

WORLD EXPERTS

This year, 465 wine specialists and the trade's great and the good judged at the world's biggest wine competition. Without their input, the International Wine Challenge would not command the global respect that it does. We salute those who donated their time – and palates – for the cause

SUPER JURORS

Superjurors are the High Court Judges of the Challenge's tasting corps. These are the individuals with the best palates and the most experience, and they tend to be Masters of Wine, winemakers, senior wine buyers or specialist wine writers. Their role is crucial throughout all stages of the Challenge, essentially to ensure consistency across the various tasting panels and to guarantee that all styles receive equally fair treatment. Used to tasting large numbers of wines within their daily work, they have a thorough knowledge of a broad range of wines. At any stage of the competition a superjuror has the authority to promote or demote a wine, providing he or she gets the agreement of a second superjuror. In the final round, it is the superjurors who decide the ultimate awards, the trophies and the great value wines. See p62 for more details on the pivotal role these tasters play.



Prestigious palates, clockwise from top left: Peter McCombie MW; Robin Cramer MW; Derek Smedley MW; co-chairman of the IWC; Anne Tupker MW; Alex Hunt; Beverly Tabbron MW; Mark Lane and Jean Marc Sauboua; Charles Crawford MW; Nicola Arcedeckne-Butler MW; Anthony Foster MW; Nick Room; and Michael Palij MW

Barbara Abraham MW wine consultant; **Ed Adams MW** Western Wines quality control director; **Nick Adams MW** Lay & Wheeler director; **Tony Allen MW** Winefrog consultant; **Nicola Arcedeckne-Butler MW** Private Cellar buyer; **Baccalario Vini SRL** chief winemaker and technical manager; **Isabelle Bachelard** *La Revue de Vin de France* journalist; **Richard Bampffield MW** corporate wine events specialist; **Filippo Bartolotta** La Baccanti Tours MD; **Gerard Basset MW** sommelier; **Paul Bastard** Co-op wine development manager; **Owen Bird** International Wine Services winemaker; **Dee Blackstock MW** Waitrose central wine buyer; **Hew Blair** Justerini & Brooks buying director; **Beverley Blanning MW** wine writer; **Jennifer Bond** Somerfield Stores QA manager; **Raffaele Boscaini** Masi Agricola Spa quality assessment manager; **Julian Brind MW** Waitrose wine consultant; **Zar Brooks** Stranger & Stranger wine consultant; **Peter Carr MW** Pernod Ricard UK wine development director; **Emmanuel Couzi** Winemakers SARL consultant winemaker;

David Cowderoy Crescendo Wines MD and winemaker; **Lynn Coyle** former Oddbins head of buying; **Robin Cramer MW** wine consultant; **Charles Crawford MW** Matthew Clark Wholesale Ltd wine purchasing director; **Brett Crittenden** Whitehall Wines international marketing director; **Helder Cunha** Vinhos do Douro Superior winemaker; **Ian d'Agata** Wine Academy of Rome director; **Steve Daniel** Novum Wines buyer; **Beltran Domecq** Allied Domecq PR director; **Natalie Estribeau** D&D Wines International winemaker; **Anthony Foster MW** Bonhote Foster Agencies MD; **Caroline Gilby MW** freelance writer; **David Gill MW** Bottle Green director; **Conal Gregory MW** wine consultant; **Peter Griebeler** Zimmerman-Graeff & Muller chief winemaker; **Sam Harrop MW** Domaine Matassa proprietor; **Christian Honorez** Genesis Wines buyer; **Alex Hunt** Mayfair Cellars buyer; **Xenia Irwin MW** First XI Wine Consultancy director; **Laura Jewell MW** Sainsbury's Supermarkets buyer; **Robert Joseph** *Wine International* publishing editor & IWC co-chairman; **Justin Knock** Southcorp

