luxury. I would also say that wine has had this benefit of being part of the service ritual. If we think about being in restaurants, there's a familiarity with how you will be served your wine. There are special glasses that we use and there's a special wine implement you need to use to open your bottle. With this service ritual comes this association with it (wine) being something special.

On top of that, the Wine Market Council did some research in 2021. The results found consumers perceive wine to be the most natural of alcoholic beverages. 62 per cent of consumers said wine is more natural than beer, and more natural than spirits.

ASI: Do you think the consumers will learn some lessons once more stringent labeling are in place? What about government warning labels and stringent standard drinks definitions? Do they help or hurt?

NF: No universal drinking guidelines exist, and a wide range of drinking guidelines are published by authorities around the world. It is recommended to follow a moderate and responsible drinking pattern: enjoy wine with the meals, alternate with water, and always avoid binge drinking. Moreover, when drinking a glass of wine,

the amount you drink is not the only important factor, how it is consumed will also matter: this is known as the “drinking pattern”. Of course, there are situations in which drinking alcoholic beverages should be avoided, for example when pregnant or breastfeeding, when driving, or if underage.

“No universal drinking guidelines exist, and a wide range of drinking guidelines are published by authorities around the world.”

– Nadia Fritella

because I think at any level, it needs a measurement. Some people need this in order to manage their health. But it's not a one size fits all. That's where the grey area really comes in. The best thing to do is to educate

RH: Standard drinks were created when alcohol was lower, and glasses were smaller. I think as we look at the concentration of alcohol in drinks it is something that is open to interpretation. I also think government mandates on temperance, or abstinence, which is certainly what we've seen a lot in the US, is dangerous. It's not a bad thing,

yourself. UK-based Professor David Nutt wrote a book called *Drink: The New Science of Alcohol and Health*. I think that that is the most unbiased factual resource that I've found around what is an acceptable amount of alcohol as I do think that these (government) mandates do cause responses of, you know, one extreme or the other. At the end of the day, the middle way is the best way, in my opinion.

ASI: Has media played a role in making over consumption of wine more socially acceptable?

RH: Absolutely! I think the perception of wine for many consumers has been, healthy. The wine industry has played into that, and then we have situations, references like ‘rosé’ all day’ or wine being referred to as ‘mommy juice’, which just starts to tap into that glamorous, kind of aspect of wine.

ASI: Do you think as a society, we are becoming more sober curious?

NF: Cultural and social norms evolve continuously. What we have noticed in recent years is that society is changing and that people value health, environmental sustainability and community. Furthermore, wine consumers are increasingly interested in having an experience with wine, that goes along with their values and



their lifestyle. Wine businesses must evolve together with their consumers and society and show that they care about their customers. Social sustainability in the form of moderate and responsible consumption can go a long way in showing that and this is why Wine in Moderation is always gaining more supporters around the world.

RH: We are still curious. In reality, when you look at the numbers, it is still a very, very small nascent space but we need to see the conversation start before the sales start to really deliver. I think it's a great discussion to have, and I think it's a healthy, pardon the pun, discussion for people to have with themselves and with their loved ones, as there isn't any doubt that alcohol has an impact on society.

ASI: In our interview with our guest editor, Marcos Salazar of the Adult Non-Alcoholic Beverage Association we discussed the role of technology in providing more interest non-alcohol alternatives. Do you think technological advances may support people finding more balance?

RH: Yes. I think for non-alcoholic to be a success, taste is such a big part of this discussion. If it doesn't taste good, it's not going to sell well. Non-alcoholic beers and wine have been around for decades, but non-alcoholic wine was something found on the bottom shelf that no one really talks about. It wasn't very good. There have been new innovations within dealcoholisation, and new ways of reconstructing beverages. I think the biggest challenge is still wine, although I think that there has been some success in sparkling wine and aromatic whites, but (non-alcoholic) red wines are a long way away.

ASI: Should non-alcoholic wine be made via dealcoholisation?

RH: I have to say, I don't think I do. I've just tasted about 50 non-alcoholic wines kind of as part of my research. I'm a nerd. I like to taste things. I'm not sure that the consumer cares as much about dealcoholisation as the industry wants them to. There are traditional producers such as Leitz, out of Germany, who are having tremendous success. Their non-alcoholic Riesling is on wine lists by the glass and appreciated by sommeliers. Giesen from Marlborough (New Zealand) is another one. Speaking with some from the company recently, their non-alcoholic range is now neck and neck with their traditional alcohol range. I think there are some consumers who are traditional, but I'm all for proxies. I'm all for things that give me flavor mouthfeel and excitement. You know, they're never going to replace a great glass of high-end Barolo. But do we need them to?

Overall, I think that's part of the big discussion. It's a good discussion to have, I think the wine industry, we have a habit of getting in our own way, about things that we don't like to talk about.

ASI: So how should one or do you live a balanced life?

NF: A balanced diet is the key element for a healthy lifestyle: It is important to carefully choose what a person eats and drinks, indeed both quality and quantity should be considered when talking about a balanced diet. Healthy lifestyles also include important aspects such as a good sleep, regular exercise, etc. All aspects that one should keep in mind at all times I believe, whether they work in the service industry or not.

RH: Balance is a fleeting concept. The biggest thing I say is, there's no such thing. It doesn't exist. I think we are humans. We are in motion. We are changing all the time. That's just life. How do I live? I'm very conscious about what I drink, and when I drink, and why I'm drinking. I won't drink at least a day a week, if not two....and I don't drink alone, which is hard because I live alone. I really try to be in situations where we can discuss wine as part of a community. Sometimes, you fall off, but then you just get back on again, and reset and move forward.

I also have a very outdoor lifestyle. Exercise, and meditation is important for me. I can take them on the road with me if I'm traveling, which helps me stay focused and perform at my best, and helps me be in a world as someone who's hopefully living by example.

“You know, they’re never going to replace a great glass of high-end Barolo. But do we need them to?”

– Rebecca Hopkins

4

Non-Alcoholic Wine Brands to Get to Know

Leitz Eins-Zwei-Zero

Weingut Leitz's more than 140 hectares of vineyard land occupy some enviable locations within the Rheingau, including various Grand Cru sites. Known for crafting expressive and revered Rieslings, in 2007 Leitz expanded their offering to include a lineup of accessible wines, made in a dry style, called Eins-Zwei-Dry in their top wines. The winery, under the direction of Johannes Leitz, continues to evolve and modernise. Their Eins-Zwei-Zero brand of non-alcoholic wines made from Riesling, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir can be found in many countries and are often lauded by critics.



Thomson & Scott Noughty

Amanda Thomson, CEO and Founder of the B Corp Certified Thomson & Scott, has taken the non-alcoholic wine world by storm with Noughty, a brand of alcohol free, organic, vegan, halal wines. They are gaining world-wide acclaim for their non-alcoholic sparkling wines including a vivacious Sparkling Chardonnay, dealcoholised via vacuum distillation, which registers at only 14 calories per glass. The brand is so successful it is popping up at hip wine bars and restaurants around the world.



Giesen

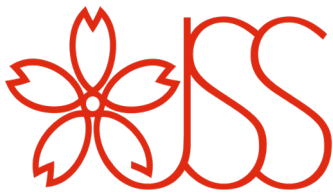
New Zealand-based Giesen's Non-Alcoholic Sauvignon Blanc is the best selling premium dealcoholised wine in the US. The popularity of the wine leading to Giesen to expand its programme to include Pinot Grigio, Riesling, a sparkling wine, rosé and a red blend.



Canada's Wine Proxies: Acid League and Benjamin Bridge

The no and low alcohol trend in Canada have taken of. Leading the charge are producers of wine proxies (wine substitutes). The first to gain national attention and recognition for their brand was Ontario's Acid League. The team of mixologists use vinegars, fruit juice, teas and spices to concoct drinks which have a taste in-line with wine. On the country's east coast, Benjamin Bridge, a world class producer of traditional method sparkling wines has been inspired by piquette to use leftover grape skins and mineral water as their flavour base, but instead of fermentation using other flavours to build their line of Piquette Zero wine alternatives.





**JAPAN
SAKE AND SHOCHU
MAKERS
ASSOCIATION**



Important Tips for Sake Managing storage

Sake is very sensitive to heat and light while in storage. Ideally, it should be stored at a cool temperature of between 1-8°C, with little fluctuation in temperature, protected from sunlight, and with minimum exposure to light, including no sterilising lights or fluorescent lights. Sake needs to be kept in dark and cold areas all the time, both before and after opening the bottle.

Unlike wine, most sake does not have a cork and so has no need for high humidity. There is also no need to lay sake bottles on their side in storage. They can be left standing upright in a fridge.

After opening a bottle of sake, it gradually begins to oxidise. However, its flavor does not change as quickly as wine. It can be in good condition for at least 3 weeks or as long as three months, so you don't have to be afraid to sell by the glass. To keep the freshness of an open bottle, cap it airtight and store it in a refrigerator.

Namazake (unpasteurised sake) and Ginjo or Daiginjo, which have delicate aromas, need particularly careful handling.

Keep in mind that some negative perceptions of sake, for example, that it smells like pickled vegetables or musky, are a result of wrong handling of storage and not due to the sake's intrinsic nature. This will continue to be a very serious concern for the sake industry. More and more specialists and importers are started storing sake in cold cellars, but this important tip has yet to be widely spread to the world market and JSS is trying harder to spread it.

If you would like to find more about serving tips for Japanese sake, please go to our website:



Foraging Flavour, Preserving Heritage: infusing a taste of Brazil

With Néli Pereira

Brazilian mixologist Néli Pereira has carved her own unique path, captivating cocktail enthusiasts with her innovative concoctions and artistic approach to libations.

But what makes Pereira's approach truly stand out in the world of mixology has been her dedication to sustainability and the celebration of Brazil using her country's indigenous ingredients.

Pereira prioritises sourcing local and seasonal ingredients, reducing waste, and advocating for environmentally friendly practices within the industry. Pereira strives to inspire others to approach mixology with a conscious mindset, emphasising the importance of preserving our natural resources.

