

# ASI MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2022  
ISSUE #6



# THE ROAD TO PARIS



**MARC ALMERT, ARVID ROSENGREN,  
PAOLO BASSO** Insights from ASI's last  
three Best Sommeliers of the World

**WILLIAM WOUTERS & CLAIRE BERTICAT**  
The Year in Review with ASI's President  
and Head of the Marketing Committee







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# ASI MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2022 | ISSUE #6

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## ASI PARTNERS





# Welcome!



As we near the end of 2022, the path forward has never been clearer. I cannot be more pleased with ASI's accomplishments this past year. To say that we as a family came together to achieve great things is an understatement. As you will read in this magazine, in the Our Team feature, I believe ASI's accomplishments in 2023 will be even greater. As I say you must build a strong ship, before you can sail the seas.

As you may know I often describe ASI and our global sommelier community as a family. There is no better time to celebrate family, and friends, than the holiday season. While not all of us celebrate Christmas, there is a global tradition of rekindling friendships, and spending time with family in December. I am so privileged to have an amazing wife and two incredible boys to celebrate with. For me the holidays are about spending time with them at home. It is a time to relax, enjoy life, and look back fondly on the year past. It's the same for many sommeliers around the world. So, while we have tackled some big topics over the last year in ASI Magazine, I am pleased to say this issue takes on a particularly positive tone. In the pages of this edition, Claire Berticat, our Director of Marketing, and myself, will talk about the great things ASI has accomplished in the past year and there is a feature celebrating our most recent ASI continental champion, Mason Ng, of Singapore.

This issue is also an opportunity to introduce the world to our board, and committee members in a more familial way. Read the pages of this magazine and discover how the members of our team enjoy the holidays. You'll find drink recommendations, along with recipe suggestions and pairings. I look forward to making mugs of Julie DuPouy-Young's hot chocolate and serving up Liora Levi's gingerbread cookies and blue cheese, or ASI Magazine editor Mark DeWolf's recipe for Acadian tourtière.

I encourage you to explore the pages of this edition of ASI Magazine and take some time this time of year to celebrate life with friends, family and colleagues. Finally, please keep our colleagues in Ukraine in your hearts and on your mind, as they battle to maintain the freedom and sovereignty so many of us take for granted.

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



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# SMALL COUNTRY, BIG HEART, VIBRANT WINES!

Wine is part of the identity of the Republic of Moldova, part of the DNA of the people, a real treasure of the country and one of the main drivers of the economy. The Republic of Moldova is known as the “open country in the paradise of wine,” because wine production is the main occupation of Moldovans. Anyone who enters here is welcome. Architectural jewels, underground galleries, vine-strewn hills and wineries that produce from a few thousand bottles to a few million — this all is the treasure of Moldova which managed to put the country on the world map of wine.

Moldovan wine today brings a fresh modern face. Its new generation wines are actually rooted in a rich and complex history, giving the authenticity that so many wine drinkers are looking for today. At the same time, it can offer unique and sometimes surprising wines, especially blends of international and indigenous grape varieties, a true expression of Moldovan terroir. “Wine of Moldova” today is the very real result of this country reinventing its approach to wine — focusing on quality, consistency and ‘enjoyment-in-a-glass’ as its priorities.

The Republic of Moldova is considered a major wine producing country:

- 15% of the active population is involved in wine production.
- Total vineyards area: 121 000 ha (it comes in 6<sup>th</sup> position amongst European wine making countries by the size of its vineyards).
- 4% of territory, 7% of agricultural land
- 200,000 people involved in the winemaking sector
- The 6<sup>th</sup> largest area of vines under cultivation in Europe

The authenticity and uniqueness of Moldovan wines is represented by the local varieties, which represent 10% of the vineyards: Feteasca Alba, Feteasca Regala, Feteasca Neagra, Rara Neagra and the new selection varieties Viorica, Alb de Onițcani etc. Over 80% of the wine produced in the Republic of Moldova is exported in more than 70 countries around the world.

Moldovan wines are now sold in 75 countries, most of them on high value markets in the European Union, with a steady increase over the last five years. In 2021, the Republic of Moldova maintained its status as the most awarded country in Eastern Europe, having obtained a record number of awards at international profit competitions: 1206 medals, half of them are Gold medals.

We highly recommend visiting Moldova as your next wine tourism destination or perhaps to return to this wonderful country for new wine experiences! Having visited once, you will fall in love forever with Moldovan wine culture and hospitality.



**WINE OF  
MOLDOVA**

A LEGEND ALIVE





A Conversation With ...

# What it takes to be a champion

What it takes to be a champion





Paolo Basso Photo: Contributed

Leading into the ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2023 contest in Paris, ASI asked the last three people to have won the title to reflect on their journey. The title of 'World's Best' comes with both prestige and responsibility. The sacrifices and work to attain the title often challenging a competitor's will and desire to push on. While some have taken the title on their first attempt, others, notably Gérard Basset, for whom the ASI Lifetime Achievement Award, discussed in this issue, is named for, took many attempts to win the title. However, as the Japanese proverb says "nana korobi, ya oki" or "fall down 7 times and stand up 8." This issue is for all that "nana korobi, ya oki."



**Marc Almert**, of Germany, won the ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2019 contest in Antwerp, Belgium. He currently is chef sommelier of Switzerland's renowned Baur au Lac & Baur au Lac Vins, where he works with the world's finest bottles day in, day out.



**Arvid Rosengren**, of Sweden, won the ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2016 contest in Argentina. After many years working in New York City, he returned to Scandinavia, and now calls Denmark home, where he continues to work on various wine related projects.



**Paolo Basso**, an Italian-Swiss sommelier, won the ASI Best of the World 2013 contest in Tokyo, Japan. He currently works as a lecturer and consultant in the wine industry.

Arvid Rosengren Photo: Contributed





Marc Almert Photo: Jean Bernard

**ASI:** A question to our reigning champion, Marc Almert. How do you account for winning the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World on your first attempt? Was your youth, and comparable lack of experience on the world stage, an advantage?

**Marc Almert (MA):** Thanks to the ASI community, opportunities to travel, and the help from friends, my employer, and the German sommelier association I was able to do a lot of training and tastings. Furthermore, since starting to compete, I took part in every sommelier competition that was available, be it just for one wine region, or even just a small tasting exam or similar small competition. It is also important to note, that in the buzz around a competition, some candidates are more in the spotlight than others, especially when coming from a country where sommellerie is a famous profession or if they have already excelled in other competitions or exams. This adds pressure on the candidates, as they get more questions from the press, more messages, etc. In Antwerp, I was “new” so I had a calm week which allowed me to remain focussed. I would love for all of us to be more respectful of this matter and appreciate the fact that candidates need time for themselves during a competition week and naming somebody a “likely winner” just adds more pressure instead of being helpful.

**ASI:** A similar question to Arvid Rosengren. Your journey to the top began — at least to the public — with your wins at the Nordic championships and subsequently Best Sommelier of Sweden contest, eventually leading to the Best Sommelier of Europe contest in 2013. However, what is visible to the world often overshadows the time spent leading into these victories. Can you describe your journey to winning that title (Best Sommelier of Europe)? Was winning that contest the inspiration you needed to continue to push forward towards the Best Sommelier of the World contest in Argentina (2016)?

**Arvid Rosengren (AR):** It’s funny, when I first became a sommelier, I had no intention of competing. I think of myself as a relatively humble person, with no great need to be in the centre of things. But once I started, I was hooked. For a couple of reasons: first, I realized it was a way for me to force myself to keep learning and not become stagnant. And secondly, I realized I could be good at it. Almost immediately however, I realized that it was such an intense endeavour that I couldn’t let it (winning the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World) take decades. All in all, I spent several hours a day preparing for about seven years. In periods, it was all-encompassing, starting the moment I woke up and ending when I fell asleep. Theoretical study is by far the most time-consuming aspect of it all, so I spent a good deal of time studying how to study and how to retain knowledge, used a computerized system to build a knowledge base and continuously test myself on retaining it. I have logged well over ten thousand hours of just repetition in those years, not including reading or adding any new information. Crazy.

Tasting and service come more naturally, at least if you work in a proper restaurant where you’re popping corks and dealing with challenging customer scenarios. I just tried to utilize what I could from my day job. Small things, like setting down my mise-en-place and opening a bottle the exact same way I would as if on stage. After thousands of repetitions become muscle memory.

As for inspiration, I think the competition in Tokyo 2013 was the great motivator for me, even if I was very depressed initially afterwards, because I thought I had done better than the results reflected. So, I knew that I had three years to 2016 to get all the work needed done!

**ASI:** Paolo, in your case, you had some second-place finishes before finally winning. How did you keep yourself motivated year after year to keep competing before finally winning the title?

**Paolo Basso (PB):** Everything depends on your culture. For me, finishing second is not to be considered a defeat at all: you have one ahead of you and hundreds (including different national selections) behind you. It is a great achievement. If, however, in your culture coming second is a defeat, then things change. But that's not something I can understand.

In any case, it is simple. If I had habitually arrived in a position far from the podium I would have stopped, because the effort is quite hard. But coming very close to victory, the motivation to do better is justified.

**ASI:** Unrelenting commitment to a goal takes a lot of time and sacrifice. Often that sacrifice is family and friends. Was sacrifice part of your experience preparing for the Best Sommelier of the World contest in Antwerp?

**MA:** To me, if you do something you love, it is never a sacrifice. Competing and training to compete has been a lot of travelling, tasting and especially meeting great somms and winemakers from all over the world. Naturally, that meant that sometimes I had to say no to other events, meeting up with friends, private holidays, etc. The experiences I was able to make and the people I met made up for this.

**AR:** I certainly couldn't have done it with a family, not the way I went about it in that timeframe at least. My life for those years was wine. Work, study, sleep, repeat. It's not a great recipe for a healthy family or social life. I definitely lost relationships, both romantic and social, because there was always another book to read, another tasting to attend or wine trip to go on. Not to sound like a martyr, because it was self-imposed and selfish. I have nothing but awe and respect for those that continue to compete with young families. It's impressive.

**PB:** Obviously yes. I have asked a lot of myself and my family. But I stopped there. I never had any major sponsors to give me free time and money. Every time you ask for something then you must give it back. Often what they ask you for, as restitution, is more than what they gave you and maybe goes even against your principles. So, I opted to do it with the few resources I had, perhaps taking longer to achieve the goal, but having only a few persons to thank for what I accomplished.

And even in terms of preparation I have always preferred to do it alone, at my own rhythm. Often the more people you have around you, the more

confusion is created. It's like in sport: some athletes need a coach to tell them what to do and some are better on their own.

**ASI:** Winning a contest like this is a momentous event. How did it change your life? Were you ready for the change?

**MA:** Indeed, it truly is a "life-changing moment." Pre-Covid, the main change has been travelling more and farther, and of course there have been more projects too. One of the key changes for me was to stop competing (which I sometimes miss), and to spend more time teaching and helping others to achieve their goals. To be ready for any change in life, it is important to have a reliable group of friends, family, and colleagues, as well as a clear set of values. Furthermore, the previous competition winners and other members of the ASI family have been very helpful in offering their guidance.

**AR:** A few years down the line now (how time flies ... ), I can certainly say that it has changed a lot. But I was hesitant at first. I didn't want to stop being a sommelier just because I'd won a title. I also suffered from a healthy dose of 'Imposter Syndrome', feeling like I wasn't worthy of the title. There was still so much of the wine world to visit, iconic wines I hadn't tasted and so forth. But that settles down too after a while. After all, a credit a large portion of my final win with my indifference to winning. When I entered in that competition in 2016, I had already agreed with myself and my loved ones that this would be the last one, whether I win or lose, and I was happy with that. That just allowed me to relax a bit more, and have fun with the process, which I think showed in my demeanor in that contest.

**PB:** Yes, definitely, winning this competition changes your life. And you must be ready to take on this new role, which is a bit like becoming a father, the greatest responsibility of a man, but no one teaches you how to do it. I won when I was of an age and already had some professional experience and together with my wife, we were able to handle it. It's like getting on a roller coaster that goes a thousand miles. You must be prepared not to be a victim of events. Then it depends a lot on where you are and how you will be able to valorise the title.

