

2014 Sake Sommelier of the Year competition opens for entries

Entries are invited for this year's Sake Sommelier of the Year competition with the top prize of a fantastic five-day, fully funded trip to Japan, worth around £5,000.

The trip includes the opportunity to take the Sake Sommelier Association's Advance Sake Sommelier Course, visiting and working in sake breweries.

The Sake Sommelier of the Year competition, the only one of its kind held outside Japan, is organised by the Academy of Food & Wine Service (AFWS) in association with the London-based Sake Sommelier Association and sponsor Gekkeikan, one of the world's oldest and finest sake producers.

'Sake knowledge is becoming increasingly important as Sake is no longer only served in Japanese restaurants but also in many top end non-Japanese restaurants. It is a growing trend amongst consumers who are on the lookout for the next big thing in luxury experiences,' commented master Sake Sommelier Xavier Chapelou, one of the chief judges of the competition.

Entrants are asked to complete a short preliminary questionnaire and two essay-based questions designed to test their knowledge, experience and vision of Sake. The top-scoring sommeliers will then be invited to attend the semi-final and final at London's Westbury Hotel on 24 November 2014 involving blind tastings, food matching tests and an error on a sake list. The final will take place in front of an audience of invited guests.

Last year's winner, Rajan Rengasamy of Spinney's, UAE, said of the competition: 'Winning was an amazing experience and an honour. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.'

The Sake Sommelier Association (SSA) is the first and only organisation that is solely dedicated to Sake. Candidates passing the Introductory Sake Professional and Certified Sake Sommelier will become an SSA accredited Sake Sommelier.

'Interest in Sake is increasing, as Japanese food grows in popularity,' commented Ryota Kishi, manager of the Sake Sommelier Association.

'Sakes, like wines, present different personalities at different temperatures and depending on the fermentation process and the rice used. The sake sommelier's job is to know the range of different sakes, how to serve them and which food is best matched with them.'

Entries must be received by 22 September 2014. Log on to <http://www.afws.co.uk/events-2/sake-sommelier-of-the-year-2/> for further information. A video of last year's competition can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fC4XeZrdksA>. [ENDS]