Néli Pereira's contributions to the world of mixology extend beyond her craft. She actively engages in mentorship programmes and educational initiatives, sharing her knowledge and passion with aspiring mixologists. Pereira believes in the power of collaboration and regularly collaborates with fellow mixologists, chefs, and artisans, fostering a sense of community and pushing the boundaries of mixology even further.

ASI: What inspired you to investigate using indigenous Brazilian ingredients for infusions and cocktails?

Néli Pereira (NP): The Brazilian culture is my main source of inspiration. Actually, my interest in Brazil precedes my work with cocktailing. I was a cultural journalist for quite a long time (working both in Brazil and abroad, such as at the BBC) and that made me study a lot about my country – which led me to two Masters Degrees in Brazilian culture – one here in Brazil and another in London, where I did Cultural Studies. So, when my husband, Renato Larini, who is an artist, decided to open our place, Espaço Zebra, a hybrid art gallery and a bar in São Paulo in 2012, I was interested in discovering what the cocktail scene was like in the country. I was already studying wine – I completed a three-year course on wine – and whisky back then. It came as a surprise to me that very little was being done with local

ingredients – not only indigenous, but local in general – fruits, herbs, barks, plants that we use to make our medicines, but no one had an idea of how they actually taste, or how they could be used as ingredients for cocktails. Perhaps most surprising Brazilian bars, which we call “botecos”, were already making infusions with those ingredients. I just connected the dots: there is a huge biodiversity and knowledge around those ingredients, and somehow a technique that we are already familiar with both in the botecos and in our popular medicine with the “garrafadas” wasn’t being used for modern cocktails. “Garrafadas”, which translates literally to *bottled*, are well-known medicines. They are a mixture of plants, herbs, barks in alcohol, normally wine or cachaça, and have been used since the 1500s in the country – they are our own way of making elixirs, vermouth, amaro etcetera.

The difference here in Brazil is that they were still restricted to medicine and had not yet come to the cocktail bar scene, even though they were already in the botecos. All I did was to bring these into the cocktail scene and started the enormous process of researching them, so we could have a Brazilian cocktail, not only in the way the drinks are made, but also in the content of them. That research resulted in the book “Da Botica ao Boteco: Plantas, Garrafadas e a Coquetelaria Brasileira”, (“*From The Apothecary to the Bar: Plants, Garrafadas and Brazilian Cocktails*”), launched last September. It is a book about the history of infusing herbs and plants into alcohol in Brazil. It’s a sort of a “Drunken Botanist”, but Brazilian style. I sincerely hope that it gets an English translation, I think it would be amazing for people outside Brazil to get in touch with all this culture, tradition, and flavour.

ASI: Do you feel like what you are doing for cocktails is an extension, or parallel, to the Nordic cuisine, foraging movement that emerged in the early part of this century?

NP: I think that my work is very much related to the “spirits of the time”, playing with words here but it is, sort of in the zeitgeist. There is the foraging movement, the return of the apothecary cocktails, and here in Brazil a consciousness about our huge biodiversity.

Although there are some resemblances to the Nordic movement, I never look too much to the outside, but mainly to my roots and my own territory, which is the Brazilian culture. Here we are also looking for ways to keep our forests standing, to keep the people who still live in our forests alive and well, especially the indigenous communities, and we are also looking to source our ingredients locally both for the sake of nature, environment, but also economy. I think I am influenced more about what is going on here in Brazil

and how I can contribute with my work to preserve our culture and to shed a light into our ingredients, so they remain with us, not risking extinction simply because we don’t use or know or appreciate them. Put it this way: I wouldn’t be making cocktails if they weren’t about Brazil. My interest came exactly because there was research I could do and contribute to here with our local knowledge and ingredients. I use cocktails as a way of talking about, communicate with and about the Brazilian culture.

ASI: We use this idea of terroir in the wine world as a word that conveys how the combination of climate, geography, culture, and other factors connect to the character of a wine. Do you feel like you are bringing an element of terroir to cocktail culture by your focus on local ingredients?

NP: I sincerely hope I am contributing to this, especially when I do research about the Brazilian biomes and how they connect to their region’s climate,



“Put it this way: I wouldn’t be making cocktails if they weren’t about Brazil.”

– Néli Pereira

popular and traditional culture and knowledge, geography, etc. But Brazil is a continental country, so all I can do is to show a way of doing, so others can reproduce those techniques and search for their own ingredients in their own terroirs - or territories, as I prefer to call them. I want to open a path for others to walk along and incorporate their own cultures. And it is impressive what we can do in Brazil – both in the beaches and countryside, from North to South, from the Amazon to the Pampas. There is just so much we can still taste and toast to and with.

The most amazing thing about Brazil is when you find a new ingredient – be it a fruit, a bark, a plant, or a herb – you get to know the traditional knowledge behind them – both the ancestral way and the popular way that this ingredient have been used throughout time. Then you learn a bit more about Brazil along the way.

ASI: I feel like in the wine world there is currently a lot of innovation that is based on ancestral ways of making wine, not least of which is the movement to natural winemaking and the use of amphora. Do you feel like you are also reviving historic traditions in Brazil via what you are doing?

NP: Definitely. My research involves both the ingredients and their traditions, but also their history, how they were and still are used by those who have been guarding and preserving this culture. When I talk about “garrafadas” that is exactly what I am doing: using both form and content that is ours, Brazilian, and have been passing from generation to generation orally. I intend to register that, and to show that by looking at the past we can build a different future, and work



with this in a more meaningful and authentic present. My next book, which will come out early in 2025 is dedicated to the historic traditions of drinks and cocktails, and ancestral beverages, among other subjects. I truly believe that there is a lot of culture still hidden in our sips and bottles.

I know it sounds odd, but if you go to a supermarket here in Brazil, you will probably find more fruits and plants, and other foods that are NOT regional and local. We have a terrible way of treating what is ours, and it is about time we change that to value and appreciate more what is Brazilian than what comes from abroad. To recognise what is ours is a good first step. Here is where my work becomes very valuable. It helps us recognise what is ours so we can both use and preserve it.

ASI: Do you believe learning about a country's food and drink traditions provides insights on culture. Do you think your work brings new awareness of Brazilian culture?

NP: I hope it does, that is precisely why I do what I do: to value and to celebrate the Brazilian culture, ingredients, people and traditions. It is a different way, maybe a more fun way to talk about a culture. Offering a cocktail, showing a new ingredient, playing with flavours, and techniques, is interesting not only for foreigners, but for Brazilians as well. It is a way for Brazilians and foreigners alike to get to know these ingredients, flavours and all the popular and traditional knowledge attached to them. In addition, it is an awareness of our techniques, and our way of using alcohol, plants, fermentation, etcetera. Even more importantly, it is a way to alert us about our environment and the need to take care of our biomes and plant diversity.

ASI: What are some Brazilian ingredients you use for cocktails, infusions you think the world should know about?

NP: You got me here! So many! But I will choose three: a herb, a bark and a fruit.

First, a herb that is already famous because it is related to the Sichuan pepper, which is “jambu” (*Acmella oleracea*). Jambu is used in North Brazil to season typical dishes such as Tacacá and also its flower, known as “jamburana” is traditionally infused in cachaça. Besides the herbal and a bit of a salty taste, it also tingles the tastebuds and leaves the mouth a bit numb, intensifying salivation. It is an amazing flavour and sensation. One of the cocktails I make with it, is I use the leaves that are weaker in the tingling aspect, infused in gin to make a “Trembling” Fitzgerald.

The second, a fruit: “jurubeba” (*Solanum paniculatum*). It is a cousin of the tomato, but a lot smaller, not as popular, and green in colour. It is rich in umami, sweet and bitter, tannic and has a mouth-filling flavour. It is used traditionally to help relieve liver pains, but in gastronomy as a pickle and it is also used to make a very popular, but cheap wine. I am very much into it and do, amongst other things, make a cocktail with vodka infused with jurubeba and cynar. Not suprisingly, it makes a great Bloody Mary vodka as well. Its roots are also delicious: normally used to make teas and popular medicines for the liver and stomach, they have a minty, woody, fresh earthy flavour that works amazingly well in amaro and vermouth.

Last but not least, catuaba. Catuaba is a tree, and its barks are well known for their stimulating properties. Also used in popular medicine for sexual problems, and as a natural “aphrodisiac”, its flavour is amazing: very tannic, very woody, very astringent. It is also tart. It is used for a very cheap mixed beverage that is sold during carnival in Brazil, but I use its barks to do both a vermouth and a liquor with it and have it replacing vermouth rosso in both Negronis, Boulevardiers, Rabo de Galos, and Manhattans. It also goes very well with tonic water.

There are loads more: our little berries are amazing, and there are so many barks and plants. You just have to come taste it here and toast to our amazing Brazilian culture! Saúde, as we say!

“That is precisely why I do what I do: to value and to celebrate the Brazilian culture, ingredients, people and traditions.”

– Néli Pereira



Grains and Grapes: wines and cocktails sharing the stage

With Steve Pineau and Mason Ng



FEATURE ARTICLE



Steve Pineau

The notion of fine dining being the exclusive domain of wine is vanishing as consumers who have grown up on cocktail culture enter mid-life. Increasingly grapes and grains are co-mingling as savvy sommeliers and mixologists erase the longstanding divide between the bar, the domain of mixologists, and the sommelier's cellar. We ask two sommeliers to weigh in on their thoughts about finding balance between their wine, spirits, and cocktail programmes.

Mason Ng works as the Wine Director for the Park90 Group. In 2019 he won both Best Sommelier of Singapore and Best Sommelier of South-East Asia titles. Last year he won the title of Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania. Before his current position and after time spent working at 3 Michelin Star, Les Amis restaurant, Ng took time to up his spirit knowledge and cocktail skills at Singapore's ATLAS, an award-winning cocktail and Champagne bar.

