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## International Jeunes Sommeliers Competition Report

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### Cape Town, South Africa, September 2012

The Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, hosted the sixth International Jeunes Sommeliers Competition Final. Twelve Bailliages were represented, some for the first time. The three young women from Russia, China and Denmark were warmly welcomed into a traditionally male dominated profession.

Thursday morning, the day before the competition, the 12 sommeliers, together with two members of the International Jeunes Sommeliers Committee (Klaus Tritschler, Member of the Conseil d'Administration from Germany, and International Vice-President Marie Jones) and Echanson George Parkes, headed off to Franschoek for a private visit to the Anthonij Rupert wine estate. They were welcomed to the estate with glasses of MCC and an amazing view of the Simonsberg, surrounding mountains and the valley towards Paarl, before a tour of the cellar, presentation of the estate wines by the Brand Ambassador, Andrew Harris, and a light lunch.

In the afternoon the group visited the Van Ryn's Brandy Distillery where Brandy Master Brink Liebenberg of Distell presented a Master Class. For 10 of the sommeliers this was their first taste of South African Brandy. The day culminated at the Cape Grace hotel on the V&A Waterfront, where the sommeliers dined with the judges from the Court of Master Sommeliers Europe. They were joined by Neil Grant, Chairman of the newly established South African Sommeliers Association.

Friday, competition day, was an early start for the sommeliers as they were required to attend a briefing by Chairman of the Judges, Brian Julyan MS. He explained the procedure for the day which would include a one hour written paper requiring one word answers, wine list corrections, a practical examination of opening and serving Champagne, identifying four spirits / liqueurs, (which we later learned included Pesco from Chile, Tequila, Pear William and Apricot Brandy), and decanting and serving the 'appropriate' wines per the menu of the day.

Later in the afternoon they were put through their paces with a 'blind tasting' test of two white (one was a Riesling from the Rheingau) and two red wines (one was a Shiraz from Central Otago in New Zealand). At the end of the competition, not only were the competitors exhausted, but so were the judges! It was a very intense day with tight competition for places at the top.

The winners were announced at the Awards Ceremony, which was held at the Table Bay Hotel in the heart of the V&A Waterfront overlooking the harbour and Table Mountain. The winner was Christopher Bates, representing the USA. Arnaud Bardary from Great Britain finished in second place, with Yuki Hirose of Australia in third. The meal was complemented by wines from the Bon Courage wine estate in Robertson, and the famous De Krans Vintage Reserve Port was served with the cheese platter.

Allison Rutowitz

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