**ASI:** Winning a contest like this brings acclaim but also the potential to capitalize it via partnerships and new opportunities. Were you able to use the title for business purposes?



A Conversation With ...

What it takes to be a champion

**MA:** In general, the key change has been to receive more speaker engagements, both B2B and B2C, as well as more interviews with the press. Personally, I think how this changes your life and especially your business or work, is very dependent on where you live, what you want to do with it and whether you are working on the floor or are self-employed — if the latter, of course this is like a gold ticket to much more projects than before. I am very grateful for having had the chance to take more and varying projects on the side, but the key part of my work still is a mix of on the floor service at the Baur au Lac as well as being part of our wine distribution company Baur au Lac Vins.

**AR:** Absolutely. That shouldn't be the reason anyone does this, but I can't lie, it has led to some good things. But also, some obligations that can be quite limiting and difficult. You will be synonymous with a thing, a title, and you'll be expected to live up to this forever. It's taken me some time to capitalize on it, especially since I decided I didn't want to become a pure consultant afterwards but rather keep working in restaurants.

**PB:** It depends a lot on the location and the context in which you are. It is very different if you are in a big global capital city where there is dynamism around wine and gastronomy or not. As far as I am concerned, being in a wine-producing region, I invested the income developed from the title to go to the source of my passion and become a producer myself.

**ASI:** Looking towards Paris 2023, what advice would you give someone training to become the Best Sommelier of the World?

**MA:** Be humble, be mindful, and be curious. Remember to not only focus on theory, tasting and service, but also to prepare yourself mentally. Sports Psychology can be immensely helpful. Have a group of supporters around you, both before and during the competition. Train with friends that are in the same position. Remember that there are other things in life too. Find your balance. Make sure to not neglect your family, your friends, and your work. And prepare mentally and emotionally both for winning, but also for the possibility that you do not achieve your goals, to avoid falling into a pit. It is a marathon, and not a sprint.

**AR:** Now is not the time to cram. Accept that there are always more wines to taste, more books to read etc. Set limits. At some point, showing up relaxed, fit and mentally ready is worth more than being able to rattle off all the right bits of wine esoterica.

Also, you will be subjected to hard tests and a lot of curveballs, but looking at it objectively, nothing that you will be asked to do is any harder than an average night in a restaurant, and you know how to handle those efficiently and with grace. Try to bring that mindset with you.

**PB:** First, to work hard, sparing no effort, almost obsessively. This will lead to your best performance. Do not to think about the title, because the possibility of achieving it (one in the world every three years) is so rare that it is better not to think about it, otherwise you might be very disappointed. Above all, try to manage the pressures that come from the outside, such as from the media, your sommelier association, family, entourage, supporters, and possible sponsors (that's why I never wanted any). It is better to be prepared to accept not being in the final than to be prepared to be there.

**ASI:** What advice would you give to the person that wins the title?

**MA:** Be humble, be mindful and know many see you now as a role model. People will look up to you, so be aware of what impulse you want to give to others on this course and to think about what influence you want to have to help shape the future of our community. Remember who helped you achieve your goals and which friends you had before the competition. Be cautious of anybody who suddenly wants to become your "friend." And remember to enjoy all the beautiful possibilities and exciting wines that you can now taste!

**AR:** Be proud, but stay humble: You won a hard test, but realize that "the best sommelier" is just a professional that provides their guests with an unforgettable experience. Take some well-earned rest and show love and appreciation for the people who carried you through this.

**PB:** The only ones who have experience on how to handle the title are those of us who have won it before. So, I suggest asking one of us for advice on how not to 'burn' this wonderful title that every sommelier dreams of obtaining and which has required so much sacrifice.



# Graham's Celebrates its 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**“ The release of the Bicentenary Collection has huge significance for us as a family business, marking not only the illustrious history of Graham's and the unparalleled excellence of the wines, but our commitment to continuing to build on these foundations for many years to come. ”**

***Johnny Symington –  
Chairman of Symington  
Family Estates***

W. & J.  
**GRAHAM'S**  
ESTABLISHED 1820  
PORT



2022 has been a year of belated celebrations for Graham's Port. In 2020, the historic port house celebrated its bicentenary, but was forced to put its planned celebrations on hold due to the pandemic. This year, however, they were able to mark their bicentennial year by unveiling a stunning collection of world-renowned ports, housed in a specially designed piece of furniture.

The Graham's Bicentenary Collection is comprised of six classic Vintage Ports and six Single Harvest Tawny Ports, including wines from 1963, 1994 and 2011 — years hailed as some of the greatest declarations of the last two centuries.

Each of the 12 wines has been carefully selected by members of the third, fourth, and fifth generations of the Symington family — port producers since 1882 and owners of Graham's since 1970. The six Vintage Ports have been aged in impeccable conditions in Graham's own cellars in Vila Nova de Gaia, and the six Single Harvest Tawny Ports have been bottled specifically for the Bicentenary Collection, including the previously unreleased 2000 and 2006.

The collection is presented in a cabinet made from rare santos rosewood, crafted by Portuguese master-joiners WeWood. It is completed by a hand-blown decanter and set of wine glasses produced by Jancis Robinson MW in partnership with celebrated British product designer Richard Brendon, an expert two-part Durand corkscrew designed for removing corks from mature and valuable fine wines, and a specially commissioned decanting funnel from the family-run, Porto-based silversmiths, Ourivesaria Coutinho. Only 30 made-to-order editions of the collection will ever be produced.





Photo: Contributed

**Our Team**

*The Year in Review with ASI's President and Head of the Marketing Committee*

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## WITH ASI'S PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

Over the past year ASI has hosted a number of events and built on the mandates set out by William Wouters, ASI President, and the board in their 2020 election platform. Behind the scenes the ASI Marketing team has been working to promote these achievements and support the accomplishments of each ASI committee, and the successes of many individual sommeliers. In this issue of ASI Magazine, we interview William Wouters about the past year at ASI, and Claire Berticat, ASI Director of Marketing, on the role of her team in ASI.



## A Year in Review with **William Wouters**

**ASI:** Following the global pandemic, by many accounts 2022 was a year of recovery for the hospitality industry. What would you say to the global sommellerie community about their resilience during Covid, and what words of encouragement do you have for them about 2023 and beyond?

**William Wouters (WW):** The pandemic absolutely created a crisis for our industry, but sommeliers are used to adversity, and thinking on their feet. Whether it is working in a restaurant, hotel, catering or retail, sommeliers and restaurateurs are constantly faced with problem solving. Navigating through the pandemic was no different. It was heartening to see so many survive this catastrophe by adapting their businesses accordingly. We saw this as well in our own association. All our continental contests were postponed and in the case of the Americas contest, the location moved from one city to another. In the case of our Asia and Oceania contest it was not only postponed twice, but the location moved twice, from Australia, to Taiwan and eventually to its final destination, last month, in Japan. Our sommeliers, candidates, and organizers showed an unparalleled level of resiliency and fortitude. They also demonstrated camaraderie. This was particularly on display at the most recent contest in Tokyo. Not only did our Japanese hosts take on the challenge of hosting a contest with less than 3 months to prepare, but our candidates and committee members came to together to support each other. I think this notion of ‘we are all in it together’ began with ASI Bootcamp in Malaysia this September and continued through our ASI Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania contest in November. It bodes well for our industry’s continue growth in 2023, as we’ve learned to survive hardship and the only way forward is working collectively, not individually.

### About **William Wouters:**

Not only is William Wouters President of the Association of Sommellerie Internationale (ASI), but he is also a chef (formerly head chef for the Belgian national football team), a champion sommelier (he has won the title of Best Sommelier of Belgium on multiple occasions), a restaurateur and since 2007 co-owner, with wife Filipa Pato, of a winery in Bairrada, Portugal. Yet, despite the long history of success and varied background in the hospitality industry, Wouters considers his greatest asset to be as an ambassador and diplomat.

**Our Team**

*The Year in Review with ASI's President and Head of the Marketing Committee*



**Our Team**

*The Year in Review with ASI's President and Head of the Marketing Committee*

**ASI:** This past year, ASI has several accomplishments, including hosting several events. What are some of the highlights for you?

**WW:** Firstly, it was an accomplishment just to host events. Hosting two continental contests, the ASI General Assembly, and ASI Bootcamp in a single year speaks to the motivation and cooperation of our board, committee members, member associations, and sommeliers. I'd like to also acknowledge the work of our marketing and communications team. Our social media presence has been greatly enhanced and improved over the past year, and the creation and execution of ASI Magazine is another feather in ASI's hat. Little wonder that our relationships with our partners were strengthened and we were able to develop new partnerships that we believe will be ongoing for many years to come.

**ASI:** While events, such as ASI's continental contests, are outwardly visible displays by ASI, the board has also made a commitment to focus energy on supporting all sommeliers via educational tools and communication strategies. Can you describe what you, the board and committees have done to accomplish this?

You must build a boat, before you can sail the seas. In 2020 and 2021 we really laid the foundations of transitioning ASI into a meaningful, forward thinking, and supportive association. In 2022, I believe our member associations have really seen how the time spent building the ship, is paying off for them and their members. There are so many initiatives that demonstrate this. Examples are the ASI Guidelines, the creation of the tutorial videos, the continued development and execution of ASI Bootcamp, and the launch of ASI Certifications to complement the ASI Diploma. These have all demonstrated the commitment of the board, and all our committee members to enriching the lives of sommeliers around the globe.

**ASI:** In this article we are also focusing on the work of the ASI Marketing Committee. How do you think this committee has supported these initiatives?

**WW:** Without them it would not be possible.

**ASI:** You and the board have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure ASI as an association is managed transparently, fiscally responsibly, and operates in the best interest of its member associations. How do you think you've accomplished this in 2022?

**WW:** There was a big investment, financially and in terms of time commitment, from ASI and its board and committee members. It's our duty to meet, and to exceed, the expectations of our member associations. This dictates a need to be constantly evolving and looking to the future. The results are pouring in. We have new partners constantly joining ASI, and the response from the sommelier community to our actions has been very positive. Certainly, the launch of ASI Magazine has also lifted our profile and been very well received by sommeliers and our member associations.

**ASI:** The marketing committee is also responsible for partnerships. What are some of the successes that you've witnessed with respect to cultivating meaning partnerships for ASI?

**WW:** Our presidents are beginning to fully comprehend what we have been doing over the last couple of years. They see how we are creating equal playing fields for all sommeliers, giving every sommelier in the world the opportunity to succeed. This rise in calibre and equality was on stage at the recent Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania contest, where there was a marked increase in knowledge and service skills amongst all competitors, compared to the last contest in 2018. All the work we've done in terms of the ASI Guidelines, tutorials, ASI Certifications and Diploma examinations, and ASI Bootcamp is paying off.





## About Claire Berticat:

Claire Berticat has a diverse background in the wine world, owning a master's degree in marketing and business administration, a degree in viticulture and enology, and is a graduate of WSET Level 3. After spending eight years working as a communications consultant, strategist for Champagne brands, and later a wine importation business, in Asia, Berticat returned home to Europe. Since 2016 she has been a wine industry consultant and was first introduced to ASI while working as a consultant for the Belgian Sommelier Guild as they prepared to host the ASI Best Sommelier of the World Contest 2019 in Antwerp. That the same year, she was appointed by ASI to oversee their partnership strategy and then eventually led to her current role as Director of the ASI Marketing Committee.

## INTRODUCING CLAIRE BERTICAT AND THE ASI MARKETING COMMITTEE TEAM

**ASI:** As we near the end of 2022, the 2023 Best Sommelier of the World contest in Paris is fast approaching. What do you think delegates and competitors can expect from this event?

**Claire Berticat (CB):** There is a good group of people, led by Philippe (Philippe Faure-Brac) and his team at the UDSF, organizing this contest. It's a big event, so our committees have been working tirelessly to be prepared and have already done the work of ensuring every small detail of the examinations and finale have been thought about and planned for. I tip my cap to Shinya (Tasaki) and Olivier (Poussier), of the ASI Contests Committee, for everything they have done to date to make sure from a competition perspective this is going to be a really well organized and fair contest. I'm excited and I think the world will be too about this competition. See you in Paris!

