

International Wine Challenge 2007 results

22 May 2007 by JR

(Please note that my **wine of the week** will be published tomorrow - you can have too much of a good thing.)

The 2007 International Wine Challenge (IWC) which claims to be "the world's largest blind wine tasting", held in London every year has just announced its medal results (find them online at www.internationalwinechallenge.com). Countries which performed notably better this year than in the past were Spain, South Africa, Argentina, Greece, England, (about which I shall be writing this Saturday in free for all) and Chile which doubled its tally of medal winners.

Fewer gold medals were awarded in 2007 than in 2006 – perhaps a nod to recent rather inflated criticism of over- generosity in the past, although the official line is that "the awarding of fewer gold medals this year underlines the rigorous judging process of a competition that has established itself as the pre- eminent arbiter of wine quality since it was created 24 years ago."

The IWC has become to a certain extent the victim of its own success (see [IWC v Decanter World Wine Awards](#) written a year ago). So many wines are entered that it needs one heck of a lot of judges to deal with them. One has to wonder whether every one of the 400 individuals who judged the IWC 2007, from a total of 19 different countries, truly are experts in their fields – although they did include 33 Masters of Wine - and a distinguishing mark of the IWC is that the poor old Co- Chairmen taste every single medal winning wine themselves at least once. Those hard- working Co- Chairmen are Charles Metcalfe, Derek Smedley MW, Tim Atkin MW and Sam Harrop MW with, for the first time, an International Co- Chairman, in the form of Michael Fridjhon who runs the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show in South Africa where I judged a couple of weeks ago.

This year 9,358 wines (and a great phalanx of sakes) from 35 different countries were assessed. A total of 260 gold medals were awarded (representing 2.8 per cent of entries). 1,129 wines won silver medals (12.1 per cent) but the biggest change was in the percentage of bronze medals awarded (19.7 per cent) with 1,839 medals, seven per cent more than in 2006. All the usual wine- producing countries were among the medal winners plus emerging contenders China, Morocco and Slovakia.

The top three medal winning nations remain the same as last year – **France, Australia and Italy**. France scooped the most medals with a total tally of 635. South Africa saw an increase in medals from 147 in 2006 to 195 in 2007.

France also won most Golds (44), followed by Australia (39). **Portugal** did extremely well with the third biggest tally of golds (36 including ports and madeiras). Chile more than doubled its haul from 5 in 2006 to 13 this year.

English wines continue to show improved form with 10 medals in 2005, 16 medals in 2006 and 21 in 2007. This year's single UK Gold apparently went to Denbies Wine Estate Greenfields 2003, the Surrey vineyard's top sparkling wine, although on the website I could find reference only to the 2004 (and found it disconcertingly difficult to distinguish between the different medals' images).

Japanese **sake** entries increased exponentially this year, due in no small part to the ambassadorial role played by Co- Chairman Sam Harrop. Of the 228 entries, 130 were awarded medals including 10 Golds. Three expert sake judges were flown in from Japan to lead the sake panels, all of whom were apparently astounded at the quality of entries.

Of the UK **supermarkets** Tesco stocks most medal winning wines (126) while Sainsbury's can claim the most golds (13). Own brand golds from Tesco, Sainsbury's and M&S include Tesco Finest Marlborough Pinot Noir 2005 (£9.99), Marks & Spencer Leitz Rudesheimer Berg Roseneck Riesling 2005 and Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Pouilly Fumé 2006 (£8.99), the 2005 having also won a gold last year.

All of 810 **organic wines** were entered into the competition this year, winning 16 golds, 86 silvers and 153 bronzes. Spain had the most medal- winning organic wines. For the first time in its 24 year history the IWC will be awarding an Organic Wine Trophy. It will be announced along with the other trophies at Vinexpo on 18 June 2007.