Steve Pineau is a well-known UK-based barman known for creating bars that are one part cocktail bar and one part wine bar. He is the co-founder of London's Old Brompton Wine Bar, Case Wine Bar and Cheese Shop and Owner of L'atelier du Vin & Prohibition Cocktail Bar, in Brighton. Prior to opening his own establishments, Pineau worked as an industry consultant and in the past worked alongside the great Gérard Basset as Bar Manager at the Hotel du Vin. Of his time there Pineau remarks "when I first met Gérard at the Hotel du Vin in Winchester, what struck me was Gerard's varied drinks interests and his vast knowledge about pretty much anything that was liquid. Gérard knew and had tasted everything one could imagine or name, from Aquavit to Chartreuse (Gérard's favourite drink).

Grains and Grapes: wines and cocktails sharing the stage



“In this time and era, I think it’s important to diversify and provide more options for guests, especially quality beverages be it alcoholic or otherwise.”

– Mason Ng

As a young barman this was mind blowing! He was the first person in the beverage industry I knew who cared and knew about spirits as much as he cared about wine. All I can say is that I was so lucky to meet him in those early years of my career as he enabled me to pursue my passion of spirits, as well as develop love and appreciation for wine.”

While Pineau and Ng come from different sides of the proverbial bar, both see similar trends occurring in the industry. Pineau says “over the last 25 years, diners are more courageous and knowledgeable, both about wine and spirits. Trends and guest expectations have shifted over the years and it is not unknown to have guests who want to match food courses with wine, cocktails or even beers. Variety and guests’ individualities, and “forwardness” to ask what they want is truly shaping the way we, restaurants are thinking, cooking, and shaping both our food and drinks menus.” It is a point supported by Ng who says “in this time and era, I think it’s important to diversify and provide more options for guests, especially quality beverages be it alcoholic or otherwise. For me, I think apart from spirits and cocktails for alcoholic options, sake should have a bigger placement on wine lists. There are so many micro-breweries which I visited recently

in Japan, one of them even showed us sake grown on different terroirs - Taturiki Terroir Sake, that was an absolutely mind-blowing visit.”

It is an evolution Pineau has been witnessing for some time, as the period when service was predominantly about wine, and spirits simply a suggestion of Cognac or Whisky post dinner has gone. This evolution inspired Pineau’s vision to bring wine and spirits together, and to as he says, “cohesively interlace the guest journey with balanced and knowledgeable service that brings wine and bar together. A guest journey that is rich with spirit and wine elements finally tuned and at the same table.”

With knowledge bases for both bartenders and sommeliers at an all-time high, is it reasonable to think a sommelier can be a mixologist, bartender or vice-versa?

Pineau doesn’t think so. “In my establishments we try to get a good level of sommelier with a good basic knowledge of bar, but saying this, there are still two different jobs at stake. Unfortunately, its nearly impossible to be able to get a high level in both. Gérard (Basset) might have been the only one who was indeed able to do both. My barman and Sommeliers usually work in the same team but have their own skills.” Pineau likens it to the difference between the main kitchen and pastry, noting although they work in the same department, they have different skills.” Ng agrees “my girlfriend is a bartender, and we discuss this often. I have learned a lot from her, in fact she was my coach for the Best Sommelier of Asia and Oceania competition for the cocktails and spirit section. The simple answer is while both jobs, are seemingly similar in terms of handling beverages, they are extremely different and to some extent, almost unlinked. A bartender can be an extremely successful one if they are able to



“I see this only as an invitation to experiment and bring grain (spirit) and grape (wine) closer to them.”

– Steve Pineau



fully grasp the flavours of each component and utilise it correctly, with balance. A general sommelier, however, would have no clue of blending different components into one or even customising a drink for someone. To the contrary, if a wine list doesn't have the flavour profile that one seeks, the best bet is to recommend the closest possible option, not adding sugar into an Alsace Riesling, if you understand my point. I think as a sommelier you need to know all your classic cocktails, basic cocktail services as well as have spirits, liquor knowledge. As a floor staff, I always say this, knowledge is your passport to go anywhere, everywhere. The more you study, be it wines or cocktails, the more opportunity will arise, it will bring you to places, so never stop studying or learning.”

Transitioning from a wine-centric establishment to one with more balance comes with investment. Does that investment both in labour and inventory justify itself? Pineau answers, “I obviously say yes. Guests are nowadays “liberated” to explore and not conform to standard offerings, so

I see this only as an invitation to experiment and bring grain (spirit) and grape (wine) closer to them. With allergies and guest desires not to be led nowadays, it only makes sense to have variety on offer, both economically for one single experience, but also building up a rapport with guests for the future.” Ng identifies having a broad range of offerings gives the guest a level of comfort and choice, saying, “some people enjoy having a Bourbon with their caviar while most prefer Champagnes. Who are we to judge if a guest enjoys it? I feel the most important aspect of hospitality in the food and beverage industry is to listen to what guests like or look for, not shoving a bottle of wine you learned about on a recent wine trip, unless, of course, they ask. I think the investment is worth the return as you have more options up your sleeves to provide your guests.”

As for what's currently trending, Pineau says, “consumers are asking for spirits like straight whisky, rum, and tequila as public knowledge is growing. It is rather rewarding when you can meet someone's

needs and maybe even surprise them with something interesting from your collection. Rum and tequila are definitely growing and very surprisingly absinthe is too, not served as a shot but the ‘proper way’ with the sugar and via the Fontaine of Water.”

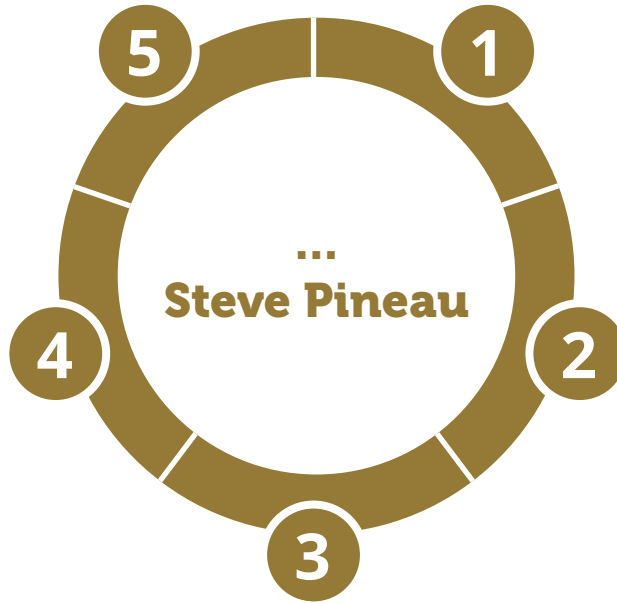
Ng says, “interestingly, I see a trend of cocktail groups having a better emphasis on the wine programmes in their outlets. Some are even expanding to list natural wines too, since the vibe is generally more relaxed, casual and fun. A few cocktail groups that come to mind include The Nutmeg & Clove group which includes a few other projects. 0202 and the Last Word, having a wine programme of around 100 labels, spanning from natural wines, grower Champagnes to classic wines as well as Grande Marquees. Another one would be the Jigger and Pony group, with outlets like Rosemead and Humpback, which has a great wine programme led by Head Sommelier Marcus Tan. This is to show that restaurants and wine bars should likewise, up their game too.”

5 Favourites with...

Favourite cocktail: Sazerac

Favourite wine to enjoy by the glass: Chassagne Montrachet, Les Masures, Gagnard

Favourite spirit to enjoy neat: Laberdolive 79
Domaine Journey



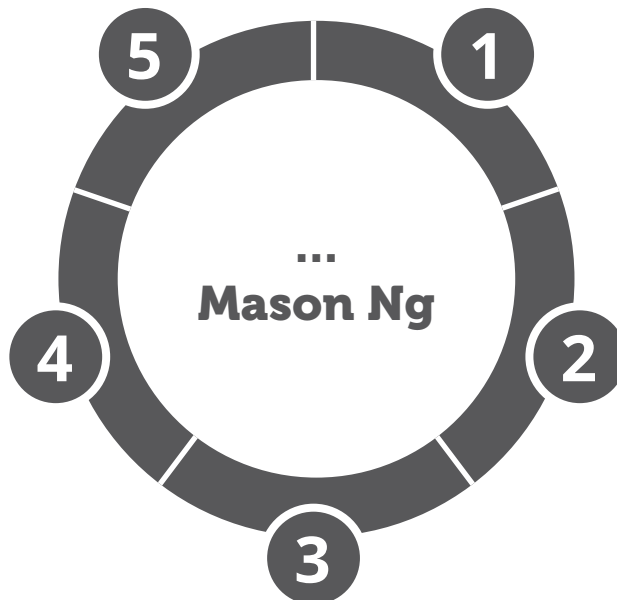
Favourite post-work beverage: Campari and Tonic

Favourite beer: Kwack

Favourite cocktail: Fernet Sour

Favourite wine to enjoy by the glass: A beautifully sweet Tokaji

Favourite spirit to enjoy neat: Vodka, Beluga Gold Line, iced, chilled



Favourite post-work beverage: Ice-cold Whisky Highball, made with a simple Blended Scotch Whisky such as Johnnie Walker Black Label.

Favourite beer: Estrella Damm Inedit

Beer-onomics: satiating consumer demand is always good business



With Jesse Vallins

“There are a lot of flavours present in beer that are absent or rare in wine, so anything that a beer brings to the table that wine doesn’t is a natural advantage if it helps your pairing.”

Chef Jesse Vallins is an Advanced Level Cicerone and a graduate of the Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers Sommelier Certification Program. While he knows grapes, and works as a chef at Barberian's Steakhouse, which is home to one of Canada's largest wine collections, his passion lies in beer. We asked Chef Vallins about where beer's place is in a fine dining setting and how sommeliers, in general, are doing with incorporating the world's most popular fermented beverage into their drinks programme.

ASI: What inspired you to become a cicerone?