**ASI:** Tell us a little about your career, how you came to work with ASI.

**CB:** I started, entirely by accident, to collaborate with the Belgian Sommelier Guild. At the time, back in 2017, I had just had my first child, and I was working towards a winemaking degree, commuting from my home in Belgium to Saint-Émilion and the Loire Valley. My goal then was to transition from working with wineries, as a freelancer, on their marketing strategy to a more technical position within the wine industry.

Then I met William Wouters, now president of ASI, and at the time president of the Belgian Sommelier Guild. This meeting changed a lot of things. William explained the Belgian Sommelier Guild needed partners and investors to host the ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2019 contest in Antwerp. I like challenges and I liked the people involved in the adventure. People are what matter the most in my opinion.



	<p>We started almost from scratch, budget-wise, and together we built what I think was an amazing event. The connections I created with the team in Belgium have been incredible and continue to this day. As I worked on this project I also began to learn about the ASI (Association de la Sommellerie Internationale) universe, its committees, and projects. What a quest! ASI is a big organization. Understanding how it works internally was not an easy task, but with the help of great people, I managed step by step to find my way around this ‘big boat.’</p> <p>What mattered the most is that I have always strongly believed the role of a sommelier is key to the on-trade industry. They are the best ambassadors any wine region could dream of. It helped me a lot in convincing partners to join the ASI family. So here I am now, leading the ASI Marketing Committee and I am very grateful for the trust I have received from all ASI board members during the past few years.</p> <p><b>ASI:</b> The ASI Marketing committee has a lot more responsibilities than the title of the committee might suggest. Broadly speaking can you tell us what duties fall under this committee?</p> <p><b>CB:</b> If you think of the definition of ‘marketing’, it can be described as any strategy or action which can help a company achieve its goals, increase its sales and profits, and/or improve the brand perception. ASI is not a product and can’t be called a brand. Our role is not to increase sales but to help the association achieve its goals, which are many.</p> <p>ASI provides numerous channels for continuing education and opportunities that encourage sommeliers to broaden their own horizons. Our role is to make sure we can pass those messages to the right audience. As part of this we are building a strong community of sommeliers willing to take part of our programs (ASI Bootcamp, ASI Certifications and the ASI Diploma, Contests etc.), which in return strengthen their skills. Of course, ultimately, we want to motivate the younger generation to consider being a sommelier as a career.</p> <p>As of now, ASI has today 66 members (61 national associations acting as full members and 5 as observer members). Our role is to constantly communicate with all of them; to support them and send the right messages from the board or the committees. Our members need to value and</p>	<p>understand why being part of an organization like ASI is worth it. We owe them to be proactive, transparent and to constantly reinvent ourselves.</p> <p>If you are an association of sommeliers in any country, you should want to join ASI. If we achieve this, I believe it means we have done our job.</p> <p><b>ASI:</b> In a lot of way your committee is the voice of the association. How do you manage this role?</p> <p><b>CB:</b> We have different tools, and we use each of them to achieve different goals and results.</p> <p>Internal communication with our members is central to our success. They (our committee members, board, member associations) need to receive fresh news and be updated on any topics related to ASI including messages from the board, press releases, event programs, dates about our next certification exams etc.</p> <p>To facilitate this, we’ve recently launched a new website. It gives clear and straightforward information about who we are, what we do, what we stand for, and information on all our agendas and programs. It was a big job to relaunch it and it has involved the work of many people.</p> <p>Our social media platforms are also very important as they are the only way for us to reach a global community and show who we are, pass on some messages and create real links with sommeliers around the world. We receive a lot of very positive messages about our social media, and the community of followers keeps growing.</p> <p>At last, our precious baby, this magazine. What a challenge it has been to make a magazine on our own with a very small investment ... but our greater source of inspiration are the people being featured in the pages of the magazine; the sommeliers themselves who represent the diversity of our world of sommellerie. We wanted to give them some space to speak openly on a broad range of topics including work-related ones but also to showcase their knowledge of the beverage and hospitality worlds. In ASI Mag, we share stories, we explain who we are as a global association, we present our people with pride, and we keep sharing tools to educate our readers (our video tutorials are explained with detail, and some of the best sommeliers of the planet share their vision of the job and their best pairing tips, for example).</p>
<p><b>Our Team</b></p>		
<p><i>The Year in Review with ASI's President and Head of the Marketing Committee</i></p>		

**ASI:** As marketing director, you have a responsibility for supporting the direction the board has chosen to lead ASI, and the various initiatives such as contests, Bootcamps, examinations, guidelines, tutorials etc initiated by ASI. In terms of ASI's voice, are there some overarching principles, directions you use to guide the team when creating content to support all these activities?

**CM:** We have the immense task of collecting and disseminating all the statements, news, from the board and work of the various committees translating these into digestible messages that can be shared with our 66 member associations and over 30 thousand social media followers.

The only overarching principle I have is to work closely with the people involved in all projects. I need to speak to them all, understand where they are going and why. Only then can I work with the team on a strategy to best present and shed light on the project. As mentioned earlier, people are everything, and we need to create a connection with them, as we all live in different parts of the word and don't get a chance to meet in person.

In saying this, I need to pay tribute to the great team working by my side. Without Xeniya Volosnikova, Mark DeWolf and Barbara Wanner who I work with on a weekly basis and the events team (kudos to Liora Levi) this would not be achievable. Also, I need to acknowledge Michèle Chantome for her extremely professional translation work, which is assisted by the talented Manuel Negrete.

Over the past two years, ASI has edited their official sommelier guidelines, produced video tutorials (we literally managed the entire film production process), designed and organized from scratch two sommelier bootcamps, created two new ASI Certifications, launched ASI Magazine, and more.

That's a lot of projects for an association comprised mostly of volunteers. To do this, we had no choice but to be super organized and ensuring all these endeavors were put into spotlight and explained clearly to our audience (members, media, sommelier community).

We also have the duty to make sure our partners are always by our side as without them, there would be no events and little investment in ASI. They have a central role, and while they understand that we constantly need to act as a

neutral organization, working within our non-profit structure and under our ethics guidelines, we have the responsibility to pass on their messages to our community. And we do so thoroughly and with pleasure.

**ASI:** The committee in a lot of ways acts to support the great work being done by the ASI Board, and the other committees. Tell us about how you and the committee support their work, and the pride you must take in that.

**CB:** There are six working committees in ASI, besides the board. Some volunteers are working a lot and rarely get a chance to explain their role and what they are trying to achieve. Our role is the 'last link of the chain.' While we can help the committees in promoting their mission, they also help us a lot in explaining what ASI is to the media and the rest of the wine world. Without all these committees working towards various goals, there would be no association and nothing to share.

And these days there is a lot to share as each committee is constantly evolving. As an example, the ASI Education Committee, which was working more on a didactic level, now has ASI Bootcamp. The ASI Exam Committee had been focusing on one Diploma for the past 10 years, but in just the past year have proposed and are executing two more certifications, ASI Certification 1 and ASI Certification 2. These are tremendous achievements that deserve to be shared thoroughly with all sommeliers that are part of our family. All this means, our people are constantly feeding us with content. Its a big responsibility to share it wisely.

On a different but related topic, two years ago, ASI founded a diversity and inclusion committee. It seemed obvious that ASI had to position itself clearly on this important matter, and we take our ethics very seriously. Our role is to be in constant contact with this committee to ensure that we are making the right move in how we fairly represent global sommellerie.

We are a big family working in the same direction and our role is to take all information from all these working committees and steadily build a strong image of who we are. We are uniquely positioned to drive conversation within the industry at the international, national, and local levels.

**Our Team**

*The Year in Review with ASI's President and Head of the Marketing Committee*



**Our Team**

*The Year in Review with ASI's President and Head of the Marketing Committee*

**ASI:** As Director, you've been remarkably successful in curating and maintaining relationships with ASI partner organizations. You've even, this past year, added two additional Gold Partners. What's been your key to success, in terms of working with partners, and creating a relationship that is valuable both to them but also ASI, its member associations and sommeliers around the globe.

**CB:** I am happy to say the family will be growing again soon.

Sommeliers are the best ambassadors many partners can dream of. They know how important sommeliers are to the on-trade business. But that's not enough. We need to establish trust with our partners. We must show them we are working with complete transparency and constantly be proposing innovative activations for them. This is where my marketing background in wine is used as I constantly ask myself how we can help them better collectively but also individually as their strategies and expectations are all unique.

It's our role to be able to reinvent ourselves and adapt — as much as we possibly can, keeping in mind our DNA and ethics. Truth be told, getting marketing budgets in 2022, after Covid and the current economic crisis was not an easy task. We need to be creative and always show our partners what value we can bring to their business or image.

I think in that sense, we have made a lot of progress in the past few years. I have learnt to enjoy the relationship we have with our partners.

They mean a lot to us, and we intend to keep them by our side, as part of our ASI family, for many more years to come.

**ASI:** There has been lot of evolution and innovation in this committee this past year. What are you most proud of accomplishing and what are you looking forward to accomplishing in 2023?

**CB:** I can say that ASI has been moving forward in multiple ways during the past few years and it is very exciting to think about the future.

If I must share two favourite projects of the past year, it would be ASI Bootcamp, a project I put a lot of heart into and this magazine. I have faith in the future of Bootcamp and I even think we can take it to another dimension. Watch out for more things to come. The other, this magazine, was a big challenge and still is, but I think it also has a shining future. Kudos to Mark DeWolf, and all involved in its production.

2023 is almost here and we are of course focusing intently on Paris and the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest happening there next February. This moment is unique, and we know how intense and emotional it will be. Our committee needs to be ready for every side of it, and we are working hand in hand with UDSF to make sure we will propose the best possible event to our members but also to the supporters, and press, coming to Paris.

What a grand and exciting way to kick off the year.



Photo: Contributed

# How to choose the right tasting glass?

## The 3 stages of tasting:

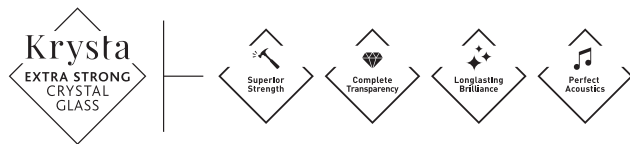
- 1 Observe:** assess the look of the wine via its colour, lustre and clarity
- 2 Smell:** analyse the intensity and quality of the aromas  
1<sup>st</sup> nose: when the wine is first poured into the glass  
2<sup>nd</sup> nose: after swirling the wine gently  
3<sup>rd</sup> nose: after next swirling the surface of the wine vigorously
- 3 Taste:** reveal the characteristics, harmonies and balance in the mouth

## The 5 criteria for a good tasting glass:



- **Thin, suitably-shaped lip**  
Comfort when tasting **3** For tasting
- **Top of bowl narrowed**  
Concentration of aromas
- **Aroma chamber**  
Development of aromas **2** For smelling
- **Wide oxygenation surface**  
Generation of aromas
- **Glass transparency**  
Appreciation of the wine's colour **1** For observing

All our glasses are made from:



— CRÉATEUR D'EXPÉRIENCES —

## Food and Wine Pairing

If the sommelier's expertise is to create harmonious alliances between the flavours of a dish and the aromas of the accompanying beverage, **this balance will be achieved if he or she chooses the right glass for the wine.**

The age of the wine, the region of origin and the grape varieties are all criteria that must be taken into account when choosing a glass.

The "right" tasting glass must convince both the amateur and the expert when it follows the following three steps: observation, olfaction and tasting. Observing the appearance of the wine, its colour,

brilliance and clarity requires a material with absolute transparency and a brilliance that lasts over time. Chef&Sommelier has developed its KRYSTA crystalline, recognised in the laboratory as the most resistant of all its competitors thanks to its resistance on the rim.

The concentration of a wine's aromas can only be fully perceived if the top of the chalice is closed. In the glass, the surface of contact of the air on the wine must be more or less wide according to the volatility of the aromas and thus the specificities of the grape varieties. For example, a Mediterranean red

wine, whose aromas evaporate more easily, needs a glass with a wide base ... Finally, the aromatic chamber (the space available between the surface of the liquid and the top of the glass) has a key role to play, since it must allow for an optimized diffusion of aromas and avoid any dominant perception of alcohol.

