

# #RIGOROUS #IMPARTIAL #INFLUENTIAL RESULTS SPECIAL:

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



## 'THE PLAN WAS TO TAKE IT EASY'

There was a new award this year at the IWC UK Merchant Awards – Restaurant Initiative of the Year 2021. It was created “to recognise and reward the huge efforts” made by restaurants during what Helen McGinn, one of the judges, described as “absolutely an Annus Horribilis” for the hospitality sector.

The deserving winner is The Harrow at Little Bedwyn, Wiltshire.

Having put The Harrow up for sale in March 2020, with a view to retiring after 21 years of successful trading, Sue and Roger Jones' plans were put on hold by the Covid-19 pandemic. Far from taking things easy, they started providing free meals for those who needed them and then launched an online shop offering “Michelin quality dishes” as takeaways to cheer customers up during lockdown. They have now taken the property off the market and turned it into their home with a wine shop at the rear – and are still doing gourmet takeaways for collection on Friday mornings.

Roger explained what happened: “We had planned to retire in March 2020 – we announced this in December 2019 – and then put The Harrow on the market. Then Covid (hit), so after we shut as planned, we prepared free food for the needy, delivering to a 10-mile radius free. We did this for six months.

“Then we were asked to do a paid takeaway, so from May 2020 to this day we offer a gourmet takeaway at £45pp for pick up every Friday morning – it's an eight-course menu that's simple to finish off. On some Fridays we hit 200 which is far higher than we could do in a week with the restaurant.

“As property values increased outside London, we took the Harrow off the market and transferred it into a five-bedroom house for us to live in, keeping the kitchen for now for takeaways but also building a Wine Studio at the rear to sell rare and iconic wines and host special wine lunches.

“For the future we have pre-orders for our takeaways up to October which I have to balance with my wine work (producing food and wine videos for companies like Wine Australia, writing and judging), so retirement is not quite there yet but Sue and I are having a ball whilst we contemplate taking it easy...”

A highly commended award in the Restaurant Initiative of the Year category went to Tranga, in London, which also opened its doors to the community during this tough trading period.



Sue and  
Roger Jones

## HONOUR FOR AURELIO

The Lifetime Achievement was awarded to Chile's Aurelio Montes, who co-founded Viñas Montes in 1988 to produce premium wines for the export market.

All he had at that time was a dream he shared with a few colleagues. They built Viñas Montes, in the Colchagua Valley, from nothing. The wines are now available in more than 100 countries and critics rave about them.

Reflecting on the success, Aurelio recalled the thinking behind it: “I thought Chile deserved to produce better wines because the conditions here – geographically speaking, climatically speaking, even the skills of the people – were pretty well suited for something better than ‘good value for money.’”

So, with a wife and five children to support, he quit his job... to become a consultant and start Viñas Montes as “a little retirement project”.



## THE BIG WINNERS

The Wine Society picked up six awards while Liberty Wines picked up four.

The Wine Society was named IWC Merchant of the Year, which, from a retailer's point of view, represents the highest pinnacle within UK wine retail.

The Wine Society, was also named Dynamic Merchant of the Year. “They didn't miss a trick,” the IWC UK Merchant Awards judges said after seeing how The Wine Society looked after its members and suppliers – ordering more wine than ever before – during the strangest of times.

The Wine Society also took the title of Wine Club of the Year and the specialist retailer awards for Austria, Regional France and Portugal.

“It's always good to benchmark ourselves against our peers, and the IWC Merchant Awards allow us to do just that,” said Ewan Murray, public relations manager. “While our members know that we are all about championing the joy of good wine, and they consistently tell us what a great job we're doing, it's heartening to have that third-party endorsement.”

The other big winner was Liberty Wines. It was named IWC Large Agent of the Year, a category sponsored by Harpers Wine & Spirit. The judges were impressed with the business's “great attention to detail and great numbers”.

62% of the business is now outside London. It has also invested for the future and is highly regarded for its quality of service. Order by 4pm and get next-day delivery!

Liberty Wines also picked up the award for IWC Wine Educator of the Year, sponsored by WSET, and the specialist awards for Australia and Italy.

As we know, small and medium-sized agents are also important for the trade. Daniel Lambert Wines triumphed in the small agent category after seeing 55% growth and supporting his suppliers. During the presentation, Daniel was given a shoutout “for his tireless efforts lobbying for the removal of the dreaded V11 forms”.