Jesse Vallins (JV): Ever since starting in restaurants as a teenager, I've had a passion for flavour and always found the world of drinks and pairings fascinating. As such, I've always sought to expand my knowledge on the subject. I went after the Cicerone certification, at first, because I wanted to prove that I wasn't just a beer geek, that I had good beer knowledge. From there it's been the desire to be not just a chef, but a well-rounded professional in hospitality. I decided to take the advanced exam because I felt I'd progressed further than the certified level and wanted something to show for that. It's opened opportunities for teaching and writing which I really enjoy. I would love to challenge the Master Cicerone exam one day, but I would need to put aside a lot of time to study. Perhaps in a couple of years.

ASI: You work at a restaurant, Barberian's Steakhouse, that is known for having one of the biggest wine lists in Canada. How does beer find a place on the beverage list at Barbarians?

JV: Barberian's is undeniably a wine destination, so as one might guess, beer is a small portion of our beverage programme. We do have options for guests who want beer or aren't wine drinkers, though. We even have a beer brewed exclusively for us by Henderson Brewing in Toronto called Barberian's Rare Ale, it's an oak aged English style ale and it pairs extremely well with steak.



Barberian's Steakhouse

FEATURE ARTICLE

Beer-onomics: satiating consumer demand is always good business

ASI: With shifting consumer preferences there was a big rise in demand in craft beer in the 2010s. Are you finding this translated to consumers becoming more interested in having a craft beer, instead of wine, at the restaurant?

JV: Only a small amount at Barberian's due to our wine focus. Not surprisingly, as you wouldn't go to a sushi restaurant and look for a wide selection of cooked dishes or non-fish items on the menu, regardless of your preference. That said, I've seen this trend in the hospitality industry in general over the last decade or so, though. I think it's a good thing, it shows people are more educated on beer and open to trying different styles.

ASI: In terms of food and drink pairing, in your opinion, are there any advantages beer has over wine? Do you find customers are interested in exploring beer and food pairings?

JV: In the late 90s when I started getting into beer, pairing it with food was almost unheard of, or at best not taken very seriously. These days with beer's surging popularity, it's a common thing, and I think that's great. There are a lot of flavours present in beer that are absent or rare in wine, so anything

that a beer brings to the table that wine doesn't is a natural advantage if it helps your pairing. After that I think beer's biggest aid to pairing is its carbonation. If we think about why sparkling wine pairs easily with food, part of that has to do with its bubbles that help to scrub rich foods off our tongue and keep our palates fresh for the next bite. Personally, though, I think looking at one beverage or the other as better, or having an advantage, is the wrong approach. Beer will pair easier with certain foods over wine, but if you're honest with yourself, you have to accept that it works the other way around, too. Beyond that, whether we think something is better we have to offer people what they want. For example, to me, beer pairs better with cheese than any other liquid on earth, but if my guest in the restaurant ordering that cheese plate isn't a beer drinker, it doesn't matter. If a paying customer wants to be educated or is open to trying something new, they'll usually let you know, but until then your job is only to please them. I think the best approach for beverage professionals is to see beer and wine as both having a valid spot with food at the table and guide their guests to whichever drink will make them happiest.

ASI: From an economics perspective, are you challenged to make beer part of the fine dining experience?

JV: With how much the cost of everything has increased over the last few years, it's definitely an issue, and the restaurant business is a business, so you always need to be conscious of that. I've had more than one restaurant general manager or owner tell me they didn't want to sell more beer because then the restaurant would make less money. On one hand they have a point, and if something isn't broken it doesn't need fixing. At the same time, I don't think it's necessarily the case that people will order only beer and therefore spend less. Not every guest is looking to order wine by the bottle. A lot of draft, bottled, and canned beer can be sold at prices in line with wines by the glass, and I've had many meals in restaurants where I've ordered beer before getting into the wine list. In these cases, I was spending more than I would have if the beer wasn't there. I know I'm not the only one who enjoys dining this way, so more beer options can increase rather than lower sales.

I think a lot of people might mistake a robust beer programme for a large beer list. A beverage list is meant to be drunk and enjoyed, not drooled over, and it isn't difficult to offer a handful of well-chosen beers on the menu. It shows attention to detail and guests will appreciate it.

ASI: Do you find sommeliers are well-versed in beer knowledge or should there be greater emphasis on beer and other beverages in sommelier programmes?

JV: The short answer is yes, there should be a greater emphasis in sommelier programmes, and sommeliers should be taking it upon themselves to learn about beer and other beverages, too.

The long answer is that it's complicated. On one hand, an individual works toward becoming a sommelier because of a primary interest in wine, so they're going to have that as their main focus, not just over beer, but anything else. Even still, wider beverage

“A beverage list is meant to be drunk and enjoyed, not drooled over, and it isn't difficult to offer a handful of well-chosen beers on the menu.”

knowledge will never be a bad thing, even if you don't need to use it all the time. While I suppose it would depend to a certain point on the type of establishment the sommelier is working for and the expectations of their guests, the hospitality industry

is constantly evolving, and a sommelier should have a good knowledge of anything being offered on their list.

I've been studying beer and wine for over 20 years and have worked with a lot of people in the drink's

world. Sommeliers are better versed in beer than they used to be, but there's still a long way to go. A sommelier certification is an impressive achievement, it shows dedication and knowledge, but we shouldn't forget to stay humble and in a state of learning. I get the impression from some sommeliers that beer is easy, it's "just beer", and they don't really have to put a lot of effort into studying to really understand or serve it properly. More than a few times I've heard somms in a restaurant describe a beer to a guest confidently as "malty" or "hoppy", it makes me cringe. If that same sommelier described a wine to you as "grapey", would you take what they were saying very seriously? I've had robust Belgian strong ales served to me near freezing in a shaker pint and it lets me know the restaurant isn't taking beer seriously. This may seem nit-picky, but if you ponied up for a good bottle of Côte-Rôtie, and then it came to you ice cold and poured into a Champagne flute, how would you feel about the money you were spending? I'm not saying all sommeliers should take beer to the level that I have, but if you can memorise all the Grand Crus in Burgundy, you can learn the difference between an ale and a lager and learn some flavour descriptors.



Harvesting the Flavours of Miraval:

The Gardener Gin's Tom Nichol



FEATURE ARTICLE

Harvesting the Flavours of Miraval: The Gardener Gin's Tom Nichol

Tom Nichol isn't your typical 'celebrity' distiller. The man that crafted Tanqueray 10 for Diageo, considered by many as 'the' or 'one of the' greatest gin ever made lives an unassuming life of a retiree in Scotland. The down-to-earth Nichol is almost dismissive of his success saying he has yet to craft a gin he is entirely happy with.



Matthieu Perrin and Tom Nichol

When Matthieu Perrin, of Famille Perrin called about a potential project, he thought it would be impolite not to at least reply. He admits that he is very inquisitive by nature so the idea of working with a chateau in Southern France sounded a little intriguing and it (Southern France) didn't seem like too far to travel.

As for the first call with Perrin, Nichol says it's an important one as he wants to judge the character of the person on the other end of the phone. According to Nichol "who I work with is the most important criteria when deciding to take on a job." After all Nichol doesn't need to work with anyone. He is happy to be retired after years working with beverage behemoth Diageo. As such he is very selective about the projects he works on. Of his first call with Perrin, Nichol says "once I start talking with someone I almost immediately decide if I want to work with them. I must be inspired by the people I work with, and if I don't like them then I won't work with them. That's the bottom line. I don't need to work with anyone, but I liked him (Matthieu Perrin) a lot."

"I must be inspired by the people I work with, and if I don't like them then I won't work with them. That's the bottom line."

Perrin had earned Nichol's respect, but would Perrin agree to his terms. Nichol says he isn't a businessman. Towards the end of those initial conversations, he advises potential clients, including Perrin, of his terms, with a take it or leave it attitude. "They usually say 'okay I will get back to you.' I generally don't expect to hear back but when they do (as Perrin did) there's a moment when reality sets in."

At this point, Nichol was still unaware of the Brad Pitt connection. It wasn't until he confirmed his decision, that he heard of the actor's involvement. Nichol says "I had no idea he was involved at all. It wasn't until after I'd said I would do the project which in this case was during a phone meeting I was running late for.

As I recall I had to take the call in my car as I was stuck in traffic. After I agreed to take on the project Matthieu asked me if I would mind if my signature was on the bottle. I said 'sure'. Then he said told me it will my signature alongside his own and Brad Pitt." It was only then Nichol realised the Oscar-winning actor was part of the project. "To be honest it didn't really matter at all, but once I knew Brad Pitt was involved, I did get back to them and say 'did you really need me?'. To be honest, If you have Brad Pitt on a bottle you can put anything in there and it will sell." Thankfully for Nichol, they wanted quality inside the bottle, which according to Nichol isn't always the case with celebrity brands, some of which he describes as 'horrendous.'

Nichol had started to formulate an image of the gin based on the original input from Perrin and his team, but a trip to Château Miraval, Pitt's southern French estate where he produces wine, in partnership with Famille Perrin, and olive oil, solidified the deal. Once he was there, the picture became that much clearer. Of course, his partners had some requests, in terms of the botanicals and herbs they wanted in the blend. Nichol would get numerous packages sent to him with different potential ingredients. Of the process Nichol says "it took a long time (with a lot of test micro-distillations), before getting to a point where I said I would include this or that. They (Famille Perrin) were very good about the process. They essentially let me do what was needed to achieve balance in the final recipe and flavour profile."

Nichol describes the gin as having a significant citrus component and a taste of Southern France, even of Château Miraval itself. Of the final product, he wanted it to have a welcoming Mediterranean spirit about it. According to Nichol "it had to be something enjoyable, that could be enjoyed on its own, and designed not just for rich people to enjoy on their yachts." As for how to serve it. While Nichol suggests bartenders can enhance the gin through cocktail creation, the gin has also been designed to be drunk on its own, as well. In fact, it's the only way Nichol drinks it.



Brad Pitt and Matthieu Perrin

A Taste of Iceland: arctic flavours

With Alba Hough

Alba Hough is a well-known member of the ASI Family. The former Icelandic sommelier champion and president of the Icelandic Sommelier Association is currently a valued member of the ASI Diversity Committee. She is also the distiller and CPO (Chief Product Officer) of Himbrimi Gin, a project that started as Hough describes as a “kitchen table experiment, while I was working as Head Sommelier for an Icelandic hotel chain.”