Respecting these criteria in the choice of glass will make the first perception of the wine, a success and will enhance the flavours of the dishes. **For this reason, Chef&Sommelier recommends the Food - Wine - Glass pairing.**



# PARIS



## illuminating the road to the Best Sommelier of the World contest

Feature Article

The adage may say “all roads lead to Rome” but next year they are leading to Paris. The City of Lights, Paris, will play host to the ASI Best Sommelier of the World, February 7 to 12, 2023. The city’s bright lights illuminating the path for sommeliers seeking the title of ‘world’s best.’

ASI and the Union de la Sommellerie Française (USDF) are in the final preparations for a global sommelier event, like none before it. The USDF was originally founded in June 1969 and is a founding member of the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI). Together the two associations, USDF and ASI, are planning a world contest like none that has come before it. Long the heart of the wine world, France has been waiting patiently since 1989, the last time it hosted the event, to welcome the world to the cradle of sommellerie for another Best Sommelier of the World contest. Led by a former Best Sommelier of the World, Philippe Faure-Brac, president of the USDF, the organizing committee has been working tirelessly to create a contest, and surrounding program that draws on history and culture of Paris, while simultaneously respects the authenticity of the contest. This year’s program according to ASI President “also gives respect to the competitors, by providing break days between the quarterfinal, semi-final and finale.”

PARIS: Illuminating the road to the Best Sommelier of the World contest







Feature Article

PARIS: Illuminating the road to the Best Sommelier of the World contest



For those seeking to absorb the culture of Paris, the USDF has planned in addition to numerous master classes, a dining event on a boat on the river Seine, traditional French bistro cuisine at the historic La Couple, a cocktail dinner at the Hôtel de Ville Paris, and for the finale a grand contest to be held at Paris' La Defense Arena. It's here, under the lights, and in front of a stadium capable of welcoming thousands of onlookers, the final three will need to perform under the pressure of an enthusiastic local and global audience. We asked Philippe Faure-Brac about the creation of the contest.

**ASI:** Hosting an ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest is a massive undertaking for any association. Why did you, UDSF, decide to apply for this opportunity?

**Philippe Faure-Brac (PFB):** It is a dream we had for more than 30 years as it is such a great honour to host this prestigious ASI event. My predecessors as president for UDSF applied two times before this edition with different concepts that didn't seduce the ASI members enough so I am just glad that we could create proposals that provide ASI the motivation to come back to Paris for 2023!

30 years is more than one generation, so we also have very high expectations from French sommeliers to live and experience an event like this! We couldn't deny this from them.

**ASI:** Hosting a contest like this is always pressure filled. However, hosting the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in a country, such as France, where wine and sommellerie are part of the culture puts an intense amount of focus on the organizer. Do you see hosting this contest as pressure or an honour?

**PFB:** Both of course! It is an honour to host such an event and to receive all delegations, ASI members and our family in France, Paris. But indeed, it brings a lot of pressure ... . As you mentioned, wine and food are a structural part of French art de vivre! Organizing the ASI Best Sommelier of World Contest in France, we know that we have all eyes on us. We can't make any mistakes regarding temperature of service, the glassware, service order of the wines, pairing, etc. There are many things that are essential to make the magic the reality for guests sitting around the table. People from all around the world are expecting nothing

less but perfection from France. But we also still need to remain inclusive because France is not just about palaces and grandeur but also great brasseries, conviviality, and the simple pleasure of being together. We want to communicate this to everyone that attends and the global audience watching the events.

**ASI:** To host an event of this magnitude requires an immense amount of preparation, and teamwork. Can you lend insight on how you, and your association, have structured roles to be able to facilitate a competition such as this?

**PFB:** Of course, organizing such an event can't be done all by myself. First, we decided all together within UDSF, including our 21 regional presidents, to select Paris as host city. We also requested their help in creating a team of volunteers from all our regions in France. We will need people to open bottles, check them, manage the glassware, and so on so we need all forces to be present. Above all our volunteers, I have a professional team working daily on the event, and nothing can be done without them. Thierry Pedros is mainly in charge of partnership management and overall organization. Claire Monnier joined the team a few months ago and will support us until the contest is done. Finally, Juliette Jourdan has worked with me on the Best Sommelier of the World since the very beginning, three years ago.

**ASI:** The contest is hosted as a partnership between ASI and UDSF. This provides both advantages and some challenges. Please describe how you work with ASI to ensure their values, brand, and partners are recognized while also ensuring your partners receive the attention they deserve during the contest?

**PFB:** We are lucky enough to have a great working atmosphere between UDSF and ASI. We know we can trust each other, and it is super easy to call, ask questions and find solutions. I would like to deeply thank Claire Berticat and William Wouters for their availability and willingness to help and find solutions together. I am personally also a member of the ASI Board for the past 18 years and Juliette is working for ASI as well, so we understand completely both entities requirements and we want everyone to make the most out of this contest.



FRANCE



Photo: Contributed



Photo: Contributed



Photo: Contributed

**ASI:** Visiting delegates and competitors will undoubtedly expect a certain level of grandeur, opulence, and experience during the week. Can you give us some insights on the events and activities surrounding the contest?

**PFB:** The broad idea we have for this contest, and the atmosphere we want to provide, is experience Paris in all its forms. During the week there will be masterclasses and some nice moments at the Bar des Sommeliers. Of course, every day will bring surprises and great activities, a visit of one iconic venue of Paris for example. We will also change the dinner venue every day to discover Paris various perspectives: golden palaces and cabaret atmosphere, alike.

**ASI:** With the contest being held in France, there will be a tremendous amount of attention and pressure on the French candidate. Did this play a

factor in your decision to elect Pascaline Lepeltier as your candidate?

**PFB:** We organized an internal selection where we invited all Best Sommelier of France and Meilleur Ouvrier de France (Best Craftsman of France) in sommellerie. We tested them on various tasks, theory, and, of course, tasting. They also had to perform several service tasks, in a restaurant-like environment that including opening wine, decanting, under real time pressure. The outcome is Pascaline end up with highest grades and Benjamin Roffet as her understudy. The selection was in March and since then we put together a Team France to prepare them both in the best possible way. Pascaline is provided weekly updates, trainings, and tastings, in France, and in New York. She is also supported with psychological training, to keep her mentally at the top of her game. As you mentioned the pressure is high, especially from the press. We

Feature Article

PARIS: Illuminating the road to the Best Sommelier of the World contest





Photo: Contributed



Philippe Faure-Brac Photo: Contributed

are doing our best to let her remain focused. In the end, we trust her in being able to handle pressure, that's one of the contest's big challenges!

**ASI:** While there is a lot of fanfare and events surrounding the competition, ultimately this is a contest. As a prior World Champion, you are keenly aware of the focus required to compete on the world stage. What are you doing to ensure the competitors have the time to focus on the task at hand and ensure the contest is fair for all participants?

**PFB:** Lucky for us we do not organize the tasks as well. We trust Shinya Tasaki and Olivier Poussier and the whole ASI Technical Committee team to prepare great quizzes and workshops. Our job as hosting countries is to select a good venue for accommodation and tasks. I think we did the good choice with Pullman Montparnasse as it is fully renovated and newly re-opened. It really offers full comfort, with large rooms and good bedding, a fitness center, good noise isolation, and so on. We really wanted to gather most of the contest in one place only. One of the latest news we have to share are the quarterfinals might only last one day so all candidates should have one day off between quarters and semi-final plus one between the semi and the finale! It gives them time to rest and relax.

**ASI:** Finally, after the week is finished what do you hope is the memory for competitors and delegates of the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in Paris?

**PFB:** My hope is for the candidates to have a great contest where they can express themselves and show their abilities, professionally and personally. I hope everyone feels welcome in France and makes the most of it in terms of developing relationships and sharing experiences. The true victory will be for sommellerie, worldwide.





# AN HISTORICAL EVENT

ASI Contest of the  
Best Sommelier of  
the World 2023

February 7 - 12, 2023



FRANCE 2023

**REGISTER NOW**





# Home for the Holidays

The ASI board share their  
favourite holiday food and drink

Feature Article

Home for the Holidays



With holiday season upon us, the members of ASI board, like most of you, are looking forward to time spent at home with friends and family. The ASI board represents a diverse group of people at different stages of life and coming from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. This time of year, whether celebrating New Year's, Christmas, Hannukah, Kwanzaa, another religious holiday, or simply taking the time to enjoy time with friends and family, it's a great time to reflect on our fortunes in the company of good food and drink.

### Toasting the Holidays with a Bolleke of De Koninck

**William Wouters,**  
ASI President



Growing up, at my family celebrations we always served a gratin of chicory with sliced ham accompanied by béchamel sauce and to wash it down, the classic ale of my hometown of Antwerp, De Koninck. The pairing of this wonderful velvety beer with its zesty, dry and lightly bitter aftertaste, traditionally served in its traditional bulbous glass known as 'bolleke,' is absolutely divine. After lunch, we would enjoy some freshly churned, extremely rich vanilla ice cream served with almond crumble. The perfect excuse to toast our friends and family with another bolleke full of De Koninck.



### 1994 Vintage D'Oliveiras Malmsey Madeira and Norfolk Cheeses

**Nina Basset,**  
ASI Secretary General



It is never difficult to choose at least one of the wines that we will be enjoying at Christmas time, as we are very fond of Madeira wine and the festive season is the perfect time to enjoy this complex and delicious wine. This year we will be opening a D'Oliveiras Malmsey Sweet Madeira, 1994. This wine is complex, rich and succulent with raisin and candied fruit flavours, which marry perfectly with the selection of local Norfolk cheeses we will enjoy before a delicious and traditional Christmas pudding with brandy butter and custard.

### Hot Chocolate and Cold Winter Days

**Julie Dupouy-Young,**  
ASI Deputy Secretary General



For me Christmas and cold winter days are a perfect excuse to indulge with a hot chocolate. Not any hot chocolate though. My go to is made from organic, fair trade, 70 per cent drinking chocolate sourced from the Dominican Republic supplier Òko Caribe and produced by Dublin based The Proper Chocolate Company. It is deliciously intense, has a very low level of sweetness, lovely bitterness and rich, inviting texture. It's a guilt free pleasure!

### The Joys of Polish Quince Tincture Liqueur

**Piotr Kamecki,**  
ASI Vice-President Europe



During the holiday season I love to drink beverages that I do not actually get to enjoy often in my daily life, especially sweet liqueurs. My favourite to savour during the holiday season is homemade quince tincture, which is a vodka-based liqueur made from quince that takes at least a month to make. A good quince tincture is wonderfully sweet with an edgy, fresh backbone of acidity. Sipping on it gives me a sense of relaxation, pure joy, and nostalgia, especially when I enjoy it from a glass from my grandma's collection.

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Home for the Holidays



## Vin de Constance and Moroccan Almond Cakes



**Michèle Aström Chantôme,**  
ASI Ambassador, Vice-President  
Africa & Middle East

The holidays season is the right time to treat yourself and your loved ones! It's also the perfect time to share something exceptional. I chose the 2013 Vin de Constance in magnum to end this year 2023. I of course have a very special relationship with Klein Constantia since my first visit to the Cape region in the early 90s. At that time, I had the opportunity to purchase only 2 bottles of the first vintage of the modern era, the 1986, from the estate. It was limited. And the mythical bottles of Vin de Constance are only 50cl! Now, you can find this fabulous wine in magnum. The perfect size when there are a lot of people, which is often the case for the Holidays! I like to enjoy this "dry wine with some sweetness" with delicate Moroccan almond cakes, but also with Jamon de Bellota, Parmigiano and even Gorgonzola. On the photo, I staged this magnum the way the Berbers of southern Morocco carry their kemkoums (jars) of water. A nod to South Africa/North Africa ... Happy Holidays to all!

## Sake and New Year's Celebrations



**Saiko Tamura-Soga,**  
ASI Vice-President Asia  
& Oceania

The New Year holiday is the most important holiday in Japan, rich in unique customs, traditions and festivities. The traditional Japanese New Year's Day feast consists of various dishes with auspicious significance. In respect for tradition and for the best pairing with such food, I naturally can't think of anything else but sake!