The medium agent award went to a company that has secured additional agencies, absorbed them effectively and came out fighting in a tough year – Bancroft Wines.



The Wine Society  
warehouse



## HOW TRING WINERY REINVENTED ITSELF TO SURVIVE

Tring Winery collected the IWC Innovator of the Year award for its Online Wine Tasting Club. When lockdown hit in March 2020, co-founders Alex Taylor and Jamie Smith swiftly pivoted the business, carrying out online tasting sessions with wine samples sent out in eco-friendly pouches.

Here's their story:

"We had just opened the doors to our new winery and tasting room in Tring and hosted our first wine tastings when Covid-19 hit. After just 36 days we had to close the doors. Many companies have innovated this year, but we knew that if we didn't do something truly groundbreaking we wouldn't survive for long at all. More tastings were booked, and so we set out to rebottle samples and keep our customers happy via Zoom. But rebottling is difficult, wine quality can't be guaranteed and shipping of glass is expensive and carbon intensive.

"By April we decided that flexible packaging was the way forward, and began a process to miniaturise bag-in-box technology. This required a different film, a different process, different machinery and vastly different boxes. We designed all of these from scratch and invested more than £100,000. Our new-to-category solution now boasts less than one-tenth of the CO2 emissions of wine samples shipped in glass bottles.

"We also have developed our live streamed show twice a month for wine 'discoverers' and wine 'adventurers' and this brings wine to consumers that they wouldn't have otherwise considered, in a fun, relaxed and unpretentious format. In every aspect, we believe we are doing direct-to-door wine tastings in a totally innovative way. Going forward we believe our solution will be a game-changer for consumer sampling, extending the footprint of trade events and wine education.

"After shipping more than 16,000 tasting sets, we are delighted to have won the IWC Innovator of the Year award. It has been incredibly hard work, and this recognition is real validation of the fact that we have created something truly groundbreaking. The fact that we have also created something that people admire and appreciate is humbling and an honour."



### IWC UK MERCHANT AWARDS 2021

IWC RESTAURANT INITIATIVE OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**The Harrow at Little Bedwyn**  
Highly commended: **Tranga**

IWC SMALL AGENT OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**Daniel Lambert Wines**

IWC MEDIUM AGENT OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**Bancroft Wines**

IWC LARGE AGENT OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Harpers Wine & Spirit**):  
**Liberty Wines**  
Highly commended: **Hallgarten & Novum Wines**

IWC ONLINE RETAILER OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Zwiesel Glas**):  
**Laithwaites**

IWC INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**Tring Winery for The Online Wine Tasting Club**

IWC SMALL INDEPENDENT MERCHANT OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Revista de Vinhos**):  
**Highbury Vintners**

IWC LARGE INDEPENDENT MERCHANT OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Maison Castel**):  
**Cambridge Wine Merchants**

IWC ON-TRADE SUPPORTER OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Washington State Wine**):  
**Hallgarten & Novum Wines**  
Highly commended: **Bibendum Wine; Liberty Wines**

IWC MERCHANT WINE LIST OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**Hallgarten & Novum Wines**

IWC WINE EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **WSET**):  
**Liberty Wines**  
Highly commended: **Bibendum Wine**

IWC NATIONAL CONVENIENCE CHAIN OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Lancaster Wines**):  
**Co-op**

IWC WINE CLUB OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**The Wine Society**

IWC CONSUMER CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**Majestic Wine - The List for Spring**  
Highly commended: **Freixenet Copestick - I heart Superheroes**

IWC DYNAMIC MERCHANT OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**The Wine Society**  
Highly commended: **Daniel Lambert Wines**

IWC NATIONAL MERCHANT OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**Majestic Wine**

IWC SUPERMARKET OF THE YEAR 2021  
(sponsored by **Encirc**):  
**Waitrose & Partners**  
Highly commended: **E H Booth & Co**