Wines brand manager; **Mark Lane** *Wine International* Collecting & Investing columnist; **Anne Linder** Laithwaites general production manager; **Simon Loftus** Adnams PLC chairman; **Jane Masters MW** Mastering Wine consultant; **Peter McCombie MW** restaurant wine consultant; **Susan McCraith MW** Waitrose wine buyer; **Maggie McNie MW** wine consultant; **Charles Metcalfe** *Wine International* associate editor and IWC co-chairman; **Martin Moran MW** journalist **David Morrison** Winemakers SARL consultant; **Angela Mount** Somerfield Stores buyer; **Tara Neil** Asda buyer; **Emma Nichols** Oddbins head of buying; **Mark O'Bryen MW** Waverley wine buyer; **Marcel Orford-Williams** The Wine Society wine buyer; **Michael Palij MW** Winetraders (UK) Ltd MD; **Sebastian Payne MW** The Wine Society chief wine buyer; **Ricard Raventos** Septima Winery manager; **Mike Ritchie MW** The Cellaret buyer; **Liz Robertson MW** consultant; **Nick Room** Waitrose wine buyer; **Finola Ryan** Liquid Assets wine consultant; **Jean Marc Sauboua** Laithwaites head of

winemaking; **Mark Savage MW** Savage Selection director; **James Simpson MW** Pol Roger director; **Stephen Skelton MW** wine lecturer and writer; **Derek Smedley MW** wine consultant and IWC co-chairman; **Neil Sommerfelt MW** Laytons Wine Merchants buying director; **Patricia Stefanowicz MW** wine educator; **Gerd Stepp** Marks & Spencer wine technologist and winemaker; **Peter Symington** W&J Graham winemaker; **Beverly Tabbron MW** Hallgarten Wines buyer; **Lindsay Talas** Thierry's buying manager; **Simon Thorpe MW** Waitrose wine buyer; **Philippe Tolleret** Domaines Skalli CEO and winemaker; **Pedro Ballesteros** Torres oenologist; **Philip Tuck MW** Hatch Mansfield wine director; **Neil Tully MW** Amphora Design director; **Anne Tupker MW** Bouquet Wines proprietor; **Jean Wareing MW** Boutinot Ltd marketing manager; **Brian Wheaton MW** wine lecturer; **Jack Whitaker MW** wine consultant; **Simon Woods** wine writer and *Wine International* First Taste columnist; **John Worontschak** Four Corners Consultancy chief winemaker

HOW THE CHALLENGE WORKS

Boasting more than 9,000 entries, from which there were a record-breaking 5,649 award-winning wines, the 2005 International Wine Challenge (IWC) has cemented its place as the best and biggest blind tasting in the world. But staging such a seamless two-week competition is no easy task: it requires a year of planning, and countless hours of physical and managerial labour – something IWC organisers have done successfully for 22 years.

Soon after the end of the 2004 Challenge, work began to compile the 2005 entry kits for producers and wine merchants wishing to submit their wines. Most now enter via the *Wine International* website, www.wineint.com.

Once entries closed, March was devoted to setting up the database systems prior to the

Wines that represent Great Value

Great Value wines are highlighted throughout the results section of the magazine in **gold-coloured text**. They are selected using the following criteria:

	red, white, rosé and other fortified wines	sparkling, Port and Madeira	sweet wines fortified Muscat and Sherry
Gold	≤£12.50	≤£20	≤£15
Silver	≤£7.50	≤£15	≤£10
Bronze	≤£5	≤£10	≤£7.50
Seal of Approval	≤£4	≤£7.50	≤£5

How the wines are marked

At all stages, wines are marked out of 20, with the following points corresponding to the relevant award:

