

BEST SOMMELIER OF THE WORLD

GENERIC PRESS FILE



INTRODUCTION & WELCOMING



Welcome by Andres Rosberg, President A.S.I.

The main challenges for the “Association Internationale de Sommellerie”

While the Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI) is a large organization, representing dozens of thousands of sommeliers in roughly sixty countries, it has multiple challenges ahead of it. These include modernizing the image and structure of ASI -we have just launched a new logo, a newsletter, and a revamped website; promoting sommellerie in areas of the world where it is still not a very well recognized profession or where there aren't sommelier associations formed, like in parts of Asia, Africa and the Americas; helping improve the working conditions and the professional standards around the world in the countries where sommellerie does exist; and many other things. It also has a very hectic agenda in the coming months, with a Best Sommelier of Asia & Oceania contest in Kyoto next October, a Best Sommelier of the World contest in Belgium next March, and a 50th Anniversary celebration and an annual meeting, to be held in Champagne next June...

The most important duties and challenges for talented sommeliers

The challenges that sommeliers face around the world are many and diverse. Ofcourse the most talented sommeliers, the ones that win the competitions, have plenty of opportunities. However, in some countries, sommeliers can face very basic challenges, like getting their jobs recognized or even paying their bills and making it to the end of the month. In many wine producing countries, it is complicated for sommeliers to taste wines from around the world. At the same time, however, we have learnt through ASI and the work of many national sommelier associations that if we can work together we can overcome these challenges. Sommelier associations can be very efficient tools to make positive changes happen!

Antwerp, an appropriate city (and Belgium an appropriate country) to host the next edition of the Best Sommelier of the World Competition

Antwerp is one of the main doors for wine in Europe, and Benelux is a big market for wineries around the world. Beer and spirits are also very important in this region. Furthermore, the love of Belgians for gastronomy is known around the globe -it is no secret that it has one of the highest densities of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world. As a result of this, or perhaps also originating this, Belgium has a long standing tradition of state-of-the-art sommellerie: It was a co-founder of ASI, it hosted the first ever world contest in 1969, and it has given the world many top sommeliers, including for instance Aristide Spies, who was a runner up in the 2013 Best Sommelier of the World contest in Tokyo...



The difference in the Antwerp edition 2019 compared to Mendoza 2016

The contest doesn't vary much itself, other than becoming a little bit more difficult and competitive each time. The setting, however, certainly changes. Mendoza had the landscapes, the vineyards, the Andes. Antwerp has the architecture, the sophisticated restaurant scene, its culture... Distances are much shorter in Belgium too, so it makes logistics a little easier. We are always learning, and with each new competition we try to outperform ourselves. Mendoza showed us how social networks, press coverage and live online streaming of the final has a tremendous impact on the promotion of sommellerie, so I would expect that all of these aspects will grow exponentially in future contests, too. I'm really looking forward to seeing the impact of this competition!



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Welcome by Michèle Chantôme, Secretary General A.S.I.

It is a real pleasure for me to welcome journalists from around the world to this press conference in Antwerp, Belgium. Belgium, this unique competition was born here, 50 years ago. Indeed, it was in Belgium, that the French sommelier Armand Melkonian became the first Best Sommelier of the World in 1969. But Belgium, is more than just the place where it all began. As we all know, Belgium is internationally notorious for its way of life and for the quality of its gastronomy. Belgian citizens have always been wine lovers.

Over the years, this country has managed to educate many talented sommeliers. Our partner, the Belgian Guild of Sommeliers has played an important role in preparing young and gifted hospitality professionals by talking to and advising their hosts on wine. But the Guild has also played a major role in the development of the A.S.I. worldwide. The Belgian sommelier Alain De Mol has actively contributed, as Chairman of A.S.I., to the international expansion of our association. Today, another top Belgian sommelier and Vice-President of A.S.I. for Europe, William Wouters, is seeing a dream become reality: hosting the 15th edition of the Best Sommelier of the World competition in his own city, Antwerp.

