

Basset seeks sommeliers

7 Mar 2011 by Jancis Robinson

11 Jun - On the day of the announcement of an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for Gérard I learned that although Laurent has indeed gone to Nottingham, Laura Rhys has decided to stay at TerraVina.

The [best sommelier in the world Gérard Basset](#) is looking for ambitious, hard-working sommeliers to work at his hotel in England's New Forest, [Hotel TerraVina](#). The problem is that his two sommeliers have already achieved so much in this hothouse of wine education and achievement, that it is time for them to move on, leaving a vacancy or two for sommeliers who are really keen to learn from a master. Here's what Gérard himself has to say:

'I am going to lose my two wonderful sommeliers; Laurent Richet in April and Laura Rhys a few weeks/months later. Laurent has been with me for three years and Laura since a few weeks before we opened Hotel TerraVina (almost four years ago). Both have done a superb job for me and they have also achieved a lot during their time at Hotel TerraVina. Laura had her first position of Head Sommelier, she became Young UK Sommelier of the Year in 2008 and a year later she won the senior title of [UK Sommelier of the Year 2009](#). Finally last year she became Master Sommelier. Laurent won the UK Gastronomy Team of the Year 2010 and also became [Master Sommelier](#) last year and he is preparing for the UK Sommelier of Year 2011 (very best of luck, Laurent!) However, it is time for them to go and further their careers and I can only wish them the very best of luck with that.

'Therefore, I need to find some replacements and what I am looking for, to start with, is one or two ambitious up-and-coming sommeliers who are perhaps in a position of number two at the moment but who are almost ready for their first position as number one. I am looking for someone (or two people) who want to learn and develop. A person who has as their priority the desire to become a great sommelier. A person who sees financial reward for later once he/she has achieved a high level of expertise. A person who is highly enthusiastic and passionate and who wants to work and learn with me.

'As I have always done, way back from my Hotel du Vin days to now at Hotel TerraVina, I leave my Head Sommelier to select around 80% to 90% of the wine list once I have enough confidence in their abilities. Like many of my past sommeliers, Laura had a major input in setting up the wine list here and very quickly was doing most of the wine list by herself. The sommeliers will also learn about bar drinks and cocktails and they will have their courses and exams paid for by the company. There are also opportunities to participate in varied wine trips around the world. The candidates need to speak English well and have a good understanding of International wines. I am prepared to spend a lot of time coaching the right candidate(s) as can attest many of the sommeliers who worked for me in the past. (Many of them won national competitions and/or became Master Sommeliers.)'

If you want to see what Gérard looks like in motion, come back and see my video of a cuvée of top British sommeliers at a recent natural wine tasting to be published later this week. You can contact him via [Hotel TerraVina](#).

Laurent is going to work in Nottingham at Sat Bains and Laura looks set to be going to work in California.