

## Asia's first Masters of Wine

6 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

Today is the day that a score or two of very hardworking wine students around the globe have been chewing their nails and checking their mail anxiously for it's the day that the Institute of Masters of Wine announce the results of their exams held in the UK, Australia and the US last May.

I have not caught up with all the results (see below for an update) but I am absolutely thrilled to report that **Jeannie Cho Lee MW**, pictured here, can now put those precious letters M and W after her name. She passed the exams last year but you may not call yourself a Master of Wine nowadays unless you have written a dissertation on some wine- related topic and had it passed by the IMW's arcane vetting procedure. And, it should be said, that some people pass the exams but do not manage to complete their dissertations to the IMW's satisfaction. (I was reminded of this when reading th recent thread on [wine tasting and perception](#) started by David Schildknecht. This was the proposed focus of a very interesting dissertation but the topic did not find favour with the IMW.)

Jeannie had already decided to devote her dissertation to the place of her home city Hong Kong in the world of fine wine. So what a windfall it was when HK announced last February that it was [scrapping duty on wine](#) and going all- out to make itself the Asian hub of the fine wine world. Jeannie submitted her dissertation a few months ago and has just heard that it has been passed and that she may now consider herself an MW.

Jeannie's parents are Korean, making her the first ethnically Asian MW, and she was educated in the US. (I first met her at the Harvard Club in New York, as it happens.) But for some time she has been resident in Hong Kong where she lives with her husband and four daughters, and runs a wine school in conjunction with Berry Bros. She is also a prolific wine writer having contributed to publications such as the *Wine Spectator* for many years. Here is one of her contributions to this site, for example, on the difficult business of [Korean food and wine](#).

This is a great step not just for Jeannie but possibly even more for the Masters of Wine, I feel, spreading their influence to the most dynamic continent for wine in the mid 21st century, with China already producing more wine than Australia.

Every bit as exciting as this is that our very own **Melanie Jones** of [www.quaffersoffers.co.uk](#), who has done so much behind- the- scenes work on this site as well as giving the benefit of her tasting notes chez, for example, [Sainsbury's](#) and [Asda](#), has also just learned that after not a few years spent with her nose to the MW grindstone, she has passed all of the first set of exams. Once she has celebrated like mad, decided on a dissertation topic, had it approved and then written to the IMW's satisfaction, she will then qualify as a Master of Wine, bringing the total number of Masters of Wine on the JancisRobinson.com team to three.

And another, [much- discussed](#) purple pager, **Pancho Campo MW** of Spain, has also just heard that as soon as he signs the IMW's code of conduct, he too may call himself a Master of Wine. He is the first Spanish Master of Wine and yet operates on an international basis with his climate change conventions so we can hope that he too will increase the Masters of Wines' sphere of influence.

Very, very many congratulations, Mel, Pancho and Jeannie. With MWs it truly is a case of the more the merrier.

**Later that same day:** I have just received news from the IMW that announces a record crop of 15 MWs! In addition to Jeannie and Pancho are the following:

**Sarah Abbott MW**  
**Jo Ahearne MW**  
**Martin Hudson MW**  
**Ben Lewin MW**  
**Christophe Macra MW**  
**Debra Meiburg MW**  
**Sara Muirhead MW**  
**Lisa Perrotti- Brown MW**  
**Jennifer Simonetti- Bryan MW**  
**Madeleine Stenwreth MW**  
**Dirceu Vianna Junior MW**  
**Tim Wildman MW**

So this year's crop has produced not just the first Spanish Master of Wine but the first Brazilian one too. And how that both Debra Meiburg and Jeannie Cho Lee are MWs, they bring the total number of Masters of Wine resident in Asia to four, with James Cluer MW whose pass was announced in May, and Lisa Perotti Brown MW who is now based in Singapore. They will presumably spread the MW word in Asia and, Asian students being so notoriously hard- working, it probably won't be long until Asians constitute the majority of MWs.