

Of trees and sommeliers

13 Dec 2012 by Jancis Robinson

Each year the co-owner of the Puligny-Montrachet hotel Le Montrachet (currently overlooking the replacement of the old, diseased chestnut trees in the Place des Marronniers with these young willows, a choice of which tree expert Hugh Johnson approves) Jean-Pierre Faraut organises a competition for sommeliers, testing their knowledge of white burgundy with the most obscure questions and encouraging them to offer a particularly fine selection of wines in their white burgundy lists.

The most recent editions of this competition took place in Belgium last year and Switzerland the year before. This year's competition was held in London and I somehow found myself lassoed as a judge, along with Adam Brett Smith of Corney & Barrow (pictured above with me), Peter Hambro and Anthony Hanson MW of Christie's. Our assessments were complemented by judges in Burgundy Faraut, Thierry Gazagnes of Hôtel Le Montrachet, journalist and wine specialist Thierry Gaudillère, vigneron Olivier Leflaive and sommelier Jean-Claude Wallerand.

An impressive group of Puligny-Montrachet vignerons were persuaded to rise at 2am on Tuesday morning in order to get to L'Etranger restaurant in London in time for the presentation ceremony where the following winners (of a copy of [Wine Grapes](#) inter alia) were announced:

CATEGORY PRESTIGE

Joint Winners:

Jan Konetzki, Head Sommelier, Gordon Ramsay, Royal Hospital Road

Agathe Plantade, Assistant Head sommelier, Restaurant Ducasse at the Dorchester (now at One & Only The Palm, Dubai)

Second place:

Renaud Rolland, Head Sommelier, The Square

Third place:

Jon Berastegui, Head Sommelier, Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's

CATEGORY EXCELLENCE

Winner:

Mia Kmecova, Head Sommelier, L'Etranger

Second place :

Xavier Rousset, Head Sommelier, Texture

The intention is to run the competition in Moscow next year.

The picture below shows from left to right Jean-Pierre Faraut, Mia Kmecova, me and Jan Konetzki.

