

Academy of Food & Wine: SOY deadline extended

The Academy of Food & Wine (AFW) has extended the deadline for entries to its prestigious UK Sommelier of the Year 2010 competition to 31 December 2009.

UK Sommelier of the Year, sponsored by House of Champagne Piper-Heidsieck, seeks to test the product knowledge, serving ability and customer service skills of sommeliers and wine service professionals.

The first round of the competition is a written questionnaire, followed by five regional finals, a London semi-final and a final. The winner will be announced at a Sommelier's Dinner on 28 April 2010, in front of an industry audience.

The Academy has also announced that it will be one of the first organisations in the hospitality sector to use The Washington Mayfair, the new banqueting facilities at the Westbury Mayfair Hotel, London, for the final of the competition and the Sommelier's Dinner the same evening.

‘We are delighted to be using this fabulous facility for the final of the UK Sommelier of the Year 2010,’ said AFW executive director Sophie Roberts-Brown. ‘We’ve already received a lot of entries to the competition from a good mix of establishments, so it’s likely to be another closely-fought final.’

Employers are invited to nominate a member of their staff for the competition by downloading an entry form at www.acfws.org or by calling the Academy on 020 8661 4646. The closing date for entries is now 31 December 2009.

For further information, please contact: Academy of Food & Wine - Linda Pettit T. 01737 823721, M. 07973 789853, linda@tilburstowmedia.co.uk. Or Sophie Roberts-Brown or Nicky Barwood T. 020 8661 4646 sophie@acfws.org or nicky@acfws.org.

Piper-Heidsieck UK - Elaine Begley T. 0207 491 9903 M. 07801 515585. elaine@sidhuandsimon.com

Editor's notes

ABOUT THE UK SOMMELIER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

Entry to the UK Sommelier of the Year competition is open to professional sommeliers and waiting staff working in the UK. All competitors must be supported by their employer. Once the entrant has been registered, they will be sent a first round questionnaire. Entrants who achieve a 75% pass mark on the questionnaire are selected to go through to the regional finals ? usually 75 to 100 entries.

The regional finals are held in five locations ? Scotland/the North, the Midlands, the West, the South and London. Here entrants undertake a written paper, a blind tasting and an oral service element. The three highest scoring entries then complete two practical service elements and an oral food and wine matching sessions.

The five regional winners and the seven highest scoring candidates will then make up the 15 candidates who compete in the national semi-final, along with the previous year's runners-up and the Jersey winner. The national semi-final is held in London in April 2010 and consists of a written questionnaire, a blind tasting and a practical skills test.

The top three semi-finalists will compete in the final that day on a stage in front of a live audience of industry professionals. Candidates will undertake a wine list correction test, a serving exercise, a blind tasting and a Champagne pour.

The judging panel is headed by the Academy's Technical Director Gerard Basset MW, MS, and includes Matt Wilkin MS, Ronan Sayburn MS, and Ian Harris of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET).

The winner is announced at a gala dinner following the final and will be awarded with a trophy and a fabulous trip to House of Champagne Piper-Heidsieck in the heart of the Champagne region of France. The trip will include a personalised tasting with Chef de Caves Régis Camus.

ABOUT THE ACADEMY

The Academy is a not-for-profit social enterprise organisation, founded in 1988. It is the professional body for front of house service personnel focussing on improving the quality of personnel and the image of front-of-house service as a meaningful career choice.

The Academy's purpose is to identify, promote and maintain the highest professional standards for the education and training of food and wine waiting staff and bar assistants in the UK hotel, restaurant, catering and bar industry.

Its objectives are: for every practicing waiter/waitress, wine waiter and bar assistant in the industry to be a member of the Academy ? their professional body; to gain greater recognition for these operatives throughout the industry by accreditation, badging and recognition; to help members develop, maintain and advance their knowledge, skills and ability; to provide an interface between educators, service staff and their employers; and to enhance member's career prospects. Currently the Academy has over 1,000 members.

ABOUT PIPER-HEIDSIECK

The House of Champagne Piper-Heidsieck was founded in 1785 by Florens-Louis Heidsieck. Since its creation, Champagne Piper-Heidsieck has always been associated with the greats and the goods; from Marie Antoinette Queen of France to Marilyn Monroe. Champagne Piper-Heidsieck is now the third largest Champagne exporter. With its new British distributor, First Drinks, the emphasis for the brand is to gain new distribution channels in the on-trade.

Champagne Piper-Heidsieck has been part of the Rémy Cointreau group since 1988 and benefits from the expertise of the celebrated Chef de Caves Régis Camus. London's prestigious International Wine Challenge has awarded Régis Camus the Sparkling Winemaker of the Year Trophy in 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2009, which underlines its efforts to be among the best made Champagne.

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