The gin which at the time was a fairly raw product but has since been elevated. Hough took over as distiller in 2021. Their gins, produced using a still powered by geothermal energy, are made from wild Icelandic botanicals and finished with Icelandic water which Hough claims to be the best in the world even if “our cousins in the other Nordic countries might protest the assertion.” According to Hough “the original idea for this gin was to have something to bring on holiday fishing trips, made from ingredients found around the rivers and lakes here in Iceland. Almost every ingredient can be picked just by walking down by a stream and they all play an important role in our food culture in general. Juniper, angelica, and arctic thyme are just a few of the botanicals commonly used for curing, marinating, smoking etc. We believe our gins echo those aromatics found in our natural environment.”

Their flagship product ‘Old Tom’ is sweetened with honey which according to Hough results in “an ideal sipping gin that becomes more complex with each sip. It’s a gin that we have found is appreciated by whisky and rum enthusiasts.” Their Himbrimi Winterbird London Dry meanwhile has similar aromatics but has no honey addition resulting in a drier gin which Hough describes as “very Icelandic in structure.” The botanicals used also are part of Icelandic cooking culture as they are same ones used for curing, marinating and smoking. The end result are gins that truly reflect the spirit, culture and terroir of this isolated country surrounded by the chilling waters of the North Atlantic, Greenland and Norwegian seas.

Alba’s Old Tom Negroni

- 1 oz (3 cl) Himbrimi Old Tom Gin
- 1 oz (3 cl) Campari
- 1 oz (3 cl) Amaro Montenegro
- Orange peel

Directions:

Place Himbrimi Old Tom Gin, Campari and Amaro Montenegro in an ice-filled mixing glass. Stir to desired dilution. Pour into glass with a single, large ice cube. Rim glass with orange peel and express over the glass. Add to glass as a garnish.

**Hough suggests substituting sweet vermouth traditionally used to make a Negroni with Amaro Montenegro.*

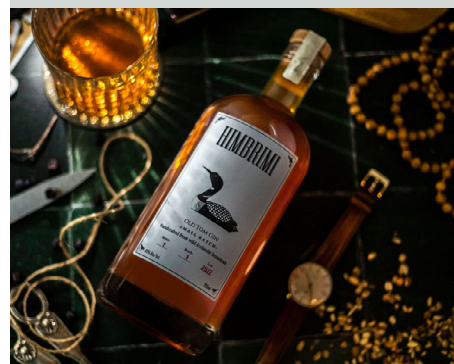
Two Dirty Birds

- 2 oz (6 cl) Himbrimi Winterbird London Dry
- ½ oz (1.5 cl) Himbrimi Old Tom
- 2 dashes Electric Bitters*
- 3 drops olive oil
- 3 Taggiasca olives, for garnish

Directions:

Place ingredients in an ice-filled mixing glass. Stir to desired dilution. Pour into glass with a single, large ice cube. Garnish with olives.

**The main botanical used is acmella oleracea, also known as the ‘electric daisy.’*



See you in Coimbra!

Coimbra, Portugal - 7, 8 & 9 November, 2023

www.winefuture.org

New Consumers – Innovations – Economy – Marketing – Diversity

The Wine Industry at a Crossroads

Wine Future 2023, to be held in the beautiful and historic city of Coimbra from 7th to 9th November 2023, will address a wine industry at a crossroads. The challenges are myriad, and both external and intrinsic to the current shape of the industry. Climate change, economic upheaval, competition from other beverages, including no/low alcohol, and the war in Ukraine all present substantial external challenges. Internally, the industry is struggling with generational shift, both in its workforce and its consumers, and to move away from both a real and perceived focus on middle-aged, straight, cis-gender white men as its core.

Wine Future 2023 will address all of these issues, with a broad range of exciting, challenging and compelling speakers. Keynote speakers include the multi-talented Bruce Dickinson, Iron Maiden front man, airline pilot, fencer and brewer; Dr Laura Catena, known as the face of Argentine wine and an expert in wine and health; Max Trejo, General Secretary for the International Youth Organisation will speak about the importance of moderation, and efforts to tackle problem drinking in young people; Rob McMillan will discuss the Silicon Valley Bank's highly rated State of the Wine Industry report; and Nobel laureate Sir Christopher Pissarides will explore the future of the world economy and the impact of technology, especially AI, on the wine industry labour market.

Panels will include discussions on diversity, equality and inclusion in the wine industry; the role of influencers; sustainability and greenwashing, the impact of advanced technologies, and the role of wine tourism.

There are also three spectacular tastings, covering icon wines from around the world hosted by Mark Squires, legendary fortified wines led by Richard Mayson, and the stars of the Portuguese wine industry led by Dirceu Vianna Jr MW.

Good to the Last Drop: maximising the coffee experience

With Paulo Grifo

For many decades, in Western European and North American dining situations, the offer of coffee or espresso at the end of the meal was done with little motivation or thought other than a natural closing to a meal. A lot has changed as coffee culture has exploded in last quarter century, with consumers seeking out the origins of their beans, the specificity of the roasting process, and embracing a myriad of coffee drinks personalized to their own specific tastes. We asked Paulo Grifo, Barista Trainer at the Coffee Science Center Barista Academy by Delta Cafés in Portugal to discuss the evolution of coffee service.

ASI: Do you think it is fair to say that there has been a revolution in coffee service over the last quarter century?

Paolo Grifo (PG): When we look at the revolution in coffee service it is important to analyse the history of coffee consumption to understand contemporary consumer preferences and rituals. Today consumers use coffee as a mean for the expression of individual personality. They study geographical origins, and the impact of the coffee roasting profile on cup quality and on the tasting experience.

The increasing awareness of the consumers about the role of the barista, that not only offers you the perfect espresso carefully brewed to reveal and cherish the identity of each coffee but also signature beverages that allow tasting and discovering new flavour combinations are intangible benefits which promote connoisseurship.

From here it is natural that consumers start looking after new ways of combining coffee not only in beverage format, but as a pairing to food. A certain roasting profile can result in aroma notes that are complementary pairings with food. The possibilities are endless and truly inspiring.

ASI: Do you find restaurants are 'upping' their coffee service game?

PG: Yes. There is an increasingly larger number of chefs interacting with baristas to find the best pairing between their gastronomic offer and the coffee which is an important part of the overall tasting experience. At Delta Cafés we believe that there are two important aspects related to what you refer as upping the coffee service: firstly, the opportunity for demonstrating social distinction through connoisseurship and taste, enhancing the importance of referencing the origin of the





Paulo Grifo

coffee you are presenting and, secondly, the endless possibilities of synergies between food proposition and coffee which can inclusively allow to work on coffee flavour design through different roasting profiles to achieve a specific coffee character. Moreover, the different possible rituals of brewing, the surrounding environment in the café or in the restaurant, the moment of the day in which you have the tasting experience, allow to create new experiences for which there is a consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for their coffees.

In Portugal, our coffee culture is mostly based on blends, not on single origin coffees. In our coffee we seek balance. However, in some top restaurants, knowing a coffee's origins and how it's cultivated, as well as knowing if it is farmed sustainably or not, are becoming increasingly important.

ASI: Is there a terroir of coffee?

PG: Yes, there is. When we refer to the terroir we are talking about how the quality of a cup coffee is driven based on the chemistry of the green coffee bean that results from environmental factors such as altitude, radiation, temperature, water availability,

and seasonality, from coffee plant species and varietal, and how the plant is responding to the local climate conditions through its ecophysiology during the green coffee bean development, and also from the local agricultural practices (shade trees, irrigation, fertilisation, soil characteristics and local geology). Agriculture, the origins of which can be traced to the early Holocene, has been fundamental in shaping the development of human society. Given its importance, the accurate estimate of crop yields in the past can shed light on several questions, also concerning coffee production, the aspects of the relationship between coffee production and the natural resources usage, enabling to infer cultivation strategies of a particular period and to evaluate the environmental effects of the land use. This is important work that scientists have been developing combining several domains of expertise to better understand what improves the coffee quality. The diversity in the combination of these edaphoclimatic factors along the coffee production zone, approximately 25 South Latitude to 25 North Latitude suggests right away the importance of the terroir to coffee quality.

“This is important work that scientists have been developing combining several domains of expertise to better understand what improves the coffee quality.”

“The process requires constant training and experimenting to tell the beautiful story of the value chain of each coffee.”

Nonetheless, we should not forget the impact of the post-harvest processing of the coffee, and that the green coffee bean works as a reactor under a specific roasting profile, so everything that composes it from the chemical point of view determines the result of the roasting process, and ultimately the tasting experience.

ASI: How should coffee be stored to ensure maximum freshness?

PG: While closed in the package, coffee must be stored in a dark place, away from sources of heat and water, we must pay attention and use the FIFO rule (First In, First Out) so that we do not let the coffee age, from the moment of opening the packaging, coffee should be consumed as soon as possible. The remainder should be kept in a dry place, without oxygen, preferably in a vacuum or in a container that allows air to be removed so as not to cause oxidation.

ASI: What are some of things a sommelier, beverage manager can do, in terms of staff training, to ensure the coffee they serve is the best it can be?

PG: I recommend working collaboratively with coffee experts and having your team talk with customers.

We (Delta Cafés) have our own in-house methodology, at our factory at Campo Maior, Portugal, for sensory analysis of the coffee encompassing both chemical and sensory analysis, conducted by our scientists, coffee tasters and our roaster, to create a sensory claim to communicate with the consumers. On the other hand, our baristas, at Barista Academy, who are the ones serving the coffee to the consumers, offer knowledge and sensory guidelines, and encourage the consumer and our clients to try new tasting experiences. When doing this, the

barista is guiding the consumer in the tasting experience of the coffee and can share the complexity of the terroir, the diversity of geographical origins, and the impact of the roasting process. The process requires constant training and experimenting to tell the beautiful story of the value chain of each coffee.





Reading the Tea Leaves: what's the future of after- dinner service?