In the fifty years since its inception, the competition has evolved into a worldwide championship involving 60 countries. I am particularly happy to present you with two former winners of the competition, Philippe Faure Brac, France, who won the Championship in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the 2007 edition winner, Andreas Larsson, from Sweden, who won the competition which took place in Rhodes, Greece that year. They are perfect examples of how the Best Sommelier of the World competition has become an international one, with finals in cities all over the world, won by sommeliers from all over the world.

Over the last decades, the content of the competition has also evolved as the sommelier profession has largely progressed and become more complex, with for example, the extension of grape varieties and the climate change. Food pairing has also become more and more important within the competition. In 2019, here in Antwerp, the new edition of the Competition will again be a well-balanced mix of theoretical and practical tasks, which will be interesting for the public. I am particularly honoured to be part of it, again. I know that here, in Antwerp, one of the most important harbours worldwide, the competition of Best Sommelier of the World, will be 'fiercely fought'.



A.S.I. AND BELGIAN SOMMELIERS GUILD



“Helping sommeliers reach new heights and better wine knowledge, everywhere in the world”

Founded in 1969, l'Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI) is the organization formed by 58 national sommelier associations in all five continents. As one of the world leading organization in the wine and other beverages sector, ASI has been promoting the sommellerie and creating conditions for expanding the profession in the world.

For nearly fifty years ASI focused on developing international sommeliers competitions at continental and world level. ASI has established the highest standards for international sommelier competitions and hosts the ASI Contest of the Best Sommelier of the World.

As an important part of its mandate, ASI embraces the contemporary context to support the profession in front of new challenges. Today, the responsibilities of modern sommeliers go far beyond merely serving wines. On top of a complete knowledge of their field and an indispensable gift for human relationships, they must also display a considerable understanding of purchase and stocks management. Today's sommeliers are also associated with the marketing of the business.

The current A.S.I. EXECUTIVES are :

A.S.I. President

Andres Rosberg (Argentina)

A.S.I. Continental Vice-Presidents

William Wouters (Belgium) Vice-president for Europe

Ricardo Grellet (Chile) Vice-president for the Americas

Saiko Tamura-Soga (Japan) Vice-president for Asia & Oceania

A.S.I. Board

Michèle Aström Chantôme (Morocco) Secretary General

Michelle McCarthy (Canada) Deputy Secretary General

Philippe Faure-Brac (France) Treasurer

Samuil Angelov (Finland) Deputy Treasurer



The A.S.I.'s main aims are :

- To bring together the national sommelier associations (just one member association per country) and to promote their founding in countries where they do not yet exist.
- To co-ordinate actions aimed at developing and advancing the profession by various means (training courses, etc.).
- To enhance the sommelier's profession as well as educating the consumer.
- To defend the ethics of the profession.

A.S.I. participates in all events related to wine, spirits and other drinks, and is able to take any action directly or indirectly aimed at its objectives defined above.



Belgian Sommelier Guild - www.sommeliers-gilde.be

In 2019, the Belgian Guild of Sommeliers will have the responsibility of organizing the Championship in Antwerp.

Founded in 1963, the Belgian Guild of Sommeliers has been actively present and participating from the very beginning in the development of sommeliers on an international level. The first A.S.I. Championship was organized in Belgium in 1969. The President of the Belgium Guild, William Wouters, is also Vice-president for Europe and the key-figure behind the organization of this new edition of the competition in Antwerp, Belgium.

Belgium has always been a leading country in wine promotion and wine education. For many years, the Guild has organized several competitions for young sommeliers. Many of them managed to win the professional competition in a further stage of their career. Professional sommeliers are also welcome to compete for the title of Best Belgian Sommelier, which the Belgian Guild takes full responsibility for and which prepares the graduates to participate in the competition of Best Sommelier of Europe and Best Sommelier of the World.

The Belgian Guild aims to gather a solid group of promising Belgian sommeliers and to bring them to the highest international level possible. Belgium is a country of wine-loving citizens. This is an asset for restaurants as good wines contribute to the quality and reputation of restaurants. Not only Michelin starred restaurants but also hotels, bars or wine bars where our tremendous profession can be rewarded for the largest pleasure of our guests.



Sommelier duties and challenges in 2019

Over the years, the profession of sommelier has considerably evolved. Today, it covers much more than pure “wine knowledge”. But of course, this is where the basics of the job are laid. For William Wouters, Vice-Chairman of A.S.I., the learning never ends. Compared to fifty years ago, the wine world has significantly evolved.

