



RESULTS SPECIAL 2023

IWC UK INDUSTRY AWARDS, IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPIONS, IWC CHAMPION WINES, IWC WINEMAKERS OF THE YEAR, IWC SAKE AWARDS

INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE CELEBRATES THE 2023 WINNERS OF THE WINE, SAKE AND INDUSTRY AWARDS

The International Wine Challenge returned to The Hurlingham Club in Fulham, London, for its annual awards ceremony.

The celebration covered the champion wines, champion winemakers, great value champions, best Sake and top UK wine businesses.

The highlights included the new Unsung Specialist of the Year awards, which give retailers with less well-known specialist categories the chance to shine. The IWC Unsung Independent Specialist 2023 went to Novel Wines, a unique online wine merchant that specialises in undiscovered wines from around the world.

Owners Ben Franks and Gyorgy Zsiga aim to make the wine market a more exciting place to shop, by sourcing wines from passionate small producers and community co-operatives, often from regions that aren't even known for their wines.

The IWC Unsung Multiple Specialist 2023 title went to Co-op,

the largest seller of Fairtrade wine in the world. Judges noted that "Co-op has shown real commitment to developing its range of Fairtrade wines over the last 20 years, working closely with producers to improve living conditions for entire communities".

Retailers of all sizes were celebrated at the awards ceremony. It was a great night for Tesco, which took home the top accolade of IWC Supermarket 2023, awarded to Waitrose for the past three years. Liberty Wines was awarded IWC Agent 2023, with judges praising its "investment in people, systems and sustainable practices".

The champion wines included a vin jaune while the Winemakers of the Year included winemakers from New Zealand, Austria, Chile, Spain and France.



Majestic Wine
Buying Team of the Year



Natalie Christensen
White Winemaker of the Year

MULTIPLE AWARDS FOR LIBERTY AND MAJESTIC

Liberty Wines topped another strong year by claiming the Agent of the Year title, a category sponsored by Harpers Wine & Spirit. The judges were impressed with the company's investment in people, systems and sustainable practices. "Liberty has led the way for many years in the latter area, but is not standing still and is known as a great company to work for," the judges said.

Liberty Wines also won the awards for Italian Specialist and Trade Educator, a category sponsored by WSET. Regarding the education, Liberty was praised for its use of technology and face-to-face training and for its significant investment in this area.

Majestic Wine took the Buying Team of the Year award, sponsored by Wines of Central Greece. The judges said it was "great to see Jane Masters MW join

Majestic, bringing her commercial skills to the team. The Buying Academy is an excellent initiative that will bring team members on and develop them." They also said they loved the model "as it will provide careers not just jobs".

Majestic Wine also won the Rosé Retailer category, sponsored by Maison Castel. The judges liked Majestic's winning combination of "good quality exclusive brands, strong merchandising and knowledgeable staff".

A new business that did well is London-based Sip Champagnes, which sources and supplies artisan Champagnes. It took the Sparkling Retailer of the Year title on the strength of its "impressive range, excellent year-on-year growth, obvious passion and scalability in a growth market".

IWC UK INDUSTRY AWARDS 2023

On-Trade Wine Supplier of the Year: Hallgarten and Novum Wines <i>Highly commended: Jascots Wine Merchants</i>
Wine Club of the Year: Naked Wines
Agent of the Year: <i>Sponsored by Harpers Wine & Spirit</i> Liberty Wines
Online Retailer of the Year: The Wine Society
Single Site Retailer of the Year: Vineyards of Sherborne
Small Multiple Retailer of the Year: Cambridge Wine Merchants
Large Multiple Retailer of the Year: <i>Sponsored by Maison Castel</i> Vagabond
Buying Team of the Year: <i>Sponsored by Wines of Central Greece</i> Majestic Wine
Supermarket of the Year: <i>Sponsored by Encirc</i> Tesco
Rosé Retailer of the Year: <i>Sponsored by Maison Castel</i> Majestic Wine
Sparkling Retailer of the Year: Sip Champagnes <i>Highly commended: The Whisky Exchange</i>