With Jeff Ho

The no and low alcohol movement isn't only occurring before and during a meal. The rise of single source tea and elevated coffee service is bringing a renewed appreciation for post dinner non-alcoholic beverages. The world's best fine dining establishments are recognising thoughtful commitments to their tea and coffee programmes is enhancing their guests overall experience. Leading the way are sommeliers who are growing increasingly familiar with guiding diners through the complete beverage selection process, including recommending the perfect tea or coffee to complement their meal, dessert or simply their personal preferences.

Discovering the nuance of tea and coffee is not unfamiliar territory for sommeliers as the concept of terroir in wine can be translated to single source teas and coffees. Increasingly sommeliers are offering products that allow diners to explore the intricacies of different growing regions. Whether is it the lush tea gardens of Darjeeling to the high-altitude coffee plantations of Ethiopia, these beverages encapsulate the essence of their origin.

Jeff Ho is one of Singapore's leading mixologists, but his love of beverages is widespread. In addition to his knowledge of wine, spirits, and mixology, he is a Certified Cicerone, a Sake Sommelier, a Certified Tea Master, a Certified Tea Blender, and holds a Coffee Skills Diploma.

ASI: Do you think it is fair to say that there has been a revolution in tea service over the last decade?

Jeff Ho (JH): I have noticed a shift towards using specialty tea for non-alcoholic beverages especially in restaurants that celebrate artisanal excellence because these specialty teas are often only produced in limited quantities. However, this is a gentle shift rather than a revolution. That being said, demand is picking up because there is a trend of shifting to low ABV or no ABV beverages in food services globally. In Asia, we have teenagers growing up drinking bubble tea which uses various types of tea from Taiwan so we have a generation of consumers already quite familiar with tea.



Jeff Ho

ASI: Have the days of a waiter bringing out a wooden box of tea bags gone by the wayside? What styles of tea styles are driving demand?

JH: Tea bags in a wooden box service is not going away anytime soon for most food service establishments because apart from China, Japan and Korea, people in most countries grow up drinking tea with milk and sugar for many generations. Nevertheless, there is a growing demand for white tea in Europe, with many restaurants and tea bars serving them. This is not surprising given white tea is quite easy to pair with most food and equally delicious to drink on its own.

ASI: Do you find restaurants are 'upping' their tea service game?

JH: Some restaurants in Europe are offering tea sommelier service and when the cocktail bar Atlas (#5, Asia's 50 Best Bars) opened in 2017, it had a specially curated tea menu. I have also come across some higher end establishments offering non-alcoholic programs to let their teetotaller patrons enjoy a well put together food and beverage pairing experience in addition to wine or sake pairing.

ASI: When preparing tea for service what are some of the things you should do to ensure proper preparation and service of tea?

JH: One of the most important things that we can prepare in advance is water. Use good quality soft filtered water, neither mineral nor distilled water. Best to leverage on technology and use a temperature-controlled kettle to bring water up to the correct temperature and hold it there rather than boiling at 100 Celsius (°C) and cooled to 80°C because you would have lost some precious dissolved oxygen in the water by boiling it all the way to 100°C. By extension, always preheat your teapot and drink ware to the correct temperature before using them so that the tea is always served at the right temperature.

ASI: What are the main categories of tea, and how should each style be served?

JH: There are 6 main types of tea in the world, namely green tea, white tea, yellow tea, oolong tea, black tea and dark tea. Each style should be served differently. First of all, serving teas in their authentic vessel provides an aesthetically pleasing way of enjoying them. In addition, the shape and material of teacups do affect our perception of the tea much like the different glassware used for wines. An equally important decision is the material

of teapot such as glass, porcelain, or Zisha (Yixing) clay teapot. The heat retention properties of each material matter significantly to the resultant tea.

As far as food and tea pairing, generally I would group white tea buds, yellow tea and green tea together because they tend to be delicate and lighter in flavour intensity. Hence, they work well with food that are light and clean in flavours. The rest of the white tea and lightly oxidised oolongs have flavours that are medium in intensity. Heavily oxidised and roasted oolongs, black tea and dark tea are the Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz of teas so should pair well with dishes that are robust in flavours. Desserts traditionally goes with black tea, milk and sugar. However, you can explore pairing desserts with heavily oxidised and roasted oolongs like Feng Huan Dang Cong from Guang Dong, China or Dong Ding oolong from Taiwan.

ASI: Is there a terroir of tea?

JH: Similar to grapes, different varieties of tea grow best in different climates and soil, for example some varieties prefer large day and night temperature differences. The distinct taste of Da Hong Pao from Wuyi mountain in Fujian, China represents the "cliff flavour" of the growing region which consists mainly of rocks, so

"One of the most important things that we can prepare in advance is water. Use good quality soft filtered water, neither mineral nor distilled water."

their roots do not penetrate deeply into the soil. The resultant mineral taste, together with being heavily roasted, culminate in an iconic taste that is highly prized. Lightly oxidised high-altitude oolongs from Ali Shan in Taiwan represent the best of fresh, elegant tea with beautiful aroma of white flowers. Heavily oxidised and roasted Red oolong (aka brandy oolong) from Luye, low altitude East Coast of Taiwan provides delicious sweet and robust fruit forward flavours that are not well know outside of Taiwan. Shade grown tea, Gyokuro from Uji Japan, is traditionally served to emperors and is prized for its rich umami and sweet flavours. The above are some of my favourite teas.

ASI: Should herbal teas be identified along with 'true tea' (from *Camellia Sinensis* plant) on a beverage list?

JH: Herbal infusions, also known as tisanes, should be identified as a separate beverage because they are caffeine free. They can also be organised by their various properties such as calming (chamomile), energising (ginger) and detoxifying (lemongrass).

ASI: How should tea be stored to ensure maximum freshness?

JH: It is best to store tea away from heat and sunlight, moisture and other ingredients with strong odours such as spices. I would also suggest vacuum sealing delicate teas such as Chinese and Japanese green teas and the most delicate white tea buds such as Bai Hao Yin Zhen and place them in a chiller to extend their freshness beyond first year of harvest.





AUSTRIA:

THE INCOMPARABLE LIGHTNESS OF WINE



The modern trend for fresher and lighter wines is an open goal for Austria's vintners: the production of white wines with these characteristics is precisely where they excel. And as for red wines, richness, power and concentration are also taking a back seat to let elegance, balance and drinkability come to the fore.

Located in the heart of Europe, the wine-growing country of Austria is situated exactly at the crossroads between warmer and colder climates. The requisite conditions for making wines with a perfect balance between ripeness and freshness are consequently good. Nowadays, a long vegetation period with warm autumn days ensures that grapes reach a high degree of ripeness just about every year. As a result, winegrowers can pay even more attention to the most important characteristic of Austrian wines: their distinctive freshness. This freshness relies on both the cooler nights that are brought about by the climate and a perfectly timed harvest, which ensures that the grapes retain their valuable acidity. Choosing the right time to harvest more than pays off as a trend towards lighter, highly quaffable wines is becoming noticeable around the world. As a result, ever more winegrowers are taking advantage of the favourable conditions in Austria to produce wines that combine an intense flavour, depth and complexity with the unmistakable light-footedness of Austrian wines.



Make Me a Match

The Globalisation of Sake

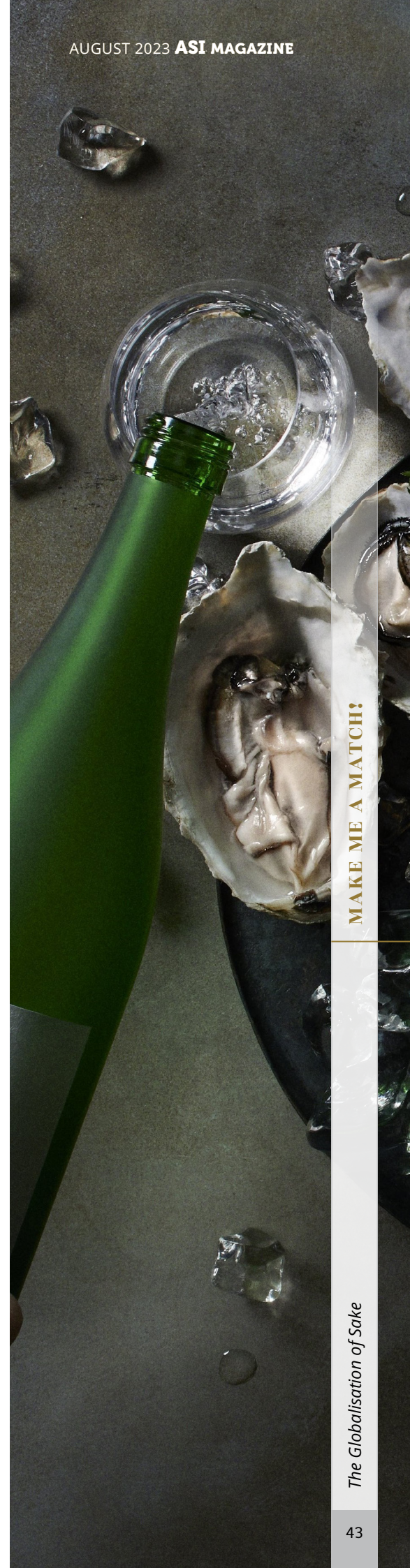
With Hitoshi Utsunomiya, Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association (JSS)

Over the last decade, sake has begun to break out of its traditional role. According to Hitoshi Utsunomiya of Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association (JSS), the rise of sake, which has witnessed more than 10 years of sustained growth, is attributable to a rising number of Japanese restaurants outside of Japan. Yet, while this rise in volume, particularly in key markets like the US and China, is attributable to the expansion of Japanese cuisine, thanks to the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association and their focus on education, sake is starting to transcend the traditional and enter a modern new world of cuisine.

This has been a key piece of the JSS strategy. According to Utsunomiya “we intended to introduce sake to the world, paired not only with Japanese cuisine but more diverse styles of food.” Utsunomiya also sees the value of sake as a pairing increasing. “I think the cuisine worldwide is gradually changing, focusing more on ingredients itself. Focusing less on complicated processes and more on the simplicity of ingredients. Consumers are also more interested in eating seafood, for the health benefits. All these factors give sake a great opportunity to be incorporated onto a drink’s menu, for the pairing aspects.”