Gold	18.5-20
Silver	17-18.4
Bronze	15.5-16.9
Seal of Approval	14-15.4

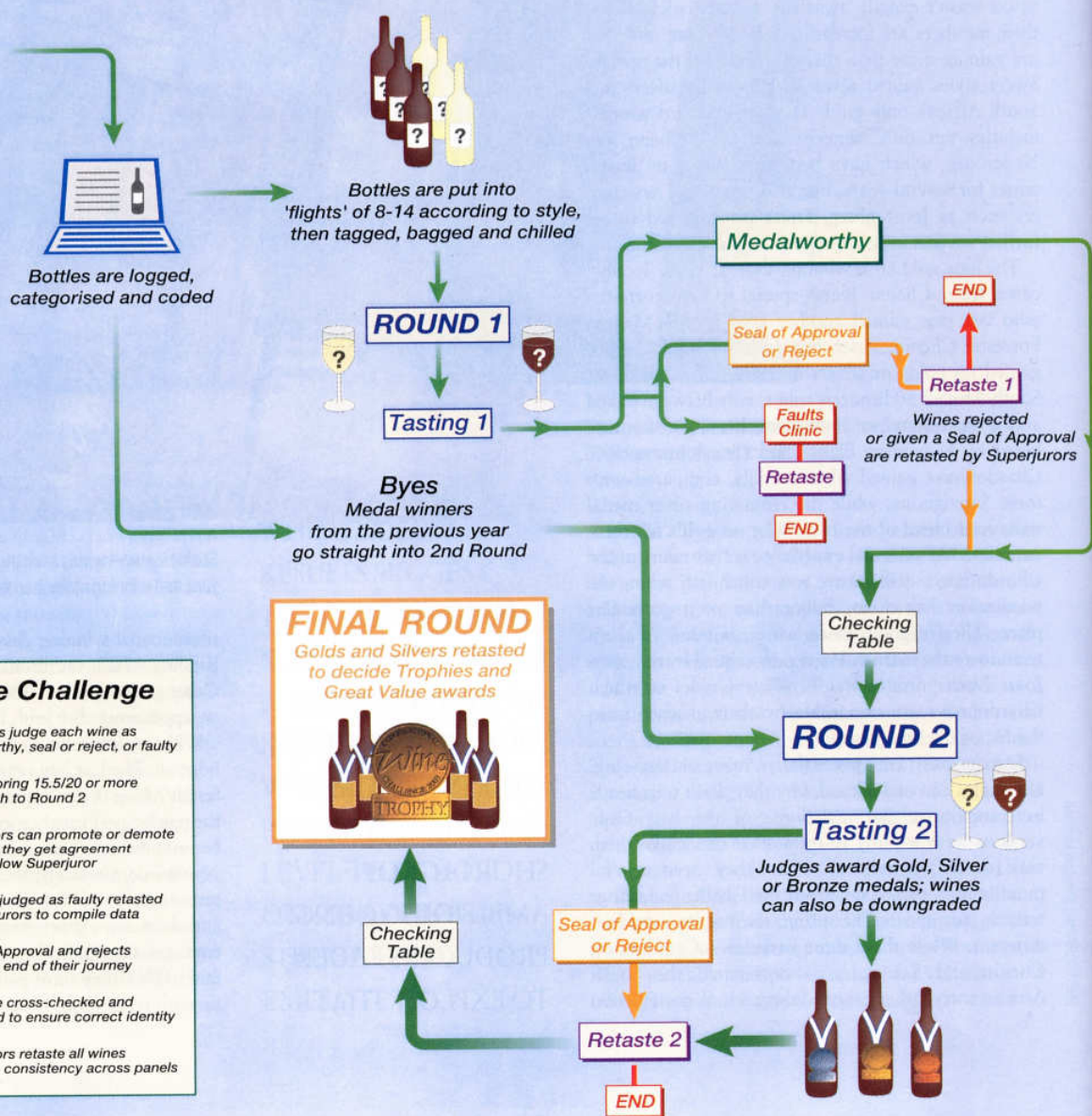
wines' arrival. At least four bottles of each entry are sent so, in early April, more than 40,000 bottles arrived at the Barbican in London, where they were logged, categorised and coded by grape variety (or varieties), style, and country and region of origin in time for the first day of tasting on 25 April. In the first round, wines from particular regions are tasted against each other, ie: Meursaults against Meursaults.

All wines go into the first round, except for the seeds (medal winners from the previous year), which go straight into the second round. To taste, wines are flighted into groups of eight to 14 wines of the same category, bagged (to ensure the tasting is blind) and tagged. They are then chilled if required.

A large part of the IWC's reputation is due to the quality and experience of its judges.