## Warm Up with Mezcal



**Marcos Flores,**  
ASI Vice-President Americas

The festivities of the holiday are coming and with them the chill of winter. On these cold days spirits with a high alcohol content are desired, that is why Mezcal becomes one of my favorite drinks this time of year. I especially like wild agave Mezcals like Tepeztate, Tobalá, Papalote or Madrecuixe, which are made from magueyes or agaves that take much longer to grow and reproduce.

One of my favorite areas is Oaxaca, since there are different states in the Mexican Republic that produce this type of Mezcal and I usually like a more ancestral or artisan process, just as our ancestors lived.

I usually drink Mezcal on its own, without salt and without any other additives and in small glasses, taking small sips and drinking it slowly.

Unlike Tequila, I really like these smoked parts that are the result of the agave cooking in ovens buried underground where pineapples are baked and give these characteristic notes but without subtracting the profile of the agaves that I am mentioning as the Madrecuixe, Tepestate or the Tobalá. Normally these Mezcals have high alcoholic graduations up to more than 50° and many of these must be acquired directly with the Mezcal distillers (Maestros mezcaleros), since these kinds of Mezcal are not commercial. Felices fiestas!

## Sweet Moments and Muscat de Beaume de Venise



**Philippe Fraure-Brac,**  
ASI Treasurer

Christmas season is synonymous with joy, merriment, and the sweet moments of sharing. My favourite drink that illustrates those feelings is Muscat from Beaumes de Venise as it the style of wine which first made me fall in love with wine. Anytime I sip it, it brings me cheerful memories and is always sure to create even more memories of holidays spent with friends and family!

## Christmas in Finland, Santa's home country

**Samuil Angelov,  
Deputy Treasurer**



Did you know that Santa Claus is from Finland? That's right, he lives in Korvatunturi, with his wife, elves, and reindeer. Lucky for our children, as they are the first to be given presents so that Santa Claus can then visit all the children of the world before Christmas Day morning.

For us Finns, Christmas is a cherished holiday. We typically celebrate the holidays surrounded by loved ones. Of course, the highlight of Christmas is the Christmas dinner. The preparation for this feast starts weeks before Christmas. Before Christmas dinner there is Christmas Eve morning, when rice porridge is served. Inside the porridge there is one whole almond. The person that finds the almond gets to enjoy good fortune until the following Christmas. The porridge is accompanied either by a pudding made from dried plums and raisins, sugar, and cinnamon, or milk. Then it's time to prepare for the Christmas truce (treaty), which was first proclaimed in the Middle Ages, in the former capital of Turku. Until well into the late 20th century, breaking this Christmas truce could result in imprisonment.

As far as the Christmas table, it is a traditional meal; at least where I come from. Dinner is served with Glögi, which is similar to Gluhwein (mulled wine) but in Finland it is often hot juice mixed with Koskenkorva, a Finnish spirit. The starter table is divided into three parts, cold salted or pickled fish, cold meat dishes and vegetarian dishes. The fish dishes are our biggest delicacy. They include salmon gravlax and whitefish. In Finland, mead is served with sour cream and onion, which is mixed with mousseline sauce and eaten either that way or with dried bread. Other fish dishes traditionally served include pickled small fish such as herring. My personal favourite is herring preserved in vinegar, although there are various types of herring served as part of the offering including mustard herring, blackcurrant herring and smetana herring. These fish dishes are accompanied by boiled potatoes and Christmas bread, which is a slightly sweet malty bread, or island bread, which is wholewheat bread topped with syrup.

For the salad, we serve Rosolli, which is a beetroot salad with all the ingredients chopped into small pieces. Finally, the meat dishes include meat such as reindeer, head cheese, pâté, sausages, and cold cuts. As far as main courses we serve either Christmas ham or lard fish, as well as different kinds of casseroles cooked in the oven. We start with the lard fish, which is dried fish rubbed with lard, then roasted in the oven, before being topped with béchamel sauce and a generous amount of allspice. In terms of meat, ham is the king of the Christmas table. It is slow roasted in the oven overnight and topped with mustard just before serving. The ham sauce is made from the pan juices with a little mustard mixed in. A little extra mustard is also served as an accompaniment to the ham. As for the side dishes, the traditional ones are radish, carrot, and potato casserole. Liver casserole is also a fixture of many Finn's Christmas tables.

For dessert, we enjoy dried fruit, or a mixture of dried fruit and ice cream, jelly, or rice pudding in various forms. In our family, Victoria pudding, a lemon-flavoured rice pudding, has been a Christmas dessert for several generations.

As for the drinks at Christmas we serve Sahti (Finnish farmhouse ale), beer and snaps like Koskenkorva, aquavit or vodka. Of course, wine is also served. I like Champagne with appetizers, Pfalz Riesling with the fish and meat, and I like a mature Bordeaux with the ham.

Christmas, of course, changes with each generation and each family, but one thing stays true: the message of peace, calm and the presence of those who matter most in our lives is still the unifying force during the holidays.



Feature Article

Home for the Holidays



# ASI INTRODUCES CERTIFICATION LEVEL EXAMS

Happenings



Photos: Contributed

ASI Introduces Certification Level Exams

Last year, ASI in its continuing efforts to be the standard of excellence in the world of sommellerie, launched ASI Certification 1 and ASI Certification 2. The introduction of these two new levels, leading to the ASI Diploma, represent the further commitment of ASI to provide its global network increased opportunities to learn, grow, and professional achievement. This past month, 225 candidates from 22 countries, participated in the ASI Certification 1 exam. ASI interviewed Andreas Matthidis, a valued member of the ASI Exam Committee, about the evolution of ASI as it relates to examinations.

Matthidis, president of the Greek Sommelier Association, is a celebrated sommelier, educator and consultant in the wine, spirit and coffee industry, in Greece. In addition to graduating with honours from the Higher School of Tourism in Rhodes, and the Athens University of Economics,

he is a graduate of WSET Diploma program (DipWSET).

**ASI:** Why did the ASI Exam Committee feel it was important to create the ASI Certification 1 and Certification 2 levels?

**Andreas Matthidis (AM):** The ASI Sommelier Diploma was established in 2012 under the direction of a legend of our association, Giuseppe Vaccarini (ASI Best Sommelier of the World, 1978), and certifies the highest “international” level of skills and knowledge required of a professional sommelier working in the hospitality sector. Over time the committee felt there was a need to offer some graduated steps leading into the ASI Diploma. Currently there are three levels of the examination program each aimed at sommeliers at various stages of their careers.

**Certification 1**

Certification 1 was established in 2021 to test the basic knowledge of aspiring sommeliers on the international stage.

**Certification 2**

Certification 2 builds on these expectations and in addition to tests of knowledge, also tests the practical skills required of a sommelier working in a restaurant-like setting, at an international level.

**ASI Diploma**

Requires sommeliers to have the highest level of knowledge and service skills within the sommelier profession, through theoretical and practical examinations.

**ASI:** As committee members and sommeliers with years of high-level experience, how do you and the rest of the exam committee make sure the questions at the Certification 1, for example, are both challenging but also achievable for candidates with limited experience?

**AM:** Our committee consists of very experienced professionals from various countries of the world who, in their daily lives, are dealing with the core of the hospitality sector. As such Certification 1 addresses the basic knowledge required at this level. Most of the questions on the exam require quite generic knowledge of wines, spirits, beers, coffee, tea, food and wine pairing, art de la table and sommelier skills. Of course, there are some questions that are related to our association (ASI) and its history. There are also some questions which are a little more difficult, which ensures there is a reasonable challenge to achieve the pass rate of 65 per cent. ASI is a professional association, so the certificates ASI issues should be challenging to attain.

**ASI:** Can you elaborate on how you determine how much of the exam should be weighted to certain wine countries, winemaking, viticulture, etcetera?

**AM:** We give a lot of thought on this point. In Certification 1 the weight is based on the generic knowledge of the most important wine producing countries (by volume of wine sold) and their appellations. For Certification 2 we cast a wider net in terms of knowledge expectations and for Diploma we drill down on details, expecting the

candidates to know the particularities and details of each wine region, style of spirit, beer etcetera.

**ASI:** For sommelier contests, competitors must compete in French, English or Spanish. Are candidates for Certification 1 or 2 required to take the test in one of these languages?

**AM:** Yes, until now knowledge of one of these three official ASI languages is required to take the exam. At the same time, we do offer alternative options for some countries that may struggle to find students capable of doing this to apply for a questionnaire in their native language.

**ASI:** Undertaking an exam like this on a global scale is challenging. What are some of the logistic hurdles of hosting an exam like this in multiple countries? What has the team done to overcome these challenges.

**AM:** Specifically for Certification 1, this is a very easy process as there is no practical skills test. The responsibility of any country hosting the examination is simply to find a functional room. At the same time, we have issued to each hosting country a set of general rules and invigilators guidelines to ensure all participating countries proctor the test the same way. We also only have one email address for registrations, of any exam, to avoid any confusion or error. On the day, the most important tool is our WhatsApp platform, as it allows all invigilators, to communicate with us at any moment during the test, if they need to.

**ASI:** If a member association is interested in hosting a Certification 1, Certification 2 or Diploma exam, who should they contact?

**AM:** There is always an announcement on ASI's official website and social media but at any time they can simply send an email to: exams@asi.info

For those interested, our next ASI Diploma examination will take place on March 13, 2023. Information about it can be found on the ASI website. Our next Certification 1 exam will take place in Spring 2023 and Certification 2 exam next autumn. Look for updates on the website, via ASI social media and the ASI newsletter.

Happenings

ASI Introduces Certification Level Exams



FAMILIA  
**TORRES**



## A FAMILY BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY

Our legacy is taking care of the planet for future generations

# Antologia Miguel Torres: new vintages of Familia Torres' flagship wines released



©ToniGalitó

Antologia Miguel Torres collection comprises the five most iconic wines from Familia Torres, which show the winery's firm commitment to quality, identity and sustainability. Its story started over 50 years ago with Miguel A. Torres, member of the fourth generation, who created the legendary Mas La Plana that took the winery in a new direction. The fifth generation consolidated this vision and added to the collection its most exclusive wine: Mas de la Rosa.

The new vintages were presented throughout the year at several professional events in different countries, before ending in October with an 'Antologia Day', a tasting with end consumers that was held simultaneously in Barcelona, London and New York.

The five wines invite us to take a journey for the senses through different Catalan appellations of origin. The route begins in Conca de Barberà with the Chardonnay Milmanda 2019, continues on to Penedès, the homeland of Familia Torres, with Mas La Plana (100% Cabernet

Sauvignon) and Reserva Real (a Bordeaux blend), both 2018 vintages, and returns to Conca de Barberà with Grans Muralles 2018, a lush wine made with Catalan varieties, including two ancestral grapes recovered by Familia Torres. The last stop of the journey is Priorat with Mas de la Rosa 2019, a genuine expression of the 1.9-hectare vineyard in Porrera with old cariñena and garnacha vines.

True reflections of their place of origin, these five Mediterranean wines allow nature to express itself freely, revealing vintage variation and emphasizing the wine's most indulgent side. They all have in common elegance and freshness. Miguel Torres Maczassek, from the fifth generation of Familia Torres, states: "our obsession with these wines is respecting the expression of the vineyard and the vintage. We have worked patiently through decades to find the right balance in the vineyards. All the wines of our Antologia Collection show a very defined identity with great sense of place, varietal character and freshness".

# HONOURING a legend:

## The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award

This ASI award was created in 2019 first to honour the legacy of Gérard Basset and then continues to distinguish a personality who, like Gérard, has played an important role in making the sommelier profession shine around the world, taking into account all that he/she has achieved during his/her career, and to have shown, like Gérard, curiosity, tenacity, pugnacity, determination, kindness, diplomacy, humility, modesty, professionalism, mentoring of young talents, transmission, charisma, talent, sense of human being and a deep enthusiasm for life.

ASI Ambassador, Michèle Chantome, was a close personal friend of Gérard and his wife Nina whom she continues to have a close relationship with. Chantome says “Gérard has always been special to me. We first met in the late eighties and our paths crossed a few times until I really got to know him when he won the Champagne Ruinart UK Sommelier of the Year in 1992. From that moment onward, I discovered his fighting spirit. He could not live without taking on a challenge in his professional life. As soon as he had reached a goal, he needed to focus on a new target. He would never have given up without achieving what he had decided to. That’s also why I was so confident regarding his fight against cancer. I did not want to imagine he would lose that battle.”