Vineyards of Sherborne
Single Site Retailer of the Year

IWC SPECIALIST AWARDS 2023

Australian Specialist of the Year: Graft Wine Company
French Specialist of the Year: Lea & Sandeman
GB Specialist of the Year: Grape Britannia
German Specialist of the Year: Howard Ripley Wines <i>Highly commended: The WineBarn</i>
Italian Specialist of the Year: Liberty Wines <i>Highly commended: Astrum Wine Cellars</i>
Spanish & Portuguese Specialist of the Year: Alliance Wine
South African Specialist of the Year: New Generation Wines
Unsung Independent Specialist of the Year: Novel Wines
Unsung Multiple Specialist of the Year: Co-op
Sake Specialist of the Year: London Sake

IWC REGIONAL RETAILERS OF THE YEAR 2023

Scotland: Woodwinters Wines & Whiskies
Northern England: D. Byrne & Co. Fine Wines
Central England: Hattersley Wines
Wales: Ultracomida
Northern Ireland: James Nicholson Wine
South West England: Old Chapel Cellars
South-East England: The Oxford Wine Company
Eastern England: The Wee Vinoteca
London: Highbury Vintners

RECOGNITION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Companies that demonstrated their commitment to sustainable practices gained several awards. In winning the On-Trade Wine Supplier of the Year category, Hallgarten & Novum Wines was praised for having sustainability as "a big part of its DNA". The judges were also impressed by the company's 27% growth year on year, "especially in the current climate", and its exceptional range of wines.

Naked Wines, this year's winner of the Wine Club of the Year award, was praised for its exceptional customer service and engagement, and for truly

listening to customers and reacting accordingly.

The judges also commented: "Great to see what Naked has done so far regarding sustainability such as lightweighting bottles, introducing the Green Grape logo as well as topless wines."

The Wine Society, winner of the Online Retailer category, has a clear, ambitious and wide-ranging action plan on sustainability. By the end of this year, for example, the business will have a 'knowledge hub' on its website that will counter the "great deal of misinformation around

sustainability, particularly in wine". The Wine Society says it will use this hub "to champion straightforward sustainability facts, best practice and real-life success stories, as well as highlight inspiring producers that are leading the way on sustainability."

By 2025 it plans to launch a 'sustainability sounding board' made up of members and suppliers, acting together in a peer review capacity to test, evaluate and contribute to its plans.



Hallgarten & Novum Wines
On-Trade Wine Supplier of the Year



Naked Wines
Wine Club of the Year

IWC RESTAURANT WINE LISTS OF THE YEAR 2023

SUSTAINABILITY



The new category in the Restaurant Wine List of the Year, Sustainability, was won by Farmyard, a restaurant, wine bar and wine shop in St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex. The relaxed setting, which specialises in local produce and natural wines, was praised for its "fantastic wine selection with very reasonable prices".

Hove's Etch by Steven Edwards won the Contemporary category. The restaurant offers a very creative and balanced wine list, which shows an impressive commitment to showcasing unusual grapes and regions – all very well signposted on the menu.

Hampshire's luxury hotel, Heckfield Place, won the Fine Dining category, which is sponsored by Zwiesel Glas. All the judges liked its "fantastic, varied wine list", which includes a wine from India, and the quirky design of the menu.

FINE DINING

Sponsored by Zwiesel Glas

HECKFIELD PLACE

CONTEMPORARY

etch.

BY STEVEN EDWARDS

IWC EDUCATORS 2023

Sponsored by WSET

Consumer Educator of the Year



Trade Educator of the Year

LIBERTY WINES



IWC CHAMPION WINES 2023

sponsored by **hellmann**
WORLDWIDE LOGISTICS



For the first time in IWC history, the French White Trophy went to a vin jaune from the Jura region: Michel Tissot & Fils' Château-Chalon Vin Jaune 2015. At the IWC Awards, this wine was crowned IWC Champion White, a category sponsored by Hellmann Worldwide Logistics.

The handpicked Savagnin grapes were harvested late, crushed, pressed and fermented. After fermentation, the wine went into barriques for six years and three months. During this time, the barrels are never topped up to compensate for the evaporation. Instead, the wine develops a layer or 'voile' of yeast on the surface, which creates the unique vin jaune character and one of the great wines of the world.

IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPIONS 2023



OWN LABEL RANGE OF THE YEAR

TESCO

In this year's IWC, 287 medals were awarded to UK supermarkets, with 210 of these going to own-label wines. The Own Label Range of the Year title went to Tesco, with Asda a close second. What tipped things in Tesco's favour were two Great Value awards – in the Sweet and Fortified categories.

Tesco also took the award for Supermarket of the Year (sponsored by Encirc) with the judges impressed by its solid wine performance and great initiatives such as the colleague network and the Tesco app, which is a great use of technology for joined-up thinking.

Marks & Spencer sells the Great Value Champion Sparkling – a Crémant de Bordeaux Brut, which the IWC judges described as a "great alternative to Champagne". M&S also won the Great Value Champion Red category with a Malbec from last year's recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award, Argentina's Susana Balbo.

The Co-op was praised for its "impressive commitment to Fairtrade wines" and working closely with producers to improve living conditions for entire communities as it collected the Unsung Multiple Specialist of the Year Award.

IWC WINEMAKERS OF THE YEAR



Viña Undurraga's winemaker, Rafael Urrejola, was named Red Winemaker of the Year. After winning the Chilean Red Trophy, Chilean Carignan Trophy, Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon Trophy, Chilean Pinot Noir Trophy, four gold medals, four silvers and two bronzes – with zero outs – he was the clear winner in this category.

When asked about winning trophies with three very different red grape varieties, he said: "They are all quite different to make and to approach. I think what could be common in these wines is the way we've been understanding the vineyard and the character we can get out of each origin, together with the quality potential."

"This search for identity and freshness in the wines, with no make-up or significant intervention, I think fits well to the judges and also to the taste of UK consumers."

Another talented young winemaker is Emilien Boutillat, the Piper-Heidsieck chef de caves who took over responsibility at Rare Champagne a couple of years ago when Régis Camus retired. He won the IWC Sparkling Winemaker of the Year title and also collected the award for the Champion Sparkling Wine, the Rare Champagne Millésime 2008.

The IWC White Winemaker of the Year award went to Natalie Christensen, who became Yealands' chief winemaker at the end of 2018, shortly after the wine group was taken over by power company Marlborough Lines.

The Sweet Winemaker of the Year title went to Hans Tschida. He has now won this award nine times since 2010.

IWC SAKE AWARDS 2023



For the second consecutive year, the IWC Sake Brewer of the Year 2023, Sponsored by Gurunavi (Shanghai), is Niizawa Sake Brewery from Miyagi Prefecture. This year, the brewer won two category trophies, three regional trophies, 10 gold medals, 17 silvers, 8 bronzes, and 11 commended medals.

Sponsored by Kyosei Bank for the first time, the 2023 IWC Champion Sake is 16th Kuroemon Junmai Ginjo Miyamanishiki by Yukawa Sake Brewery from Nagano Prefecture. The high-altitude brewery is said to be located "between the stars and heaven". The 16th-generation current family owner, Naoko Yugawa, and her team won this Champion Sake title with their signature sake using locally grown Miyamanishiki sake rice and water derived from the Kiso River.

The IWC Champion Great Value Sake 2023 Award, sponsored by the Sake Samurai Association, went to the best quality sake available at the most reasonable price: the Kiku-Masamune Shioritate Gin-Pack from Kiku-Masamune Sake Brewing in the Hyogo Prefecture.

IWC SPECIAL AWARDS 2023



The award for the Best Wine in First Year of Production went to an English still wine: Lymestone Manor Estate Triassic Pinot Noir 2020. The vines were originally planted for sparkling wine, but in 2020 the winemakers decided to leave some grapes to hang for longer. Now they have put Devon's Lymestone Manor, which has one Michelin star and is owned by chef Michael Caines, on the England wine map.

In wine production, consistency is important, and this is recognised by the award for Consistency at the IWC over the past five years. In that time, Rutherglen producer Morris Wines has been awarded nine trophies, 23 golds, 11 silvers and one bronze, and not a single unawarded wine! In the 2023 competition, Morris Wines collected the Rutherglen Muscat Trophy and Australian Fortified Trophy for its Old Premium Rare Muscat NV, the Topaque Trophy for its Cellar Reserve Grand Topaque NV and the Australian Tawny Trophy for its Old Premium Rare Tawny NV.

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WORLDWIDE LOGISTICS

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