IWC MERCHANT OF THE YEAR 2021:  
**The Wine Society**



### IWC REGIONAL MERCHANTS OF THE YEAR 2021

NORTHERN ENGLAND:  
**Bon Coeur Fine Wines**

CENTRAL ENGLAND:  
**Bottles Wine Bar & Merchants**

EASTERN ENGLAND:  
**Cambridge Wine Merchants**

LONDON:  
**Highbury Vintners**

NORTHERN IRELAND:  
**James Nicholson Wine**

SCOTLAND:  
**Woodwinters Wines & Whiskies**

SOUTH WEST ENGLAND:  
**Averys of Bristol Wine Merchant**

WALES:  
**Mumbles Fine Wines**



### IWC SPECIALIST MERCHANT OF THE YEAR 2021

Australia: **Liberty Wines**

Austria: **The Wine Society**

Bordeaux (sponsored by **Crus Bourgeois du Médoc**):  
**Wilkinson Vintners**

Burgundy: **Goedhuis & Co**

Champagne and Sparkling:  
**Marks & Spencer**

En Primeur: **Goedhuis & Co**

England: **Waitrose & Partners**

Fortified: **Vintage Wine and Port**

Germany (sponsored by **Wines of Germany**):  
**The Wine Barn**

Italy: **Liberty Wines**

Languedoc Roussillon: **Yapp Brothers**

Loire: **Lay & Wheeler**

New Zealand: **Specialist Cellars**

Portugal (sponsored by **Revista de Vinhos**):  
**The Wine Society**

Regional France: **The Wine Society**

Rhône: **Yapp Brothers**

Rosé (sponsored by **Maison Castel**):  
**Marks & Spencer**

Sake: **Tazaki Foods**

South Africa: **Museum Wines**

South America: **Taste Argentina**

Southern & Eastern Europe: **Novel Wines**

Highly commended: **Hallgarten & Novum Wines**

Spain: **Indigo Wine**



"An amazing set of wine merchants who well deserve their recognition!"

Helen McGinn, ex-supermarket wine buyer, UK Merchant Awards judge and IWC co-chair

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

The IWC Online Retailer of the Year, **Laithwaites**, was praised for "their service level and attention to detail, which is second to none". The judges added: "We love the free Champagne campaign, and the reasoning behind it."

**Cambridge Wine Merchants**, who picked up the large merchant award (sponsored by **Maison Castel**), were described as "very much at the cutting edge of their game", having executed many innovations with speed and accuracy.

The National Merchant Award went to **Majestic Wine**, marking the company's return to form in terms of service, range, web presence and all-round improvements. Majestic Wine also won the award for the Consumer Campaign, for its List of Spring – which put them back on the map in a very strategic fashion and saw them re-engaging with their consumers.



**Waitrose & Partners** also collected two awards: IWC Supermarket of the Year (sponsored by **Encirc**) and it retained its title for English wine. "It reflects the dedication of the buying team, but also our supply chain, our relationships with our producers, our specialists in shops and the extended team looking after our events and experiences," the company said.

**Co-op** won the National Convenience Chain category (sponsored by **Lancaster Wines**). The judges said the Co-op "does it well ethically, morally, with great logistics and they have weathered the storm and grown their market share while improving the quality of their range".

## HIGHBURY VINTNERS



"Reading through the entries this year was quite emotional at times, with companies reporting how they adapted, survived and grew in such turbulent times." Laura Jewell, UK Merchant Awards Judge





# THE CHAMPION WINES

The IWC champion wines for 2021 have been selected following a retasting of all the trophy winners from IWC 2021. Here they are:

## CHAMPION WINES (sponsored by Hellmann Worldwide Logistics)



**IWC CHAMPION SWEET WINE 2021**  
(Alois Kracher Trophy):  
**Tenuta Di Capezzana**  
Vinsanto di Carmignano  
Riserva 2013

**IWC CHAMPION FORTIFIED WINE 2021**  
(Manuel Lozano Trophy):  
**Emilio Lustau Palo Cortado**  
VORS 30 Years

**IWC CHAMPION SPARKLING WINE 2021**  
(Daniel Thibault Trophy):  
**Piper-Heidsieck**  
Vintage 2008

**IWC CHAMPION WHITE WINE 2021:**  
**Domaine Sigalas Santorini**  
Barrel 2020

**IWC CHAMPION RED WINE 2021:**  
**Maison Albert Bichot Clos**  
de la Roche Grand Cru  
Cuvée Cyrot Chaudron  
Hospices de Beaune 2019

## GREAT VALUE CHAMPION WINES (sponsored by Reflex Label Plus)

Here are the best-performing wines under £15 at IWC 2021:



**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION SWEET 2021:**  
**Morrisons The Best Botrytis**  
Semillon 2017

