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IWSC judging  
The verdict

**IWSC Report**

2020

## IWSC judging – The verdict

The IWSC judging took place in central London's Chinatown in August and September. Tasters sampled the wares of the 2020 entries, culminating in the trophy judging at the end of an enlightening week. It has been a challenging year for us all in so many ways. So once again I must give huge kudos to the IWSC team. When logistics are so well executed, it allows the judges to really focus on the task in hand, ensuring a rigorous, fair and ultimately enjoyable judging process.

On the subject of the judges, here too, we were well equipped. As Wine Judging Committee member Dirceu Vianna Junior MW comments, 'The standard of judges invited to participate in this competition is very high and it's a privilege to taste, learn and share knowledge with such an excellent group of professionals. Judges are strict but fair and consumers can be certain that stickers on the bottle reflect the ambition, effort and results that each producer has been able to achieve.'

Judges are not there to choose personal favourites, but rather to subjectively analyse the wines. It is possible to overlook an intrinsic quality in the wine without considered discussion among the panel. So verdicts are evaluated, cases made, and a score and possible medals are given. A member of the Wine Judging Committee oversees each day's proceedings and tastes any wines that panels may disagree on.

This year's judging threw up some intriguing and encouraging results, with certain countries and styles of wine really shining. An impressive 1197 Silver medals were awarded and 137 being awarded the prestigious gold medals.

Among the highlights, Australia and New Zealand put in a notably strong and solid performance. As Alex Hunt MW observed, 'The sheer number of good wines coming out of Australia and New Zealand mean these countries remain a safe hunting ground. But it's worth seeking out the exceptional examples, for their extra degree of excitement, complexity and distinct regional expression.'

Of particular note was the extraordinary performance of Australian fortified wines. These often overlooked wines offer haunting complexity and balance, which was particularly evident in wines such as Morris of Rutherglen's Cellar Reserve Gran Muscat and Stanton & Killen's Gran Muscat. Shiraz and Chardonnay also impressed but less so in Margaret River, whose Chardonnays in particular seemed a little off colour this year.

South Africa continues to impress, as it has done over the past decade. The once frequent whiff of unclean wines now seems but a distant whisper – instead there are so many wonderful wines to shout about. I am increasingly impressed by Stellenbosch and the fantastic and diverse styles of Cabernet Sauvignon it yields. The Western Cape and its many sub regions also performed very well. What energizes judges is finding those hidden gems, while constantly learning and discovering both new wines and established favourites. The following 18 wines are ABS Wine Agencies best in show from this year's judging.



# The 2020 IWSC highlights from ABS Wine Agencies



**95**

*Stanton & Killeen, Grand Muscat NV*

**Rutherglen, Victoria, Australia Sweet fortified**

Viscous and treacly with layers of densely concentrated flavours and a marked burnt caramel note on the palate which is balanced by an ample acidity that brings freshness. Luxuriously indulgent.



**92**

*Stanton & Killeen, Grand Topaque NV*

**Rutherglen, Victoria Australia Sweet**

Sun-dried tomato and caramelised walnut, a sun-kissed god. Orange zest, rich and utterly unctuous, it's a mouthful of walnut, resin, and deep, dark chocolate. Silky and sensational.



**91**

*Jordan, Cobblers Hill 2016*

**Stellenbosch South Africa Red**

Dark and sweet, dense cherry fruits are complemented with slight floral notes. Concentrated with ripe tannins and a juicy, bright and complex finish.



**91**

*Hope Family, Austin Hope Cabernet Sauvignon 2017*

**Paso Robles, California USA Red**

Excellent nose geographically and varietally defined with mint, cedar, cassis and black-currant. The palate is elegant and structured, the tannins fine-grained and plenty of fresh acidity. Classy.



**94**

*Bon Courage, Jacques Bruère Brut 2012*

**Robertson, Western Cape South Africa Sparkling**

Juicy melon and yellow apple notes on the nose, with red berries and minerality. Great balance of acidity and flavours on the palate, with a malt biscuit-like finish.



**92**

*Weingut Villa Wolf, Library Release Wachenheimer Goldbächel Riesling 2012*

**Pfalz, Germany Medium Sweet**

This wine has big dimensions and maturity with gorgeous frangipane fanning out alongside honeysuckle brushed red apple. Steady, weighty development marches towards lengthy finish.



**91**

*Casas del Bosque, Noble Late Harvest Riesling 2018*

**Casablanca Valley, Chile Sweet**

An aromatic and alluringly fresh style of Riesling, revealing plush peach and apricot. With notes of nut and orange marmalade, this shows depth, freshness, and life.



**90**

*Stanton & Killeen, Classic Muscat NV*

**Rutherglen, Victoria Australia Sweet**

Sumptuously sweet but balanced by racy acidity. This is a full, rich and thickly textured example that displays a great composition of fruit flavours and alcohol that is carried well.