Unfortunately, Basset did succumb to cancer, just before the ASI Contest of the Best Sommelier of the World in Antwerp, but his legend courses through the veins of sommeliers across the globe. His spirit legendary and his accomplishments unparalleled. Basset was the most awarded sommelier. He was a Master Sommelier, Master of Wine, possessed a Wine MBA, and OIV MSc in Wine Management. He was Best Sommelier of Europe, and eventually won the title of ASI Best Sommelier of the World in 2010. Perhaps most special to Basset was being bestowed with the title of Officer of the British Empire.

On a personal note, that speaks to his passion for learning and achievement, Chantome says “every time we happened to travel together, I was surprised to see how many books he could purchase in the airport shops. Wine books? Not at all ... He had already tons of them at home. All he was looking for were books about life achievements, in sports, art, business, and biographies of winners from any field. He always needed examples to reassure him he was on the right path. He wanted to know how they had been successful and would even draw some lessons from their experiences.”

**Happenings**

*Honoring a legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award*



**Happenings**

*Honouring a legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award*



THE ASI GÉRARD BASSET LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award continues in his honour. After Gerard who received it posthumously, the 2021 first award was presented to legendary French sommelier and ASI Best Sommelier of the World 1989 winner Serge Dubs. In winning the award Dubs demonstrated the qualities of not only a great sommelier, but an ambassador of the profession.

The criteria of for those nominated for the award are:

- Long, loyal service to the wine industry supporting sommellerie, winemakers and hospitality professionals.
- Someone who has had an impact through their work and expertise for and within Sommellerie
- A great ambassador for wine, wine service and hospitality, through service, wine making, education or journalism
- A mentor and shining example of professionalism in their own career that has inspired others
- Someone who embraces change, diversity and inclusivity

Following nominations last November and December, a jury comprised of the ASI vice-presidents, the current ASI Best Sommelier of the World (Marc Almert) and co-chaired by Nina Basset (also representing Romané Basset) and the ASI President a list of 14 names were presented to a guest jury comprising some of most influential names in the wine world. The guest jury reduced this list to a final four, which was presented to all the ASI member association presidents for a final vote earlier this month. Member association presidents have until January 7th, 2023 to submit their pick for the prestigious award. The winner, normally announced in March, will be presented this year as part of the program of the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in Paris, in February 2023.

Happenings

*Honouring a legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award*



LOUIS HAVAUX



Photo: Contributed

Indeed, after the previous competition held in 1978 in Cascais (Portugal) with the Italian Giuseppe Vaccarini as the winner, he doubled the number of participating countries and received all the competitors free of charge: Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and Spain. International journalists testified: "this competition really created the revival of the ASI ... thanks to Louis Havaux, Père des Sommeliers ... Brussels, the world capital of wine" ... With the brilliant victory of Frenchman Jean-Luc Pouteau. On this occasion Havaux was awarded the title of Honourary Member of the ASI. Since 1983, he has participated as a member of the jury in its numerous competitions, witnessing their spectacular progression at the world level...

To quote Louis: *"If I recall correctly, we are now over sixty member countries of the ASI! This is an impressive journey, the merit of which is mainly due to the multitude of volunteer sommeliers that I have been able to appreciate over the years."*

Thanks to the ASI sommelier community, he has, in fact, founded and then presided over the FIJEV (International Federation of Wine Journalists and Writers), then co-founded the Association des Grands Concours Internationaux des Vins (sponsored by OIV), animated as a wine columnist on television (RTB.F and RTL.TV), and been inducted into 68 brotherhoods in France and abroad as Belgian Chancellor of the Jurade de St-Emilion, he has invited, each year, along with the Best Sommelier of Belgium to be received and inducted into the Jurade. Finally, he is a Commander in the French Order of Agricultural Merit. Louis says "I would like to thank the Gilde and ASI for this wonderful opportunity in life. They introduced me as a journalist to the world of sommelierie and wine."

While Havaux has never been a sommelier this 87 year-old has devoted the best years of his life, more than 50 years, to support sommelierie in Belgium and around the world, while also managing his wine business.

He was the editor of the magazine of the Gilde des Sommeliers de Belgique. For more than 25 years, he was also secretary general of this Gilde and always remained active in their activities, in particular as a member of the jury of the competitions of the Junior Sommeliers or the Best Sommeliers of Belgium and represented Belgium at various international meetings with the ASI.

In 1983 he organised the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in Brussels on behalf of the Belgian Sommelier Gilde, without any subsidy from ASI. This saved ASI from a financial disaster, at the time. He took risks by organising a wine fair to finance it, but fortunately it was a great success and the beginning of the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles which today is well-known worldwide and a contest where sommeliers from all over are invited to come and judge wine, improving their skills and knowledge.

Happenings

Honouring a Legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award

VÉRONIQUE RIVEST



Photo: © Martine Doucet

Véronique Rivest is recognized domestically — and internationally — as one of Canada’s leading wine experts. She is a renowned sommelier, wine writer, speaker, and educator. She enjoys sharing her hard-earned wine knowledge, as a columnist for La Presse newspaper as well as other magazines and as commentator on Radio-Canada.

Véronique got her start in the hospitality industry at 16 when she got her first job in a restaurant in Ottawa. It was, she says, love at first sight, and the beginning of a journey that has led her to become a successful restaurateur and sommelier.

But her love of the restaurant industry did not stop her from wider studies. She has a BA in modern languages from Ottawa University, and an MBA in International Trade from Schiller University in Strasbourg. She is fluent in French, English, German, and Spanish.

After 30 years in the hospitality industry, Véronique can look back on a record of unrivalled achievement in her field in Canada. She took part 4 times in the Best Sommelier of Quebec competition before winning it. Perseverance is in her DNA! She then won the

Best Sommelier of Canada competition in 2006 and repeated her win in 2012. She won the Wine Woman Award in Paris in 2007 and ASI Best Sommelier of the Americas in 2012.

At the ASI World’s Best Sommelier competition, Véronique placed in the top 12 in 2007 and 2010, and captured second place in Tokyo in 2013. She was the first woman to attain the podium in the history of the competition. She is a trailblazer who opened the way and inspired a generation of female sommeliers, in Canada and abroad.

In 2014 Véronique opened SOIF Bar a Vin in Gatineau, Quebec. Just one year later, it was named one of the 10 Best New Restaurants in Canada by EnRoute Magazine. It is of course also a place of learning and sharing. Continuing education is a big part of Soif’s raison d’être. Winemakers come to visit from around the world, as well as sommeliers who come to train with Veronique. Her love of teaching and mentoring is as big as her love of wine.

Véronique has been a member of the ASI Sommelier Contests Committee since 2020.

In 2015, she was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal of Canada, which recognizes great Canadians for exceptional deeds that bring honour to the country.

In 2016 she was named Air Canada’s official sommelier, tasked with selecting wines for the airline’s business class.

In 2018, she was decorated with the Order of Gatineau, given to citizens who have made an exceptional contribution to their profession and have brought international attention to the city.

Her influence, and her recognition as a highly respected wine professional in the world, are not only due to her success in the difficult world of professional competitions, but also much to her attitude and vision of the profession. Véronique’s authenticity, her simplicity and ability to communicate, her extreme professionalism combined with a true passion and extraordinary humility, have greatly contributed to her success but have also established new scales in the profession and have contributed to its evolution. Not to mention the enormous influence that Véronique’s career and successes have had on women in the profession around the world.

**Happenings**

*Honouring a Legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award*



SHINYA TASAKI



Photo: Contributed

Happenings

Honouring a Legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award

Shinya Tasaki was born in 1958 in Tokyo, Japan. Wishing to study French cuisine, Shinya left Japan in 1977, at the age of 19, and headed to France, where he discovered the profession of sommelier and decided to take up this path. He returned to Japan country in 1980. Three years later, in 1983, he won the Best Sommelier of Japan Contest. He never stopped improving, having set himself the challenge of winning the world competition.

He succeeded in 1995, at the contest of the Best Sommelier of the World, organized by the ASI that year in Tokyo. Perhaps no other person has done so much to promote the culture and enjoyment of wine in Japan, both in families and in izakaya, the restaurants rooted in Japanese culture.

Elected to the presidency of the ASI (Association de la Sommellerie Internationale) in 2010, a position he held until 2017, he has not ceased to work for the promotion of the sommelier profession, the improvement of techniques and the social advancement of sommeliers worldwide.

In 2012, together with Giuseppe Vaccarini, World's Best Sommelier 1978, he launched the ASI Diploma with the aim of harmonizing the level of sommeliers around the world and encouraging them to improve their skills.

In 2011, Shinya Tasaki received a very high Japanese distinction, the Yellow Ribbon Medal, for his contribution to the promotion of the sommelier profession, from the hands of the Emperor himself, who congratulated him personally. The Yellow Ribbon Medal is awarded to "those who by their diligence in their profession have become role models for the people."

On this occasion, Shinya Tasaki said, "To me, this award does not honour me so much as it does the profession of sommelier. I will continue to contribute to the training of sommeliers."

As vice-president of the Japan Sommelier Association, he was fully involved in the preparation of the 2013 World Competition, which was held in Japan. He continues to support the hosting of ASI international competitions in Japan with the members of the JSA, of which he has become president.

He also continues, through lectures and media presence, to transmit the charm of wine and gastronomy, but also the art of table manners — especially the right way to serve wine — to the people of Japan.

To tell the truth, the charismatic Shinya Tasaki is a living legend in his country and continues to inspire young sommeliers in Asia and around the world. He is to date the only non-European sommelier to hold the title of Best Sommelier of the World.

GIUSEPPE VACCARINI



Photo: Contributed

Giuseppe Vaccarini was born in 1952 in Miradolo Terme, near Pavia, Italy. He became a professional sommelier in 1972 and won the title of Best Sommelier of the World in 1978 at the ASI contest in Estoril, Portugal.

His career quickly turned to the transmission and training of sommeliers and the development of gastronomy throughout the world. Starting, of course, in Italy where he taught hotel technology and more specifically sommellerie in Milan from 1987 to 2010. He has also managed prestigious restaurants, including Michelin-starred Gualtiero Marchesi in Milan.

At the same time, he put his knowledge and talent to the service of the Italian Sommelier Association (Secretary General and then President) and then of the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI), of which he was Secretary General from 1987, then President from 1996 to 2004, and Director until 2007. He then founded the ASPI, the association of professional sommeliers of Italy, of which he is still the president.

Giuseppe has given sommelier courses in many countries including Switzerland, South Korea, Vietnam, Brazil, Portugal, Cyprus, Thailand, Venezuela amongst others. He has also given numerous conferences and participated in the work of the ASI Technical Committee and been on the jury of various international competitions. As president of the Technical Committee of the Ruinart Trophy, he contributed with Michèle Chantôme, to the creation of many associations of sommeliers in northern and eastern European countries.

In 2012, at the request of Shinya Tasaki, then president of the ASI, he created the exam for the ASI Diploma with the goal of harmonizing the expected skill levels of sommeliers around the world. Still at the head of the Exams Committee, he and his team have just launched two other certification exams offered to national associations to encourage sommeliers to improve their skills. He has also been actively involved in the development of the ASI Guidelines as well as tutorials and the ASI Bootcamps in Poland and Malaysia.

A hard worker — he gets bored on vacation, admits those around him — he is the author of more than 20 books on sommellerie and gastronomy, including wine and food pairings and in-depth knowledge of quality products, from mineral water to coffee, beer, ice cream, grappa, cheeses, charcuterie and more. Finally he contributed, as a journalist and expert, to many magazines.

		<p>Happenings</p> <p>Honouring a Legend: The ASI Gérard Basset Lifetime Achievement Award</p>
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*It's better with*

# CAVA

The world is taking notice of Cava. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, global sales of Spain's iconic traditional method sparkling wine style increased more than 17 per cent in 2021, and this positive trend has continued through 2022. What's driving the growth? It is premium, longer aged Cava, such as Cava Guarda Superior Reserva, Cava Guarda Superior Gran Reserva, Cava Guarda Superior de Paraje, as well as organic Cava.

