Special award for Luis

16 Mar 2012 by Jancis Robinson

The 2011 André Simon Awards for best food and drink books published last year were decided yesterday afternoon and announced last night at a reception at the Goring Hotel, London. Advised by this year's special drink book adviser David Gleave MW, the judges turned from grape to grain with their choice of drink book as *The Oxford Companion to Beer* edited by Garrett Oliver and published by OUP. Oliver, Gleave and the book are shown left.

The food book of the year, of which there were many times more entries than for drink book of the year, was eventually decided as baker Dan Lepard's *Short and Sweet* published by Fourth Estate. Xanthe Clay advised the judges on the food books. Each of these winners receives a cheque for £2,000.

After these announcements were made, our Spanish specialist Luis Gutiérrez (see his latest article, on the revival of Xarello) and sherry guru Jesus Barquín wondered whether it had really been worth their while trekking to London for the award ceremony, but were finally rewarded with the judges' lone discretionary special commendation worth £1,000 for *The Finest Wines of Rioja and Northwest Spain*, the book they wrote with Victor de la Serna.

The picture below, also taken by Nick's sister-in-law Sarah Barclay, shows Luis (left) and Jesus flanking the book's photographer Jon Wyand. They had anyway taken the precaution of making a 10.30 booking at Heston Blumenthal's Dinner at the Mandarin Oriental, either for celebration or consolation. The late start was presumably less of a shock to their Spanish digestive systems than it would be to a British one and, knowing their tastes, I suspect they spent a good portion of their winnings on and at Dinner.

Nick was alas unable to perform his usual role as a trustee and judge of the André Simon Awards this year as he had just had a major operation on his less-than-perfect gut. He was, and still is, in intensive care but is now stable and is expected to be transferred to his own room by Saturday morning at the latest. His sister Katie Lander is secretary of the André Simon Awards, which is why I have access to the results and images so soon.

The shortlisted books in the food category were:

- BOCCA
  by Jacob Kenedy
  Published by Bloomsbury
- COUTURE CHOCOLATE
  by William Curley
  Published by Jacqui Small
- SCOTTISH SEAFOOD
  by Catherine Brown
  Published by Birlinn
- SHORT AND SWEET
  by Dan Lepard
  Published by Fourth Estate
- TASTING INDIA
  by Christine Manfield
  Published by Octopus Books
- THE GOOD COOK
  by Simon Hopkinson
  Published by BBC Books
- TRIPE

by Marjorie Houlihan
Published by Prospect Books

The shortlisted books in the drink category were:

- AUTHENTIC WINE
  by Jamie Goode and Sam Harrop MW
  Published by University of California Press
- IN SEARCH OF PINOT NOIR
  by Benjamin Lewin MW
  Published by Vendange Press
- THE OXFORD COMPANION TO BEER
  by Garrett Oliver
  Published by Oxford University Press
- THE FINEST WINES OF RIOJA AND NORTHWEST SPAIN
  by Jesus Barquin, Luis Gutierrez and Victor de la Serna
  Published by Aurum Press