Entries arrive from all over the World



Unravelling the Challenge

- Tasting 1** 4-6 tasters judge each wine as medalworthy, seal or reject, or faulty
- Medalworthy** Wines scoring 15.5/20 or more go through to Round 2
- Retaste 1** Superjurers can promote or demote providing they get agreement from a fellow Superjurer
- Faults Clinic** All wines judged as faulty retasted by superjurers to compile data
- END** Seals of Approval and rejects reach the end of their journey
- Checking Table** Wines are cross-checked and debagged to ensure correct identity
- Retaste 2** Superjurers retaste all wines to ensure consistency across panels

This year, more than 465 members of the wine trade from around the world took part, including 41 Masters of Wine (see p64 for a full list of the judging panel).

Up to 1,500 wines are assessed daily. Tables of at least four tasters – who are told what style they are judging and can ask about the vintage, country and region – score the wine out of 20 (see box, left). Wines scoring above 15.5 points are deemed medalworthy and sent to the second round to join the seeds. Wines scoring less than 15.5 are sent for retasting by superjurors to ensure a good wine has not been missed. Providing two superjurors concur, a wine can be promoted back into the running for a medal and head into the second round, or be given a Seal of Approval (recommended), or deemed uncommendable and rejected. A stop at the checking table confirms the wine on the tasting sheet matches the one in the bag.

In an average day, a judge on one of the 20 busy tasting tables might see between 60 and 90 bottles. Superjurors may taste 300 wines. If a wine is judged faulty at any stage, a replacement bottle is found and the suspect bottle sent to the Faults Clinic for analysis. This year, 5.8% of wines were found to be faulty: 4.09% were corked and 1.71% had other faults – either oxidised, reduced, volatile or unclean. (See the October issue for an article on closures and the IWC Faults Clinic).

The next week, in the second round, wines scoring above 15.5 points are assessed again, with the judges deciding which, if any, medal they should receive (a wine can still be rejected or demoted to a Seal of Approval at this stage). Wines are still grouped by grape and country/region, although Meursault may now be judged against other white Burgundies. Superjurors are again called upon to retaste all wines to endorse the judges' decision; medals are confirmed, and then it's back to the checking table to confirm the bottle's identity.


In the final round of the Challenge, superjurors taste all gold medal winners blind against others in the same category, with the best of the best being considered for a trophy. The panel can award new trophies, split them, or withhold them. The last task is to decide the winners of special trophies and the major winners (see p47 for a full list).

Value for money is always important, which is why wines that meet the IWC Great Value criteria (see box, left) are highlighted in the results pages. To praise wines that are strong in both quality and value, the IWC also bestows Great Value Trophies (see p54). All medal winners that meet the Great Value criteria and are widely available are retasted to identify the winners.

After the final Challenge round, a trade tasting for merchants and buyers is held for all wines entered into the Challenge that are not available in Britain. IWC organisers believe this promotes a more diverse selection of wines to the UK buyers, as well as a platform for those seeking distribution in Britain.

With four to six bottles of each wine sent by merchants and producers entering the IWC, some are inevitably left over, even after the numerous rounds of tastings and faulty wines. The IWC gives hundreds of cases of wine to selected charities and charitable organisations, including Barnardos, the British Red Cross, the Royal National Lifeboat Association and the Cai Dae Trust.


At our black-tie gala dinner on 7 September, the trophy winners, Winemakers of the Year and Merchants of the Year awards were announced, and full results are revealed with the publication of this and last month's issue of *Wine International*. Now it's your chance to buy these wines and make your own assessment. Enjoy! 🍷



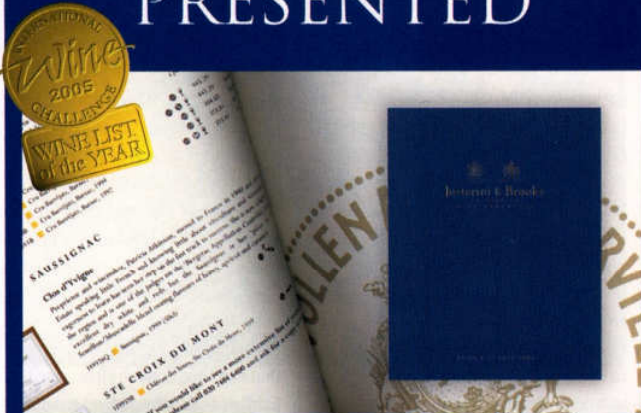
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