



International Wine Challenge 2026 crowns a landmark year for English wine and honours the UK's industry leaders

9th September 2026 – The spotlight shone brightly on the UK wine industry last night as the [International Wine Challenge](#) (IWC) unveiled the results of its highly anticipated 2026 Awards. This year's awards showcased the exceptional quality being produced across English vineyards while also recognising the businesses helping to shape the UK's wine landscape. England delivered a landmark performance, achieving the highest Gold medal conversion rate of any country in the competition. Meanwhile, the IWC Industry Awards honoured the retailers, suppliers, educators and hospitality businesses whose expertise and innovation continue to shape the UK's thriving wine landscape.

England delivers its strongest gold medal performance yet

England enjoyed one of its strongest performances ever at the IWC, recording the highest Gold medal conversion rate of any country in the competition and securing 25 Gold medals overall. Sparkling wine continued to lead the charge, accounting for 21 of those Golds and placing England second only to France for sparkling wine Gold medals.

Among the standout performers was **Wiston Estate Winery**, whose **Vintage Cuvée Magnum 2009** was awarded the **English Sparkling Trophy**, the competition's highest accolade for English sparkling wine. Awarding the wine 97 points, judges praised its "amazingly youthful" character, noting its "beautifully balanced, elegant palate" and "real purity". Meanwhile, the **English White Trophy** went to **1276 Wines** in Herefordshire for its 95-point **Chardonnay 2024**. With Trophy winners spanning Sussex, Kent, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Herefordshire, the results highlighted both the quality and growing diversity of England's wine industry.

Sam Caporn MW commented, *"As English vines age and also as older, more complex reserve wines become available to use in blends, I think it is fair to say that the sparkling wines in particular are getting better and better. And it wasn't just fizz that were winning the top gongs, but superlative still wines too which also impressed the judges and Co-Chairs. A category and country that is on the up and deservedly so!"*

Recognising the UK's wine industry trailblazers

The IWC Industry Awards recognised excellence across 19 categories, honouring the people and businesses shaping the UK wine landscape. Judged by a panel of industry experts, the awards celebrated achievements across retail, hospitality, education, distribution and specialist wine sectors, highlighting the innovation and passion that continue to drive the UK wine trade forward.

In the supermarket categories, **Tesco** retained both **Supermarket of the Year** and **Own Label Range of the Year**, building on its clean sweep of all three supermarket awards in 2025. Graham Nash, Lead

Product Development Manager, Tesco said, *“It’s a massive credit to the team. We’re wine lovers at heart; passionate about the product and passionate about the category, so winning this is a tremendous honour for all of us and we’re absolutely thrilled.”*



Tesco celebrates winning Supermarket of the Year

This year, **M&S** was named **Buying Team of the Year**, recognising the expertise behind one of the UK's most respected wine ranges.



M&S celebrates winning Buying Team of the Year

In the retail categories, **Majestic** was named **Large Multiple Retailer of the Year** for the third consecutive year, while **Tanners Wines** secured its first win as **Medium Retailer of the Year**. **Highbury Vintners** also enjoyed repeat success, retaining the **Small Retailer of the Year** title.



Majestic celebrates winning Large Multiple Retailer of the Year

Several companies achieved success across multiple categories. **The Wine Society** secured both **Online Retailer/Wine Club of the Year** and **Sustainable Specialist of the Year**, while **Liberty Wines** was recognised as **Trade Educator of the Year** and **Italy Specialist of the Year**, alongside two further Highly Commended accolades.

In the on-trade sector, Northumberland's Michelin-starred **Restaurant Pine**, secured **Restaurant Wine List of the Year** for its thoughtfully curated wine programme which complements its acclaimed tasting menu and showcases both established and emerging producers. **Hallgarten & Novum Wines** was recognised as **On-Trade Wine Supplier of the Year**.