William highlights some key assets for future sommeliers who want to become successful and widely appreciated for their work and passion:

- 1. Travel:** it is very important to gain experience in the field, by visiting as many vineyards as possible, to discover food habits, products and recipes from all over the world. It is also of the utmost importance to work in various restaurants abroad.
- 2. Self-study:** the wine world continuously evolves. Fortunately, e-learning helps professionals to gain easily accessible information and courses. It is necessary to take the initiative to update your knowledge, even if it is not understood or encouraged by the restaurant/hotel owner.
- 3. Social intelligence:** good sommeliers are able to listen to their guests and understand what kind of experience they are looking for. They easily adapt themselves to clients' needs and priorities.
- 4. Culture and curiosity:** sommeliers need to spend time increasing their general cultural background, to show enough curiosity and interest in a huge amount of topics. They should ideally speak at least two or three different languages.
- 5. Management:** definitely part of the job nowadays. At its best, management of the wine stock is a cooperation between owner and sommelier. It is all about budget allocations, a good balance of several wines, prices and young and aging wines.



Retrospective: 50 years of BSOW competition

When Armand Melkonian became the Best Sommelier of the World in 1969, in Brussels, it was difficult to imagine the level of history making going on that day. Together with Jean-Marie Stoeckel, who was second, and Paul Brunet, third, the three French sommeliers together were bringing to life the most important contest of the world sommellerie. What makes the A.S.I. Contest of the Best Sommelier of the World the most relevant international meeting for sommeliers is not only the level of the participants, the commitment with the profession and the industry relevance of the competitors, is a history of 50 years.

Over half a century, sommeliers from France, Italy, Japan, Germany, Sweden, United Kingdom and Switzerland contributed to grow the prestige of the ASI Best Sommelier of the World. From Armand Melkonian in 1969 to Arvid Rosengren in 2016, ASI has 15 outstanding champions that have upgrade the level of the profession and brought the sommellerie to be one of the most influential voices in the industry.

From Brussels to Mendoza, cities from three continents hosted the contest, considered the most important international competition for the sommellerie. The cities that hosted the Best Sommelier of the World are Brussels, Milano, Estoril, Venice, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Vienna, Montreal, Athens, Rhodes, Santiago de Chile and Mendoza. The diversity of hosting cities is another clear element of the relevance and the global spirit of A.S.I. and its most important event.

The Best Sommeliers of the World : 1969 - 2016

- **1969** Armand Melkonian, France, in Brussels, Belgium
- **1971** Piero Sattanino, Italie/Italy, in Milano, Italy
- **1978** Giuseppe Vaccarini, Italie/Italy in Estoril, Portugal
- **1983** Jean-Luc Pouteau, France, in Brussels, Belgium
- **1986** Jean-Claude Jambon, France, in Venice, Italy
- **1989** Serge Dubs, France, in Paris, France
- **1992** Philippe Faure Brac, France, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- **1995** Shinya Tasaki, Japon/Japan, in Tokyo, Japan
- **1998** Markus Del Monego, Allemagne/Germany, in Vienna, Austria
- **2000** Olivier Poussier, France, in Montreal, Canada
- **2004** Enrico Bernardo, Italie/Italy, in Athens, Greece
- **2007** Andreas Larsson, Suède/Sweden, in Rhodes, Greece
- **2010** Gerard Basset, Royaume-Uni/United Kingdom, in Santiago, Chile
- **2013** Paolo Basso, Suisse/Switzerland, in Tokyo, Japan
- **2016** Jon Arvid Rosengren, Suède/Sweden, in Mendoza, Argentina



65 Participants from 62 countries - into 2019 edition

Albania
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Chile
China
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Dominican Republic (Observer)
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Indonesia
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Korea
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg

Malaysia
Mauritius
Mexico
Monaco
Montenegro
Morocco
Netherlands
New Zealand (Observer)
Norway
Philippines (Observer)
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Serbia
Singapore
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Taiwan
Thailand (Observer)
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom
Uruguay
Venezuela
+ 3 winners of
continental
competitions



GENERAL INFORMATION



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