



International Jeunes Sommeliers Competition Report

Vienna, Austria, October 2008

The world of wine is a competitive one and young sommeliers representing National Bailliages have once again tested their mettle in the 2nd Annual International Final of the Chaîne's Jeunes Sommeliers Competition.

The event was staged at the MODUL Hotel and Tourism School under the generous patronage of its Principal, Hofrat Prof. Mag. Dr Erich Auerbäck, Chancelier and with the participation of Lecturer/Chef de cuisine Gottfried Gansterer, Conseiller Gastronomique. Ten competitors took part – there were due to be eleven but it was indeed most unfortunate that Canada's representative, Lianne Castravelli, was prevented from taking part by a trade dispute at her place of employment.

It is not that long ago when 'Sommelier' was just a **simple French word to many people**, but now it has become a worldwide **symbol of alcoholic beverage service – backed by a high level of skills and an in-depth product knowledge**. Sommeliers are the **bridge between wine makers and consumers**. They are ambassadors, the messengers of wines. Customers feel *terroir** and passion through their sommelier.

The rigorous competition, overseen by a panel of judges chaired by Brian Julyan MS, Maître Sommelier, Chief Executive of the Court of Master Sommeliers, included theory and practical elements as well as a blind wine tasting. The one-hour theory element consisted of a written examination testing knowledge in all areas of wine production, laws, viticulture and vinification, as well as spirits, beers, ales, ciders, port and sherry.

The practical skills' testing covered decanting, champagne service, appropriate glassware choices, identification of crafted beverages (by nose) and other real world tasks. It was thus very much a role-playing exercise requiring full restaurant service skills, composure, dress and personal equipment.

The blind tasting element comprised six wines. Marks were scored for assessment by sight, nose and palate as well as for initial and final conclusions of each wine.

At the Awards and Induction Ceremony on the Saturday afternoon, the winner was announced as Christopher Miller from the Bailliage of the USA. He received the 2008 Competition's specially-commissioned trophy as well as its Gold Medal. In second place was Laura Rhys from Great Britain, who received the Silver Medal and the Bronze Medal for third place went jointly to Jürgen Witschko from the host Bailliage of Austria and to Elvis Ziako from the Bailliage of Greece.

The Jeunes Sommeliers Competition aims to promote the expertise of the young wine and spirit professional and to encourage mastery of wine and spirit knowledge. The achievement of these goals was self-evident by the calibre of the competitors in Vienna. Firmly established now in the International Chaîne calendar, we eagerly anticipate the 3rd Annual Final on September 24, 2009, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

Marie Jones
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