The success of these sub-categories reflects the D.O.'s commitment to quality, the environment, sustainable practices, and transparency. As of 2025, the Cava de Guarda Superior category will be 100 per cent organic, representing an important milestone as the D.O. continues to focus on the sustainability of the industry. This commitment to sustainability is in parallel to continued emphasis on quality via reduced yields, extended aging, and stronger traceability from grape harvest to bottling. The latter evidenced via the introduction of different colours for each category which will help consumers to identify the types of Cava, and the introduction of a 'guarantee seal' of the Regulatory Council, a body accredited by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for the certification of Cava.

Additionally, an "integral producer" label has been launched to distinguish those wineries that press and vinify 100% of the cuvée on their own property, for their own production. This label highlights the value of the elaboration being carried out entirely, from start to finish, by the same winery.

In keeping with these commitments to continually raise the quality of Cava and increase consumer understanding of how Cava is produced, and where



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 [@do.cava](https://www.facebook.com/do.cava)



it is made the D.O has also introduced the ability of producers to identify zones of production. Javier Pagés, President of the Regulatory Council says of these new labelling practices, “these seals represent what sets us apart and identifies us as the authentic Cava with Designation of Origin. They offer the highest level of certification, and the only official one that guarantees the quality of the product to the consumer, certifying the authenticity of its characteristics and of the information on the label.”

## **Cava’s Gastronomic Prowess Proved**

Sommeliers have long regarded Cava as one of its most reliable tools when it comes to perfect pairings. Québécois sommelier, scientist, gastronomy expert and author of *Tastebuds and Molecules: the Art and Science of Food, Wine and Flavor* has identified numerous ingredients that synergize with the various styles of Cava, opening even more opportunities for Cava to shine on the dining table.

[www.cava.wine/en/discover/molecular-study-cava](http://www.cava.wine/en/discover/molecular-study-cava)

## **Become a Cava Expert and Educator**

Do you want to share your passion for Cava with your colleagues, students or with family and friends? Begin your journey with the Cava Educator live on-site course, where you will learn the history of Cava, the Designation of Origin, its Regulatory Council, the traditional production method, grape varieties permitted, origins and zoning, types and styles, classification, how to enjoy it, in addition to its multiple pairings and its great link with gastronomy.

The Cava Academy is a 100% online course that allows you to study at your own pace, learning about and enjoying Cava whenever, and wherever, is most convenient for you.

You will have on hand a collection of videos by renowned Master Sommeliers and Masters of Wine, who will guide you through the exciting experience of a Cava tasting. A selection of Cavas delivered to your home address will make the experience highly rewarding.

**Discover the Cava Academy:**  
[cavaacademy.com/en/home](http://cavaacademy.com/en/home)

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# D.O. CAVA



Make Me a Match:

# MM



Make Me a Match: A Global Tradition

# MAKE ME A MATCH!

A Global Tradition:  
*Eating and drinking local during the holidays*



Photo: Contributed

We asked sommeliers from across the globe to describe their favourite holiday food and drink pairings. While the flavours they recommend vary greatly, the one consistent was the value of eating and drinking local. The sommelier occupation often requires travel around the world, and in depth research into the food and drink of many foreign nations, but when it comes to celebrating the holidays, a time to celebrate what you have around you, it's comforting to know sommeliers raise a glass, and a fork, to what's made nearby them.

## Gingerbread Cookies with Blue Cheese

**Pairing:**

Blossa 2022 Hurricane "Gløgg" (Mulled Wine)

**Sommelier:**

**Liora Levi**

President of the Norwegian Sommelier Association; ASI event team



**About the Dish:**

Gingerbread cookies have been a part of Norwegian Christmas traditions for a very long time. It is customary for families to bake and decorate the cookies before Christmas. Making gingerbread houses, castles and fortresses is also very popular and involves everyone, from young to old. The tradition of enjoying blue cheese with these lovely cookies is fairly new but nonetheless mouth-watering and delicious.

**Make Me a Match!**

*Make Me a Match: A Global Tradition*



Make Me a Match!

Make Me a Match: A Global Tradition

About the Pairing:

Fortified wines with a high dose of sweetness are a great match to this dish as it pairs remarkably well with the saltiness of the cheese and the alcohol rinses the palate from the creaminess of the cheese. I find that Vintage Oort is the ultimate pairing, but also the typical Norwegian “gløgg,” the Scandinavian version of alcoholic mulled wine. It has a lot of sweetness to it in addition to the usual Christmas spices. This year’s favorite gløgg is Blossa 2022 Hurricane.



Photo: Contributed

## Acadian Tourtière

**Pairing:**

Domaine de Grand Pré Riesling and Beausoleil Vineyards Pinot Noir

**Sommelier:**

**Mark DeWolf**

Canada, ASI Content Manager, ASI Magazine Editor, Creative Director Food & Drink, Saltwire Network



About the Dish:

For most North Americans, the holiday dining experience centers around turkey dinner, but growing up each Christmas Eve my mom would

serve an Acadian tourtière. Tourtière is a meat pie comprised of a combination of ground beef, pork and veal, but sometimes includes lamb or game, along with mashed potatoes, onion and a mix of savoury and aromatic spices such as cloves and cinnamon. The scent of this pie coming out of the oven fills any home with holiday spirit.

About the Pairing:

The Acadian’s settled in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, nearly 400 years ago. Many landed near a town called Wolfville, where I can trace some of my own ancestors too. The land of Acadie (Acadia), made famous by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s poem Evangeline, is now awash with vines, as it is the centerpiece of our emerging local wine industry. When it comes to a wine to match tourtière, it would be quite easy to reach for a moderately intense red wine such as GSM blend, but I think there is a delightful cooling, contrasting effect by serving a local Riesling, such as Domaine de Grand Pré’s version, or a bright fruity red such as Beausoleil Vineyards Pinot Noir. Both of which would be pretty good pairings for turkey dinner as well.



Photo: Contributed

## Vitel Toné and Old Vines Semillon and Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc blend

**Pairing:**

Matías Riccitelli Old Vines Semillon, Río Negro, Patagonia, Argentina, and Altar Uco Edad Media

**Sommelier:**

**Matías Prezioso**

President of AAS ;  
Argentina  
Sommelier  
Association



**About the Dish:**

For Christmas in Argentina there is a tradition, that I love, of eating a lot of cold dishes. This is explained by the fact that Argentina is located in the southern hemisphere, so Christmas is in the middle of summer and fresh dishes are the ideal starter. Among them, the one I like the most is Vitel Toné, a preparation of Italian origin (specifically from Piedmont) but which became very popular in Argentina thanks to immigration from that country. It is prepared with beef (cuts such as peceto or tongue are used), accompanied by a sauce whose main ingredients are mayonnaise, tuna loins, beef broth, anchovies and capers. It is a dish that mixes the flavors of the meat with the sea, something that happens a lot in Argentina because we are known for our plains and cows but we have a large extension of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean.

**About the Pairing:**

To pair this dish I love a mouth-filling white wine that, at the same time, also possesses freshness. The body allows to accompany the creaminess of the dish and the acidity of the wine combines very well with the marine flavors of the tuna, the anchovies and the salinity of the capers. I think directly of two great Argentine wines. One of them is "Matías Riccitelli Old Vines Semillon" from Río Negro (Patagonia), from old vineyards that provide great complexity while maintaining the freshness of the variety and the place. And I also think of this dish with "Altar Uco Edad Media," a creation of the brilliant winemaker Juan Pablo Michelini. A wine that is a blend with a majority of Chardonnay and some Sauvignon Blanc. Thanks to the cooler climate of the Uco Valley along with natural winemaking and biological aging, it has both incredible complexity and freshness.



Photo: Contributed

**Pavlova**

**Pairing:**

Pegasus Bay Aria Late  
Picked Riesling 2018

**Sommelier:**

**Celia Hay**  
President of  
New Zealand  
Sommelier Association



**About the Dish:**

Heading into our summer Christmas holidays, Pavlova is an enormously popular dessert that is easily prepared by the home cook. It is made of meringue, soft in the middle and the covered with a thick layer of whipped cream then topped with a selection of season fruits and edible flowers. The dessert was named after the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova.

The dessert is the source of much on-going debate about who named the dessert: New Zealand or Australia? Both claim the honour and it remains a classic in both countries. In summer, it is the perfect dessert because of its light texture which is balanced by a selection of ripe summer fruits.

**About the Pairing:**

This late harvested Riesling from North Canterbury is made only in the best years. Dominated by ripe pineapples, apricots and honey, it retains a lively acidity and complements the fresh fruit and sweetness of the Pavlova.



**Make Me a Match!**

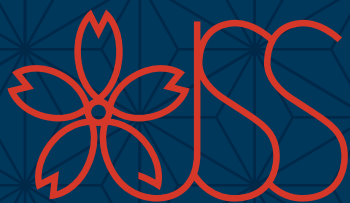
*Make Me a Match: A Global Tradition*





# O-toso

## A thousand-year-old herbal sake and a wish for longevity on Japanese New Year



JAPAN  
SAKE AND SHOCHU  
MAKERS  
ASSOCIATION

New Year is one of the most important holidays in Japan. According to Shinto beliefs, Japanese gods visit each household on the first day of the year. People clean their house thoroughly in preparation. Then, the whole nation takes a break for a few days, gathers with family, and celebrates the brand-new year.

One of the traditions for Japanese New Year is the ceremonial drinking of a medicinal herb-infused sake called “o-toso.” Families sit together and take a few sips of it from a special set of lacquerware cups to wish for good health and longevity. As it is a symbolic beverage rather than one for leisure, it is served somewhat ceremoniously. In the most formal way, the liqueur is served from the youngest to the eldest, each taking a sip from three separate cups.

O-toso is originally from China, and was introduced to Japan in the 9th century, the era of great concern for diseases and illnesses. Literally meaning “slaughter (the evil) and revive,” the herbal concoction gained popularity amongst aristocrats in the imperial court. Soon, they incorporated this medicinal liqueur into their New Year’s rituals. The practice spread to the general population sometime after the 17th century.

The blend used for o-toso, called toso-san, contains several herbs and spices, each with medicinal benefits. The formula varies, but common constituents include Japanese pepper, cinnamon, *atractylodes japonica*, and bellflower. Nowadays, most households use pre-packaged toso-san, and steep it in sake or mirin a sweet rice liqueur, for several hours to make o-toso. A new year starts with a sip of o-toso hoping for its magical effect as told in the folklore — one drinks it, and the whole family will be free from illness. An entire family drinks it, and the whole vicinity will be free from disease.

# MEET MASON NG: WINNER OF THE BEST SOMMELIER OF ASIA & OCEANIA 2022 CONTEST



Photo: Contributed

Last month, the ASI Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania contest was held in the vibrant city of Tokyo, Japan. 24 competitors from 13 countries each had one task to accomplish, compete for and win the title of Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania. In our last edition of ASI Magazine, we highlighted the rise of sommellerie throughout the region, placing special focus on the emergence of Southeast Asia. In the past the contest was traditionally dominated by Japanese, Chinese, New Zealand and Australia sommeliers. However, this time there was a little Southeast Asia flavour in the finale, as Mason Ng, a Malaysia born sommelier living in Singapore, joined perennial favourites Andrea Martinisi (New Zealand) and Loïc Avril (Australia). Despite the pressures of competing against two sommeliers, well-known on the world stage, in Martinisi and Avril, Mason Ng emerged victorious ushering in a new era for sommellerie in Asia, especially Southeast Asia, as the first Singapore candidate to win the title of Best Sommelier of Asia and Oceania.

Ng started off his wine career at the three Michelin star Les Amis restaurant, where he attained his Certified Sommelier certification at the age of 19. After his time at Les Amis, at only 21, Ng became Head Sommelier at ATLAS, where he was responsible for creating their wine and spirits programme. ATLAS specialises in both gin and Champagne as Head Sommelier and boasts a collection of more than 1,000 gins and 300 different Champagne labels. In 2019, Mason passed his Advanced Sommelier and was crowned Best Sommelier of Singapore as well as Southeast Asia, at contest held in Manila, Philippines. Currently as the Wine Director of Park90, he leads a team of 19 Sommeliers across Singapore, Taiwan and Japan, and aims to share his love of wines to a broader audience and wine lovers all over the world.