**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION FORTIFIED 2021:**  
**Waitrose & Partners**  
Nº1 Fino del Puerto  
Don Luis

**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION SPARKLING 2021:**  
**Tesco Finest Premier**  
Cru Champagne NV

**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION ROSÉ 2021:**  
**Les Domaines Paul**  
Mas Jardin de  
Roses 2020

**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION WHITE 2021:**  
**Les Domaines**  
Paul Mas Réserve  
Languedoc Blanc 2020

**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION RED 2021:**  
**Virgen del Galir**  
Maruxa Mencia 2019

It was a good night for Maison Albert Bichot. The Burgundy estate produced the Champion Red Wine, the Clos de la Roche Grand Cru Cuvée Cyrot Chaudron Hospices de Beaune 2019, while its Corton Charlemagne Grand Cru Domaine du Pavillon 2019 won the Organic Trophy.

It was also a good night for the Languedoc region. Les Domaines Paul Mas now has two Great Value Champion wines in its portfolio: its Jardin de Roses 2020 was named Great Value Champion Rosé and its Réserve Languedoc Blanc 2020 was named Great Value Champion White.

Having been awarded three trophies, nine golds, 78 silvers and 83 bronzes at the IWC over the past five years, Languedoc producer Cave de Roquebrun was presented with the Len Evans Trophy.

English wine producer Roebuck Estates won the award for the Best Wine in its First Year of Production, the James Rogers Trophy, for its Rose de Noirs 2016.



IWC Judges - covid secure judging in action

# THE TOP WINEMAKERS

Burgundy winemaker Christophe Briotet of Edouard Delaunay, who won the IWC Red Winemaker of the Year title last year, was presented with the White Winemaker of the Year award this year.

The Red Winemaker of the Year award went to Wolf Blass's Chris Hatcher and Steven Frost, who were presented with the Len Evans Trophy last year for their consistency over the past five years.

Two regular winners collected two of the other winemaker awards

(virtually of course this year). Sergio Martínez from Emilio Lustau once again retained the IWC Fortified Winemaker of the Year title while Hans Tschida regained the Sweet Winemaker of the Year title from Dr Klaus Peter Heigel of Weingut Hans Wirsching.

Émilien Boutillat proved he was the right choice to succeed eight-times IWC Sparkling Winemaker of the Year Régis Camus at Piper-Heidsieck. Less than three years into the job, Emilian has collected his first IWC Sparkling Winemaker of the Year title.

## IWC WINEMAKERS OF THE YEAR



Hans Tschida from  
Hans Tschida

Sergio Martínez from  
Emilio Lustau

Emilien Boutillat from  
Piper-Heidsieck

Christophe Briotet from  
Edouard Delaunay

Chris Hatcher & Steven  
Frost from Wolf Blass

## IWC PLANET EARTH AWARDS 2021 AND IWC SPECIAL AWARDS 2021



**IWC ORGANIC TROPHY 2021:**  
**Maison Albert Bichot**  
Corton Charlemagne  
Grand Cru Domaine du  
Pavillon 2019

**IWC FAIRTRADE AWARD 2021:**  
**Bodega Argento**  
Artesano de Argento  
Organic Malbec -  
Cabernet Franc 2020

**IWC SUSTAINABLE TROPHY 2021:**  
**Valli Vineyards**  
Pinot Noir Gibbston  
Vineyard 2019

**IWC BEST WINE IN FIRST YEAR OF PRODUCTION**  
(James Rogers Trophy 2021):  
**Roebuck Estates Rosé**  
de Noirs 2016

**LEN EVANS TROPHY 2021**  
(for consistency over 5 years):  
**Cave de Roquebrun**

**IWC OWN LABEL RANGE OF THE YEAR 2021:**  
(sponsored by Freixenet Copestick):  
**Marks & Spencer**

## SAKE AWARDS



**IWC CHAMPION SAKE 2021**  
(sponsored by Japan Airlines):  
**Mikotsuru Junmai Ginjo**  
Sankeinishiki Suwakimotsuru  
Sake Brewery

**IWC SAKE BREWERY OF THE YEAR 2021:**  
**Shimizu Seizaburo**  
Shoten

**IWC GREAT VALUE CHAMPION SAKE 2021**  
(sponsored by Sake Samurai Association):  
**Hokosugi Shuujuun**  
Futsu-shu Kawabu Brewery