As for where and how sake should be introduced into a beverage programme, Utsunomiya sees sake as being a by the glass “on a wine list, next to the Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc there would be an option of for sake by the glass.” Not surprisingly Utsunomiya doesn’t see sake limited to a single by the glass option on a wine list. “Within sake we have different styles. If we are successful in educating sommeliers, they will be able to talk to consumers about various types of sake they offer and the food to pair with them.”

What was Utsunomiya favourite pairing? He says, “it was a course at the 2023 ASI Best Sommelier of the World Contest in France, featuring scallops paired with Junmai Ginjo.”



MAKE ME A MATCH:

The Globalisation of Sake



Atsuhide Hoshiyama

Bringing Sake to the Table

Atsuhide Hoshiyama is a specialist of both wine and sake based in Hyogo, Japan. On the wine side he holds an ASI Diploma, Japan Sommelier Association Sommelier Excellence, a Diploma in Wine & Spirits from WSE, and is a Masters of Wine student. His sake accreditations are of similar stature, as he possesses a WSET Level 3 Award in Sake, J.S.A. Sake Diploma and works as a sake critic for *Robert Parker Wine Advocate*.

“The umami of sake is a bridge to food ingredients. Sake, rich in umami, creates a synergistic effect with foodstuffs rich in amino acids.”

ASI: What advantages, if any, does sake present in terms of structure and flavour as it relates to food and drink pairing?

Atsuhide Hoshiyama (AH): Sake has a wide range of structure and flavours, so it depends on categories and producer’s philosophy. Each style of sake has different advantages.

ASI: What makes sake different from wine in terms of structure?

AH: Most sakes have a sweetness (even dry styles) that allows them to be paired with a wider range of foods than wine.

Sake with a higher degree of rice polishing ratio has more umami. Sake rich in umami enhances the taste of fish roe, bluefish, and other strong ingredients that are difficult to pair with wine, without bringing out negative elements. In addition, some sake has a bitterness derived from umami, and this bitterness can add complexity to food pairings.

Unfiltered sake has a mellow texture due to the sake lees contained in the liquid. This mellow texture not only works well with foods with a lot of umami, but also softens the stimulation of spicy foods. Therefore, it can be paired with dishes that use hot spices.

Sake can change its structure by changing temperatures: at temperatures below 12°C, the structure becomes lean; at around 40°C, the sweetness and umami are more pronounced and the texture is mellow; at temperatures above 50°C, the acidity becomes more pronounced and the sake becomes drier, giving it a tighter structure. Therefore, one sake can be paired with multiple dishes by changing the temperature.

ASI: What makes sake different from wine in terms of flavour profile?

AH: The Ginjo and Daiginjo styles have gorgeous banana and apple flavours that bring out ethyl caproate and isoamyl acetate. This style of sake can be paired not only with fruit and raw vegetable dishes, but also with delicately sweet Japanese sweets.

Many Junmai styles, such as sake made from the Kimoto and Yamahai methods, have almost no fruit flavours and are dominated by spice and grain flavours. These styles can enhance the flavours of strong ingredients such as game and shellfish without interfering with their flavour profile.

Aged sake has a soy sauce-like spice and dried fruit flavours because the Maillard reaction progresses more rapidly than in wine. In addition, complex flavours like mushrooms and nuts develop. For this reason, it pairs well not only with soy sauce, but also with spiced sauces and well-seasoned dishes. This style of sake also often has a high sugar content, making it a good match for grain-baked desserts such as tarts and moon cakes.

ASI: Sake has been traditionally associated with classic Japanese cuisine on the dinner table. Do you think sake can be, and how, paired with non-Japanese, even Western cuisine?

AH: Most Western cuisine does not use sugar in its cooking, but this does not mean that the sweetness of sake does not play a role: Western cuisine appetisers include fruit and fruit sauces, and the sugar in sake blends well with the sugar in the fruit. The sugar content of sake can also enrich the taste of food. The sugar content of sake also contributes to the richness of texture, making fatty dishes richer in taste. The sweetness of sake also adds dimension and complexity to the taste of sauces.

The umami of sake is a bridge to food ingredients. Sake, rich in umami, creates a synergistic effect with foodstuffs rich in amino acids. The synergistic effect of umami on stock-based sauces is of course obvious, but when combined with the lactic acidity of sake, ingredients such as cheese achieve a high level of harmony.

Sake can be enjoyed at a higher temperature range, thus better blending in the mouth with warmer dishes. Red wines are served at a higher temperature range than white wines, but with some exceptions, such as Italian Cacciucco (seafood stew), they are difficult to harmonise with seafood dishes. White and rosé wines served



at lower temperatures reduce the volatility of flavours in the food by lowering the temperature in the mouth and also harden the texture of the food. Not only does sake pair well with seafood, but it can be served at a higher temperature than red wine, so it does not interfere with the textures and volatile flavours of the dish. This makes it possible to enjoy a variety of warm Western cuisine.

ASI: Should sake be presented on drinks list intermingled with wine or do you think it should remain as its own section?

AH: Depends on the drink list. If the restaurant has just one drink list which includes all categories of beverages, sake of course should be intermingled in the list. However, if the restaurant has independent wine list, sake should remain as its own section. As I mentioned above, sake has a wide range of styles and categories. Most wine lists have several category headers like Sparkling, White, Rosé, Red, Sweet, Country, Region, even Natural wine, etcetera. Each sake

should be put into a category, that is easy to understand by customers. This does not necessarily have to be a traditional categorisation. In some cases, a categorisation that is easier to understand for customers unfamiliar with sake, such as "fruity," "savoury," "rich," or "delicate," may be more appropriate.

Five Classic Sake and Japanese Food Pairings

Ginjo

Service Temperature: 6 to 8°C

Pairing: Squid Sashimi with salt and Sudachi citrus juice.

Junmai Daiginjo

Service Temperature: 8°C to 12°C

Pairing: Nerikiri, a traditional Japanese sweet made by mixing sweetened white bean paste with refined rice flour

Honjozo

Service Temperature: 50°C to 60°C

Pairing: Grilled Mackerel with salt

Junmai (Kimoto method)

Service Temperature: 35°C to 45°C

Pairing: Japanese eel Kabayaki-style with Japanese pepper

Aged Sake

Service Temperature: 20°C to 40°C

Pairing: Sukiyaki. Using this aged sake in the sukiyaki sauce will enhance the affinity of the pairing.



ASI: Can you take the same five classic sake styles and recommend dishes from other parts of the world to pair with them?

Five Sake and Global Cuisine Pairings

Junmai Daiginjo

Service Temperature: 6°C to 8°C

Pairing: Vietnamese summer roll

Junmai Ginjo

Service Temperature: 8°C to 12°C

Pairing: Burrata cheese and fruit salad

Honjozo

Service Temperature: 4°C to 6°C

Pairing: Caviar

Junmai (Kimoto method)

Service Temperature: Around 20°C

Pairing: Saumagen with Sauerkraut

Aged Sake

Service Temperature: 35°C to 45°C

Pairing: China Zong (bamboo wrapped Chinese rice)

Back to School: sommelier scholarships

By Xeniya Volosnikova

The availability of scholarships for sommeliers is undeniably on the rise. Numerous institutions and organisations worldwide are now providing training and opportunities to individuals with diverse backgrounds and skill levels who have a passion for becoming sommeliers or further enhancing their expertise in the field.

As Romané Basset, Co-Founding Trustee of The Gérard Basset Foundation, shares “this makes becoming a sommelier more accessible and affordable, and therefore makes it more attractive as a career path, which in turn will attract more people to the trade - and thus requiring more scholarships to help them enter what can be a very daunting and intense profession.” In developed markets like Europe and the USA, there are significantly more opportunities for aspiring sommeliers compared to other parts of the world. Below are several examples of scholarships

(listed in no particular order) offered by different institutions, many of them are targeting less privileged groups or geographies, which hopefully will give the boost to sommellerie outside Europe and the US.

1. The Gérard Basset Foundation

The Gérard Basset Foundation was set up to support and promote Diversity and Inclusion within the Wine, Spirits and Hospitality industries, and according to Basset “we achieve this by providing scholarships, bursaries and grants to individuals and institutions, to support a wider range of people entering the wine, spirits, and hospitality industries: developing their knowledge, their experience, their confidence and ultimately their careers. Scholarships are created to offer students exceptional

educational and internship opportunities which would otherwise be out of their reach. In many cases, our scholarships will include both educational and professional components, allowing scholars to learn new skills and then put them into real world practice.”

2. Women of the Vine & Spirits Foundation

The foundation provides scholarships for the purpose of helping women advance their careers in the food, wine, spirits, beer, and hospitality industries through education, leadership, and professional development.

Valeria Tenison, WOTVS Scholarship recipient, France says “I had selected the Continuous Education Scholarship which I planned to spend for the Somm360 event in Montreal which was unfortunately cancelled. Nevertheless, I spent

the money for several trips and courses, including a study trip with Vinality International Academy and a Madeira Wine Educator Course. The money obviously helped to pay the expenses but in general it definitely helped to deepen my knowledge to the extent that I was accepted to the Master of Wine programme last year."

3. Somm Foundation

SommFoundation (The Guild of Sommeliers Education Foundation) is a California non-profit corporation, committed to assisting beverage professionals to achieve their full potential. SommFoundation commitment for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion is built on four pillars: Representation, Access, Belonging and Transformation.

4. Wine Scholar Guild

International provider of wine certification programmes, specialising in the wines of France, Italy and Spain, as well as immersion study trips. Study options include distance-learning and classroom-learning.