Photo: Contributed

**ASI:** What inspired you to become a sommelier?

**Mason Ng (MN):** My uncle was an avid wine drinker and he introduced me to wines when I was around 13 years old. I couldn't drink at that time, but he would occasionally pass me a sip or two. It sparked my curiosity, and I started studying about wines at that young age. Seeing videos online about people being able to do blind tastings and identifying wines was probably one of the most inspiring things I've seen at that time, and I would say that was a strong push for me to want to acquire that skillset.

**ASI:** When training to be a top sommelier often there is a lot of sacrifice involved. Was this the case for you?

**MN:** Absolutely. I sacrificed relationships with my loved ones, my family, my friends and even my own personal time. There were a lot of sleepless nights studying and improving myself, such as doing blind tastings after hectic services. When I just began my career as an assistant sommelier, I spent almost every single penny of my salary buying wines to taste so that I could have a better understanding of wines from around the world and gain that not knowledge not just by reading books. I vividly remember that I couldn't even afford to dine out and spent most of my days at McDonald's or at home studying. I sacrificed eating spicy food

although I really loved it, in fear that it would affect my palate. I told myself, there is no victory without sacrifice. Wine was my life, and it still is. I'm glad to say that it seems as though those sacrifices have been paid off and I find myself travelling in vineyards more than I do to McDonald's. Do I regret it? No, not for a single moment.

**ASI:** Have you had mentors supporting your journey?

**MN:** I had a mentor a few years back, Mathias Camilleri MS. He pushed me to continue upwards, preparing for my Advanced Sommelier certification and for competition. I wouldn't have achieved these things without him. The rest was due to being self disciplined and determined. I have a group of friends who have been very supportive of me as well. We share knowledge, wines, and competition materials with each other to better ourselves. Thank you, Joel, Lucas, Yang, Alvin, Vincent and Celine. Of course, I cannot forget my team and employers at Park90, who have showered me with support which has boosted my confidence to do more.

**ASI:** You recently attended ASI Bootcamp in Malaysia. Did you gain any knowledge or preparation tips at this event?

**MN:** Absolutely. I learned a lot of small details on decanting as well as sparkling wine service; especially how to save time. One of the most helpful pieces of advice was by Marc Almert, recommending us to buy samples of mini spirit bottles so that we can taste/nose a variety of spirits or liqueurs without needing to commit to a full bottle. I have been collecting since then and am continuing to do so for my preparation for the ASI Best Sommelier of the World contest in February.

**ASI:** You competed against two impressive and quite well-known sommeliers in the finale. Was there a level of intimidation or were you able to block this out and simply focus on the task at hand?

**MN:** Intimidation, absolutely, given their reputation and that they have competed in the Best Sommelier World contest before. I definitely felt like this was going to be an extremely tough battle. However, to calm myself down and to be composed, I kept telling myself that to win is to win over yourself. Be the best version of yourself and perform at your best is more important than wanting to beat others. If you can beat your own mental weakness and overcome the stress, you can beat anything and everything. After every station I reset myself and readjusted to focus on the next task and forget

about what happened on the previous task. Getting the next task right is better than thinking about how I could have been better in the previous task.

**ASI:** Watching the finale you seemed to have a quiet confidence but also demonstrated a lot of humility. How important do you think humility is to being a good sommelier?

**MN:** I would say that humility is one of the most important traits a good sommelier should have. Nobody wants to be in company of someone who is proud and arrogant. Share your knowledge, relax, be kind to one another and always look out for things to learn from everyone. Never stop learning and never assume that you know everything. Learn and share. You have to be humble as learning about wine is itself humbling.

**ASI:** How do you envision this title changing your life?

**MN:** I'm still a bit overwhelmed by what just happened as we just created history for Singapore. This

is huge, and I have yet to digest this information still. However, I do hope to conduct masterclasses on competing and train more sommeliers in Singapore and within Southeast Asia as a start. I would love to elevate the wine and sommelier scene of this region and bring us to a world class level while I am still in the game.

**ASI:** On the lighter side, was there a special bottle you opened to celebrate this latest victory and why did you choose it?

**MN:** To be extremely honest I haven't had the time to celebrate the win yet, but many have shared wines with me upon my arrival back in Singapore. The community here has been extremely supportive and proud, and at times I feel that I do not deserve so much love from everyone. It is all still a bit emotional and overwhelming. Many of my guests and sommeliers gathered and did a surprise celebration for me at my work place the day I landed back in Singapore. There were too many great wines to single out one!



Photo: Contributed



Happenings

ASI Tutorials: Sparkling Wine Service

A hand is shown pouring sparkling wine from a bottle with a gold foil top into several glasses. The glasses are arranged in a grid pattern on a white surface. The wine is light-colored and has a thick head of foam. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

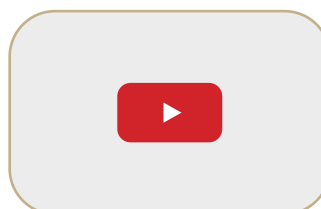
# ASI Tutorials: Sparkling Wine Service





Photos: Contributed

**Sparkling wine service**, whether in competition, or in a practical restaurant atmosphere can be amongst the most challenging of service skills as it requires not only manual dexterity but also requires several applied service skills and knowledge of sparkling wine styles. Join ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2019 champion Marc Almert (moderator) and renowned French-Irish sommelier Julie Dupouy-Young for a step-by-step demonstration of proper wine service.





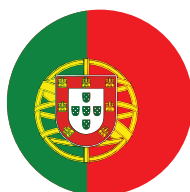
# Raise a Glass:

## 4 Untraditional, Traditional Method Sparkling Wine Regions

Happenings

Raise a Glass: 4 Untraditional, Traditional Method Sparkling Wine Regions

**Bairrada:**  
expressing the elegant side of Baga



Bairrada may not resonate as a hub of sparkling wine production to many in the wine world, but there are a lot of things the world doesn't know about this sleepy central Portuguese wine region. Long outwardly known for tannic reds made from the indigenous Baga grape, the region has inwardly also long been known for its sparkling wine. About two-thirds of Portuguese sparkling wine production comes from the region. With a new generation led by the likes of Filipa Pato and Luis Gomes (Giz) amongst others focusing on the freshness and acidity of Baga grown on the limestone rich soils of the region, Bairrada's traditional method sparkling wines are gaining much deserved renown.



Photos: Contributed

**Brazilian Bubbles?**



High elevations (some vineyards more than 600 meters in elevation), volcanic soils, and overcast skies during the final ripening period provide Altos de Pinto Bandeira D.O, Brazil the ecological conditions to produce high quality traditional method sparkling wine. Producers here typically craft their sparkling wines from Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, although Welschriesling (Riesling Italico) may contribute up to 10 per cent of the blend.







## Sussex Sparkles

Many of the best sparkling wines in England come from the southeasterly Sussex region, where vines grow on chalk and sand soils, similar to Champagne, which is just a couple hundred kilometres away, as the birds fly. Now boasting its own Geographic Indication (GI), the sparkling wines of the region must be produced using the traditional method, must age for 15 months on the lees and are primarily made from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier although Arbanne, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Petit Meslier and Pinot Noir Précoce are also allowed

Photos: Contributed



## Nova Scotia: What Grows Together Goes Together

If oysters, lobster, and other shellfish are traditional method sparkling wines preferred partners then it should come as little surprise that Canada's coastal wine region, Nova Scotia, is producing some very food friendly sparkling wines. The eastern Canadian province, known for its seafood, is increasingly gaining attention for its sparkling wines. Best versions are made from classic Champagne varietals such as Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier although the region's local L'Acadie Blanc, a hybrid with a complex genetic makeup, might make its most distinctive, as the sparkling wines made from this local favourite boast yellow apple, sometimes coming across as ever so slightly overripe apple, and saline-like notes on the nose and palate. A must try with the local saltwater oysters.



# MEMBER NEWS

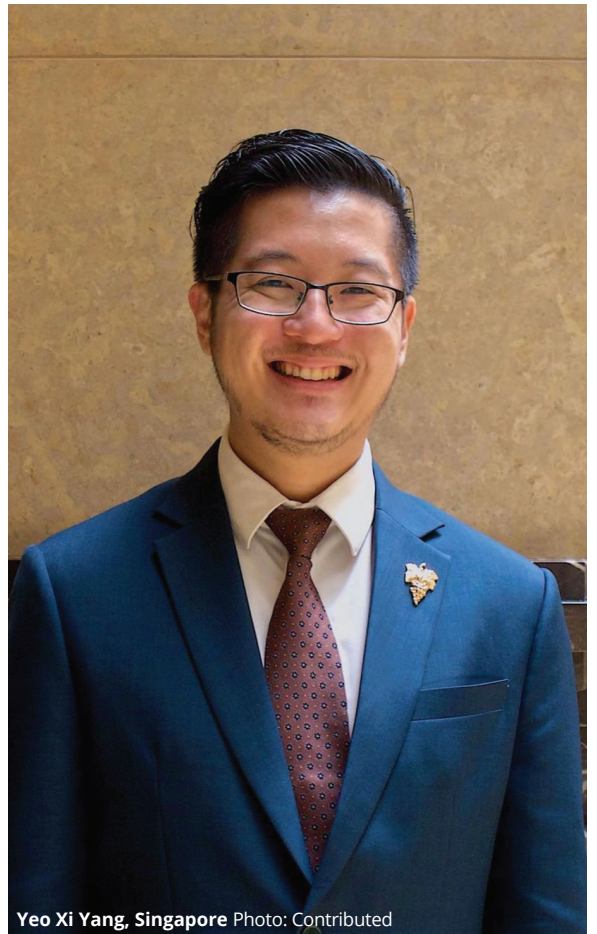


Ecuador Photo: Contributed

News



José María Aguirre Photo: Contributed



Yeo Xi Yang, Singapore Photo: Contributed

Member and Industry News





Stephane Dardenne, Belgium Photo: Contributed

**NINA BASSET  
JOINS ASI BOARD**

The board of ASI is pleased to announce Nina Basset as its new Secretary General. Basset, who along with her late husband Gérard, had long been part of the ASI family, replaces Mr. Peer Holm in that position. Of the appointment William Wouters, President of ASI says “we could not think of anyone better, or more deserving than Nina, for this role. She brings with her knowledge of the industry, a long-standing commitment to sommellerie and the utmost respect of the wine world. We feel very privileged that she accepted this position and look forward to working with her to further promote the values of our association.”

**THE LEGACY OF  
GREAT ARGENTINE  
WOMEN SOMMELIERS**

Following in the tradition of great Argentinean women sommeliers such as Paz Levinson (ASI Best Sommelier of the Americas 2015) and Valeria Gamper (ASI Best Sommelier of the Americas 2022), three women were on the podium of the recent SommArg22 (Best Sommelier of Argentina) contest. Delvis Huck, Alma Cabral, and Andrea Donadio qualified for the grand finale besting a strong group of talented sommeliers. In front of an audience at Teatro Mendoza, which was also broadcast live on the Youtube channel of the Argentine Sommelier Association, Andrea Donadio emerged victorious, and will join Valeria Gamper at the ASI Best Sommelier of the World 2023 contest in Paris, France.

**THE WORLD WELCOMES  
NEW SOMMELIER CHAMPIONS**

Last month, Wallace Gonçalves Neves, beat out Luís Otávio Álvares Cruz, Renato Rodrigues Brazil and sixteen other candidates, from across the country, to take home the title of Best Sommelier of Brazil. He was presented the winner’s trophy by Danio Braga, President of ABS-Brasil (Associação Brasileira de Sommeliers). ASI is also privileged to announce a number of other new sommelier champions. 36-year-old Stéphane Dardenne, Head Sommelier of L’air du Temps, in Lierneux, has won the title of Best Sommelier of Belgium. Joining Dardenne as new champions are Ratmir Akhmetov of Kazakhstan, Yeo Xi Yang of Singapore, and José Maria Aguirre of Ecuador.



Ratmir Akhmetov, Kazakhstan Photo: Contributed





BEST  
SOMMELIER  
OF THE WORLD  
ASI CONTEST

FRANCE 2023

FEBRUARY 7<sup>TH</sup> - 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2023