

## 2010 Sommelier of the Year: semi-finalists announced

The semi finals of the Academy of Food & Wine's 2010 Sommelier of the Year competition will see sommeliers from the UK's top restaurants pitting their skills against one another, including representatives from two Gordon Ramsay restaurants, The Fat Duck, Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Hotel TerraVina and La Trompette. The competition, sponsored by House of Champagne Piper-Heidsieck, seeks to find the best sommelier or wine waiter in the UK based on wine knowledge, serving skills, customer service skills and tasting ability. The UK Sommelier of the Year is widely recognised as being one of the industry's toughest competitions and has now been running for 30 years.

The following 15 sommeliers will go forward to the semi final, following the four regional finals held across the country this week [22 February]:

Garry Clark, sommelier, Chester Grosvenor, Chester  
Remi Cousin, assistant head sommelier, The Fat Duck, Bray  
Christopher Delalonde, sommelier, Sarment Wines, London  
Sergio Dos Santos, head sommelier, Atlantic Hotel, Jersey  
Bavand Foroughi, sommelier, Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's, London W1  
Yohann Jousselin, head sommelier, Vineyard at Stockcross, Newbury  
Jan Konetzki, assistant head sommelier, Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, London SW3  
David Kubler, assistant sommelier, Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, Oxford  
Erica Laler, sommelier, Texture, London W1  
Phillippe Moranges, deputy head sommelier, Hakkasan, London W1  
Mark Perlaki, head sommelier, Hotel du Vin et Bistro, Harrogate  
Stephen Raducki, assistant sommelier, Le Pont de la Tour, London SE1  
Laurent Richet, sommelier, Hotel TerraVina, Southampton  
Clement Robert, head sommelier, Summer Lodge Country House Hotel, Evershot  
Magda Saleh, assistant sommelier, La Trompette, London W4

The semi finals will take place on 28 April 2010 at the new Westbury Gallery at the Westbury Mayfair hotel, London, from which the top three will qualify for the final being held the same afternoon. In front of an audience of invited guests from the hospitality industry each finalist will complete a timed blind tasting, correct a series of mistakes on a wine list and participate in a pressurised restaurant role-playing scenario with difficult orders and demanding customers. A dramatic finale will see the three attempt the notorious Champagne pour, where a magnum of Champagne Piper Heidsieck Cuvée Brut has to be completely emptied and evenly poured into 16 flutes without returning to any of the glasses.

The winner of the UK Sommelier of the Year 2010 will be announced at a gala dinner that evening where they will be presented with the winner's trophy. The winner will also receive a trip to the House of Champagne Piper-Heidsieck in the heart of the Champagne region including a personal tasting with Chef de Caves Régis Camus.

This year's judging panel is headed by the Academy's technical director Gerard Basset MW, MS, alongside Matt Wilkin MS, Ronan Sayburn MS, and Ian Harris of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET).

Last year's UK Sommelier of the Year Laura Rhys, head sommelier at Hotel TerraVina in Hampshire. In 2008 Gearoid Devaney, then head sommelier of Tom Aikens in London, scooped the top prize.

For further press information, please contact:

Academy of Food & Wine

Linda Pettit

T. 01737 823721 M. 07973 789853, [linda@tilburstowmedia.co.uk](mailto:linda@tilburstowmedia.co.uk)

Sophie Roberts-Brown or Nicky Barwood

T. 020 8661 4646 [sophie@acfws.org](mailto:sophie@acfws.org) or [nicky@acfws.org](mailto:nicky@acfws.org).

Piper-Heidsieck UK

Elaine Begley

T. 0207 491 9903 M. 07801 515585. [elaine@sidhuandsimon.com](mailto:elaine@sidhuandsimon.com)

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT THE SOMMELIER OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

Entry to the 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 are sent a first round questionnaire. Those 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 four locations across the UK and 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 four regional winners and the highest scoring entrants then make up the 15 candidates who compete in the national semi final in London on 28 April 2010, along with the previous year's runners-up and the Jersey winner.

The three best semi-finalists then compete in a tense final the same day 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.

#### 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. 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 Champagnes.

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