



Search for 2006 Champion Wines concludes Spain & Portugal lead the victors Old World Fights Back

Tonight, the highest honours bestowed by the International Wine Challenge (IWC) were presented at London's Grosvenor House Hotel in front of an audience of some of the world's greatest wine makers.

There were 49 trophy winners from the class of 2006, but it is the Champion awards that represent the highest pinnacle of achievement.

Being named an International Wine Challenge Champion is not only about prestige and national pride. A wine feted in such a universally recognisable way is guaranteed commercial success with bottles flying off the shelves of retailers, large and small, the moment they are announced.

Champion Red

Viñas del Jaro Chafandín 2003

The Chafandín was one of many wines included in the IWC's Discovery Tasting back in May. This wine swept the IWC Chairmen off their feet. They are certain the UK wine consumer would react in the same way were they given the opportunity to purchase it. Currently no UK stockists.

Champion White

Guru 2004 Wine & Soul

This is a subtle, understated, elegant and beautifully-made wine which demonstrates that Portugal can make brilliant, dry white wine to rival some of the world's greatest. This is a wine made from Portuguese varieties, not the usual 'international' suspects. UK Stockists – **C&D Wines £17.00**. This wine has also won the James Rogers Trophy (see below).

Champion Sweet

Weingut Günther Bardorf Randersackerer Sonnenstuhl Riesling Eiswein 2002

To think that the 2002 vintage was the first year this wine was produced is a testament to Weingut Günther Bardorf. It has all the hallmarks of quality eiswein with fantastic concentration, showing dried nectarines and peach fruit. Yet again the IWC has awarded a Champion title to a wine which has yet to find a stockist in the UK.

Champion Fortified

Quinta do Portal Vintage Port 2003

It was only a matter of time before Quinta do Portal claimed the IWC's ultimate accolade. With a gold in 2003, 3 silver's in 2004 and a gold in 2005, the Champion Fortified award in 2006 caps off an impressive period for this fine Port producer. UK Stockists - **Charles Hawkins, Great Western Wine Company Ltd and The Wineman Ltd (price £26.20)**

The Daniel Thibault Trophy (Champion Sparkling)

Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs 1996

The Champagne and sparkling wine category is one of the toughest categories within the International Wine Challenge. Our tasters are privileged to sample some of Champagne's finest, and not just from the most recent vintages either. All this makes success for Champagne Taittinger all the sweeter. UK Stockists – **Thresher £105**

The James Rogers Trophy (best wine in its 1st year of production)

Guru 2004 Wine & Soul

For the 3rd year in a row this award has gone to a Portuguese producer but for the first time it has been awarded to a Portuguese white wine. Are we seeing the renaissance of Portuguese whites? The IWC results for this category would lead us to believe so, with no Gold or silver in 2004, 1 silver in 2005 and 3 gold and 6 silver in 2006. No UK stockists

The Len Evans Trophy (consistent performance over past 5 years).

Alois Kracher

Since 2002, Kracher has submitted 62 wines and received 2 trophies, 7 gold, 15 silver, 24 bronze, 10 seals. In fact, only 4 wines of the total submitted have not received medals. Although recognised as one of the world's finest sweet wine producers, Alois Kracher's talents are much broader. In 2005, his Illmitz Zweigelt was awarded the Austrian Red Trophy. In the UK, Kracher wines are stocked by Noel Young.

Wine Merchant of the Year Awards were also announced at the event:

Wine Merchant of the Year – Berry Brothers & Rudd

Supermarket of the Year – Waitrose

High Street Merchant of the Year – Majestic

Independent Merchant of the Year – Berry Brothers & Rudd

Small Independent Merchant of the Year – Stone, Vine & Sun, Winchester

Agent of the Year – Bibendum

Innovator of the Year – The Thresher Group

Wine Makers of the Year were announced as:

Sweet Wine Makers - Alois Kracher – Kracher

Sparkling Wine Makers of the Year - Claude Taittinger - Champagne Taittinger

Fortified Wine Makers of the Year - Francisco Albuquerque – Cossart Gordon

White Wine Makers of the Year - Andrew Wiggan – Peter Lehmann Wines

Red Wine Makers of the Year - Joanne Irvine – Irvine Wines

Finally, **Michel Rolland** was named Wine Personality of the Year.

The four IWC co-chairmen – Charles Metcalfe, Tim Atkin MW, Derek Smedley MW & Sam Harrop MW – welcome a new talent to their ranks. Joining them next year will be a **new international co-chairman**, Michael Fridjhon, one of South Africa's leading wine writers and a highly experienced international wine judge. This guest position will be filled by a different, high profile individual each year.

A full list of trophy and champion award winners will be posted on the IWC website on Thursday 7 September:
www.internationalwinechallenge.com

Editor's Notes:

1. The International Wine Challenge was founded in 1984 by Charles Metcalfe and Robert Joseph.
2. The competition is owned by William Reed Events.
3. Judges & the Judging Process

Of the 450 Judges involved in this year's judging were 28% of the world's Masters of Wine (MW). However it's not the volume of judges but their undoubted quality that sets the IWC apart from lesser competitions, it's the judging process. As Charles Metcalfe explains:

"Unlike other competitions, which are based either on mathematical computation or dictatorial 'experts', we are a competition that believes in discussion and consensus. No one is right all the time: even the best taster has lapses in concentration, bad nose days."

The IWC judging discusses the wines every step of the way. We ask our tasting panels to discuss, not just to add up marks then divide by the number of tasters. The Co-Chairmen discuss when we want to change marks given by panels. By the time a wine has won a Seal of Approval or been rejected, it has been tasted at least twice (once by the first round panel, checked by a Co-Chairman). By the time it wins a medal, at least three times (first round panel, plus second round panel, plus Co-Chairman checking). By the time it wins a Trophy, at least five times. I know of no other competition that judges so thoroughly and even-handedly."

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