The full list of industry awards is here:

Category	Winner	Region
Restaurant Wine List of the Year	Restaurant Pine	East Wallhouses, Northumberland
Own Label Range of the Year	Tesco	National
Agent of the Year (Small)	Graft Wine	London
Agent of the Year (Medium)	Fells	National
Agent of the Year (Large)	Hatch Mansfield	National
Buying Team of the Year	M&S	National
On-Trade Wine Supplier of the Year	Hallgarten & Novum Wines	Luton, Bedfordshire
Consumer Educator of the Year	Local Wine School	National
Trade Educator of the Year	Liberty Wines	London
Small Retailer of the Year	Highbury Vintners	London
Medium Retailer of the Year	Tanners Wines	Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Large Multiple Retailer of the Year	Majestic	National
Sustainable Specialist of the Year	The Wine Society	National
Online Retailer/Wine Club of the Year	The Wine Society	National
Sake Specialist	Tazaki Foods	London
Specialist of the Year - Italy	Liberty Wines	London
Specialist of the Year - England	Vagabond Wines	National
Specialist of the Year – South America	Condor Wines	Horsham, West Sussex
Supermarket of the Year	Tesco	National

The best bottles for less

The **Great Value Champion Wines** are among the most eagerly anticipated awards at the IWC, shining a spotlight on bottles that deliver exceptional quality at accessible prices. Open to still wines retailing for under £15 and sparkling wines under £25, the awards help consumers discover outstanding value across a wide range of styles and regions. This year's Great Value Champions (below) were sourced from leading retailers including Tesco, Sainsbury's, Ocado and Asda, demonstrating that award-winning wines need not come with a premium price tag.

IWC Great Value Champion Sparkling 2026	Codorníu Ars Collecta Blanc de Blancs Reserva Ecológico 2022	£18.25 from Ocado
IWC Great Value Champion White 2026	Tesco Finest Picpoul de Pinet 2024	£10 from Tesco
IWC Great Value Champion Rosé 2026	Sainsbury's Taste the Difference Vigneti delle Dolomiti Pinot Grigio Blush 2025	£8.75 from Sainsbury's
IWC Great Value Champion Red 2026	Trivento Private Reserve Malbec 2024	£11.50 from Tesco
IWC Great Value Champion Sweet 2026	Marisco Vineyards The Ned Noble Sauvignon Blanc 2025	£12 from Majestic
IWC Great Value Champion Fortified 2026	Asda Exceptional LBV 2020	£13 from ASDA

Chris Ashton, Director, International Wine Challenge, said, *“The International Wine Challenge is about recognising excellence at every level of the wine industry, from the producers creating world-class wines to the retailers, suppliers, educators and hospitality businesses helping bring those wines to consumers. I'd like to congratulate all of this year's Industry Award winners, whose expertise, passion and innovation continue to strengthen the UK wine trade and raise standards across the sector.”*

The full list of IWC award winners can be seen [here](#), and the winners of the IWC Industry Awards can be seen [here](#).

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Now in its 42nd year, the International Wine Challenge is recognised as one of the world's most respected and influential wine competitions. Under its new global regional structure, wines are judged blind by international panels of experts across the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and the UK, combining regional

insight with international perspective while maintaining the benchmark standards for which the IWC is known.

The International Wine Challenge brings together its UK Co-Chairs — Sam Caporn MW, Peter McCombie MW, Helen McGinn and Dr Jamie Goode — alongside Judge Emeritus Oz Clarke OBE and International Co-Chairs including Cathy van Zyl MW, Erin Larkin, Yang Lu MS and Kenichi Ohashi MW (Asia-Pacific); Matías Prezioso, Patricio Tapia and Christy Canterbury MW (Americas); and Ken Ohashi MW, Simon Hofstra, Åke Nordgren, Natsuki Kikuya and Jennifer Docherty MW (Sake). Together, they deliver the world's most internationally representative wine competition.

All medal-winning wines are tasted blind through multiple rounds of judging. Wines are awarded Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, as well as Commended accolades. Gold medal-winning wines progress to Trophy judging, and the very best examples in each category go on to contest the competition's highest honours, the International Trophies. The Challenge also recognises outstanding individual achievement through its Champion Winemaker awards, which celebrate the winemakers behind the competition's most exceptional wines.

The International Wine Challenge is committed to helping consumers discover great wine, and the medals displayed on winning bottles offer a trusted guarantee of quality.

For more information on the International Wine Challenge, please contact the IWC team at Phipps

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