**93**

*Jordan, Black Magic Merlot 2017*

**Stellenbosch South Africa Red**

Elegant cassis nose. The palate is layered and generous, showing ripe plum and baked strawberry notes supported with oak. Fresh and smooth on the finish.



**91**

*Jordan, Barrel Fermented Chardonnay 2019*

**Stellenbosch South Africa White**

Ripe peach, yellow apple, pear and buttered bread greet the nose with a delicious nutty leesy creamy vanilla note lifted by fragrant lemon. Balanced palate, refined acidity and delicious biscuity finish.



**91**

*Tokara, Reserve Collection Chardonnay 2019*

**Stellenbosch, South Africa White**

Complex nose of ripe spiced yellow stone fruit, toast and sweet oaked spice. Beautifully balanced taut palate shows nuanced apple and aromatic pear, seasoned with a beautifully-integrated oaky note.



**90**

*Campbells, Muscat NV*

**Rutherglen, Victoria Australia Sweet**

A concentrated honey and floral nose opens to a rich and spicy palate displaying notes of satsuma, fig and toffee with roasted coffee notes on the finish. Mouth watering! uscious.



**93**

*Weingut Dr. Loosen, Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling 2004*

**Mosel, Germany Sweet**

A seductive character of baked apricot, honey-glazed peaches and cinnamon, with a creamy vanilla palate. Touches of lemon offer lift and the finish is fresh and balanced.



**91**

*Stanton & Killeen, Classic Topaque NV*

**Rutherglen, Victoria Australia Sweet**

Walnuts roasting on an open fire. Fig jam and date nipping at your nose. Heather honey and caramel hung by the fire. Tawny yet fresh, and everybody knows.



**91**

*Jordan, The Real McCoy Riesling 2019*

**Western Cape, South Africa White**

Citrus nose with wafts of kerosene opens to a ripe palate of green apples, luscious tinned peach and honeyed slate mineral notes. Beautifully precise with brilliant, long lime cordial finish.



**90**

*Weingut Dr. Loosen, Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling 2003*

**Mosel, Germany 2003 Sweet**

A decadent palate with layers of golden apple, vanilla and honey. Hints of floral notes give it lift and add to the complexity. Intense and moreish.

# The IWSC Judging process & judges

By Alistair Cooper MW

The eclectic breadth and depth of experience and wine knowledge among the gathered judges sparked stimulating discussion and debate during the typically rigorous judging process. Panels of three judges formed tasting teams for the day and were all given information on each wine spanning grape variety, provenance and alcohol levels but, importantly, excluding price. Each day normally focused on either a specific country or region and was split further into logical flights. These flights are carefully ordered so as to minimise palate fatigue, and unlike at other awards, numbers of wines are capped at 65 per day. Each flight is appraised by all of the judges individually and without discussion, scores are recorded and notes are taken. Then at the end of each flight, scores are compared and each wine is discussed by the panel.

This is the crux of the judging process. We are not there to choose personal favourites, but rather to subjectively analyse the wines. It is possible to overlook an intrinsic quality in the wine without considered discussion among the panel. So verdicts are evaluated, cases made, and a score and possible medals are given. A member of the Wine Judging Committee oversees each day's proceedings and tastes any wines that panels may disagree on and well as Gold and Silver winners.

## Judges:



*Alistair Cooper MW*  
Wine Consultant, Author & Educator



*Elizabeth Kelly MW*  
Wine Buyer - Majestic



*Freddy Bulmer*  
Buyer - The Wine Society



*David Kermode*  
Journalist, writer & broadcaster



*Isa Bal MS*  
Owner - Trivet restaurant



*Eric Zwiebel MS*  
Head Sommelier - Summer Lodge Hotel

## Judging Committee:



*Alex Hunt MW*  
Purchasing Director -  
Berkmann Wine Cellars



*Helena Nicklin*  
The Three Drinkers



*Rebecca Palmer*  
Associate Director & Buyer -  
Corney & Barrow



*Roger Jones*  
Owner - The Harrow at Little Bedwyn



*Dirceu Vianna Junior MW*  
Wine Consultant, Author & Educator



*John Hoskins MW*  
Owner of The Old Bridge & Chairman of  
the Master of Wine examination



*Mick O'Connell MW*  
Owner of Neighborhood Wines



*Stefan Neumann MS*  
Director of Wine - Dinner by Heston



*Svetoslav Manolev MS*  
Wine Buyer - Flemings Hotel

To see how the IWSC judging process works, scan here:



For more information about the IWSC, go to:

**[www.iwsc.net](http://www.iwsc.net)**

For recommendations, news and more special reports go to:

**[www.cluboenologique.com](http://www.cluboenologique.com)**

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