5. Court of Master Sommeliers

As sommeliers, the principles of the 'Court' center on hospitality, exemplified by the late President Gerard Basset MS, MW, OBE. The 'Court' strives to elevate global beverage service and knowledge, offering courses in various countries. To foster diversity in the sommelier community, they now offer 12 annual global scholarships

for BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of colour) or low-income candidates seeking to enter the profession. The organisation is apolitical but recognises this as a global social issue, supporting positive change. The CMS Europe scholarships are open for 'Introductory and Certified' or 'Advanced' levels. Four are available in Europe and two each in China, India, South Africa, or Australasia. Successful scholarship recipients receive course and examination coverage, along with mentorship from an MS professional for career guidance.

6. Cordon Bleu Academy

For over a century, Le Cordon Bleu has helped shape the careers of some of the best chefs and food enthusiasts around the world, developing the London wine school in 2014. Regularly offering scholarship competitions each year, 2022 marks the first year offering a wine specific scholarship competition which follows the success of the Julia Child Scholarship. The Wine Scholarship by Le Cordon Bleu provides a once in a lifetime opportunity for someone who has a passion for wine and aspires for a career in the wine industry.

7. MAD Academy

MAD Academy equips the global hospitality industry with the knowledge, tools, and network to advance sustainable action and responsible business practices. Their goal is to radically shift the way hospitality businesses take care of people and the planet. Through five-day intensive courses in Copenhagen, Denmark, they seek to train and empower professionals in the industry to make a difference

in their workplaces, communities, and the world. Participants return with concrete tools and skills to make immediate impact and build capacity toward long-term solutions. MAD Academy was founded in 2019 by René Redzepi, chef and co-owner of restaurant Noma, and Melina Shannon-DiPietro, MAD Executive Director, in collaboration with a group of visionary individuals.

8. WINTOUR International Master on Wine Tourism Innovation

The International Master on Wine Tourism Innovation (WINTOUR) offers a truly integrated study programme that takes advantage of the know-how in Tourism and Oenology of three universities and regions of Europe: Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Tarragona, Spain), Université de Bordeaux (France) and Universidade do Porto (Portugal). These universities are in highly attractive touristic areas, recognised with the label of UNESCO Human Heritage, and have a long tradition on wine, producing specialty wines such as sparkling, fortified, aged red, and sweet.

9. The Roots Fund

Created to empower underrepresented BIPOC in the wine industry by providing resources and financial support, through educational scholarships, wine education, mentorship, and job placement. The Roots Fund is committed to investing in Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a wine communities to provide opportunities to those seeking a career or education in all aspects of wine.

10. The Association of African American Vintners

"Many of our vintner members are balancing full-time jobs while self-funding their wine businesses. It is imperative that, as AAV grows, we help members to accelerate their business growth and impact on the wine industry," according to AAV Executive Director Angela McCrae. Funding for the grant programme is acquired solely through a fundraising campaign implemented by the Association of African American Vintners for the purpose of positively impacting AAV member businesses' operations, marketing or innovation efforts and help grow their wine business.



Nothing comes without some sweat! Valeria shares her feeling about the scholarship application process. "It takes time to fill in the application forms that can be lengthy and sometimes go through a further selection process with several interviews. And of course, you should be ready to receive a negative result. I think these points might discourage people from applying, especially those sommeliers who are full time on the floor and don't have much time. I see receiving a scholarship as winning in a lottery. If it happened - great, if not - I will try again later when the opportunity arises."

If the selection process doesn't scare you, here's a tip from Romané to potential applicants, "my advice to sommeliers or aspiring sommeliers seeking to receive funding to help them further their career, is to be both bold and humble at the same time. Bold, in that they should not be afraid of seeking out opportunities and introducing themselves to people who are in a position to help them, as taking the initiative is always very impressive. Humble, in that they should always be willing to learn more and be open to new ideas from mentors and their fellow sommeliers. Confidence without becoming arrogant - that is the key!"

Who knows, maybe you, like Sharrol Mukendi-Klaas, recipient of the Gerard Basset Foundation and ASI Sommelier scholarship, will serve as an example of education excellence and motivation to future sommeliers. Of her wine journey Sharrol says, "my experience so far has been a dream. I am living a dream. It has also been really hard because it takes a lot of dedication and hard work to become a sommelier. But I would never trade this for anything!"

"This makes becoming a sommelier more accessible and affordable, and therefore makes it more attractive as a career path, which in turn will attract more people to the trade."

– Romané Basset, Co-Founding Trustee of The Gérard Basset Foundation

Please note that the list is not full, and there are numerous other opportunities in different countries and regions. The deadlines to apply may vary for different scholarships even within the same institution, so we urge you to study the links provided. We created this list only mentioning a few opportunities available as an inspiration to start on or continue your journey in the world of wine, make good use of it and share with colleagues.

Member News

ASI General Assembly Convenes in Helsinki: making a house a home

The Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI) recently convened in Helsinki, Finland, for an important gathering hosted by the Finnish Sommelier Association. The agenda included electing a new board and devising strategic plans to further advance the profession. Attendees were also treated to a post-assembly Wine Fair focused on biodynamic agriculture, organised by Finnish Master of Wine, Heidi Mäkinen.

Nina Basset, outgoing Secretary General, moderated the General Assembly. Her professionalism, warmth, and collaborative spirit were celebrated by ASI President William Wouters. While Basset's role was interim, her contribution to the association is expected to have long-lasting effects.

Unchallenged for the role of President, Wouters was appointed for a second term. He emphasised that the first term was about laying the foundations for enduring success, and the next phase will focus on 'decorations' – the refinement of the association's work and making it welcoming to all.

The newly elected board remains similar to the previous one. Philippe Fraure-Bac (France) and Samuil Angelov will manage the association's finances as Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer respectively. Vice Presidents Piotr Kamecki (Poland), Saiko Tamura-Soga (Japan), and Michèle Chantôme (Morocco) continue their roles, representing Europe, Asia & Oceania, and Africa and the Middle East. Beata Vlnkova (Slovakia) takes over as Secretary General, and Ivo Dvorak (Czech Republic) as Deputy Secretary General, while Matias Prezioso was voted in as Vice-President Americas, joining the board for the first time.

Wouters extended a warm welcome to the US and Zimbabwe as ASI member associations and lauded Moldova and Lebanon for starting their path to membership. He highlighted the efforts to lay a strong foundation, establish cornerstones of success, and build sturdy pillars. His future plans include expanding educational offerings like ASI Certifications, ASI Diploma, and ASI Bootcamp, and refining processes to ensure governance transparency and financial stability.

Strauss & Co. Show Support of South African Sommeliers

In a landmark move after the successful inaugural sale of South African Wine NFTs in 2022, Strauss & Co Fine Wine Auctions announced the release of six significant collections of the world's finest wines, minted and authenticated as NFTs. The goal? To contribute to the growth and development of sommelier education in South Africa. A portion of the auction's proceeds will be donated to the South African Sommeliers Association (SASA).

SASA, founded in 2011, has been leading the charge in providing wine service education in South Africa. As international benchmarks for fine wines climb beyond reach, this donation aims to level the playing field for aspiring African sommeliers. South Africa has made significant strides in creating opportunities in the wine industry, yet much still needs to be done. With this partnership, SASA and Strauss & Co are paving the way for accessible and quality wine education in the country.



Second Quarter Somm Champions

This spring, the world witnessed the rise of five extraordinary talents in the realm of sommeliers. Alejandro Rodríguez Sánchez-Pardo clinched the title of Spain's Best Sommelier 2023, demonstrating his expert mastery of wine and wine service. In Iceland, the accolade of the Best Icelandic Sommelier 2023 went to Manuel Schembri, whose exceptional understanding of global wine and spirits impressed all. Finland's Antero Niemiaho became the Best Sommelier of Finland 2023. Lastly, Tomasz Żak, celebrated for his knowledge of the world of wine and other beverages, was crowned the Best Sommelier of Poland 2023. Their accomplishments serve as a testament to their exceptional skill, palate, and deep understanding of the complex world of hospitality, service, wine, spirits, and other beverages. Finally, Agnieszka Swiecka, has been crowned UK Sommelier of the Year. Swiecka, who was runner-up in 2022, was determined to take the title in 2023 and did so showing impressive sommelier skills, as well displaying a quiet calm and charm on stage.



Agnieszka Swiecka



Nicholas Clerc

Nicolas Clerc Awarded Gérard Basset Caterer Award

Nicolas Clerc, President of the UK Sommelier Academy was awarded the Gerard Basset Caterer Award for services to the Wine Industry at the recently held UK Sommelier of the Year contest.

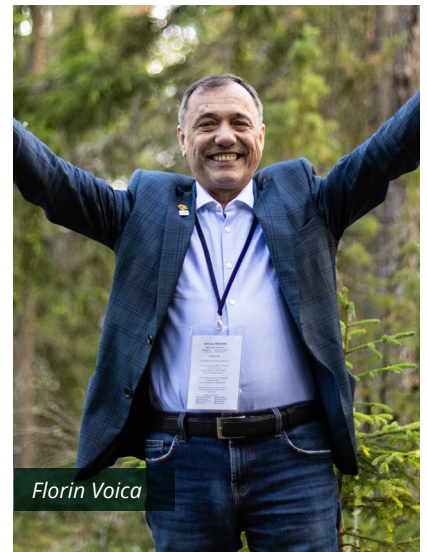
“Nicolas is a truly worthy recipient, having been instrumental in re-invigorating the UK Sommelier Academy over the last couple of years and inspiring so many UK-based sommeliers, as well as delivering a record breaking eleven Gold ASI Diploma winners during 2023. Impressive!”

– Nina Basset

The Association of Sommeliers from Romania Summer Kick-Off Event

The Association of Sommeliers from Romania (ASR), the only internationally recognised national sommelier association in Romania, started the summer celebrations early with their annual Clubul Privat de Vin – A.S.R (The Private Wine Club – ASR) which was held on May 29th. The annual event is a celebration of Romanian wine, and an opportunity for sommeliers and winemakers to share their stories with and about wine.

[Click here to watch](#)



Florin Voica



ASSOCIATION
DE LA SOMMELLERIE
INTERNATIONALE



CERTIFICATION



ASI CERTIFICATION 2 EXAM

NOVEMBER 2023



Scan the QR code for
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