



International Wine Challenge 2026 crowns Champion Wines and Winemakers



Left: IWC White Winemaker of the Year, Estelle Roy from La Chablisienne, Burgundy, France; Right: IWC Red Winemaker of the Year, Javier Martínez de Salinas from Bodegas Olarra, Rioja, Spain

9th September 2026 - The [International Wine Challenge](#) (IWC), the world's most influential, impartial and rigorously judged global wine competition, has revealed its Champion Wines and Winemakers of the Year for 2026. Five wines from France, Argentina, Italy and Portugal claimed the competition's highest honours across sparkling, white, red, sweet and fortified categories, while leading winemakers from Australia, France, Spain and Austria were recognised for their achievements across the same five styles.

FRANCE dominates with two Champion Wines and White Winemaker of the Year

France retained its position at the top of the IWC medal table, winning 849 medals, including a competition-leading 67 Gold medals and 14 Trophies. Champagne led the world's regional Gold medal table with 28 Golds, closely followed by Burgundy with 26. While Burgundy dominated the top red wine awards last year, in 2026 the region secured two of the competition's ten Champion spots for its white wines.

- **Rare Champagne's** Rare Magnum 2012 was awarded **Champion Sparkling Wine (Daniel Thibault Trophy)**. The 98-point Champagne was one of the joint highest-scoring wines in the competition, praised by judges for its balance of power and finesse, layered citrus and hazelnut character and exceptionally long finish.

- **Maison Albert Bichot's** Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru Domaine du Pavillon 2024 was crowned **Champion White Wine**. The 97-point Burgundy had already secured four Trophies, including the *White Burgundy Trophy* and *French White Trophy*.
- Completing a trio of top honours for France, **Estelle Roy of La Chablisienne** was named **White Winemaker of the Year**, an accolade she also won in 2024. Earlier this year, La Chablisienne's wines won three Gold medals and two Trophies, reinforcing Burgundy's position as one of the defining regions of this year's competition.

ARGENTINA is home to the world's Champion Red Wine

Mendoza underlined its reputation as one of the world's leading fine wine regions, winning 10 of Argentina's 11 Gold medals and producing the IWC's Champion Red Wine.

- **Huentala Wines' Huentala Calizo Albar Block 06 Malbec 2023** was crowned **Champion Red Wine**. The 97-point wine had already collected the *Mendoza Malbec Trophy*, *Argentinian Malbec Trophy* and *Argentinian Red Trophy*.

ITALY celebrates the world's best sweet wine

Italy rose from fifth to fourth place in the global medal table with wines from Piedmont, Veneto, Campania and Franciacorta all featured among the country's strongest performers. However, it was a sweet wine from Tuscany that secured one of the competition's ten top accolades.

- **Tenuta di Capezzana** was awarded **Champion Sweet Wine (Alois Kracher Trophy)** for the third year running. Its 97-point Vinsanto Capezzana Riserva 2018 continues an exceptional run for the producer and was described by judges as "deliciously decadent with crushed biscuit and almond flavours topped with honey and apricot."
- **Derbusco Cives' Franciacorta Pas Dosé Épique 2016** was named **Best Wine in First Year of Production**. The 96-point wine also won the *Franciacorta Trophy* and *Italian Sparkling Trophy*.

PORTUGAL triumphs with one of the highest-scoring wines in the competition

Portugal climbed from fourth place in 2025 to third in the global medal rankings in 2026, while a Gold success rate of just over 9% placed Portugal among the strongest-performing wine-producing countries. The Douro led the country's performance with 23 Gold medals, making it the strongest-performing region outside France in the 2026 competition.

- **Menin's Porto Tawny 80 Anos** was awarded **Champion Fortified Wine (Manuel Lozano Trophy)**. Scoring 98 points, it was one of the joint highest-scoring wines of IWC 2026 and had already won both the *Tawny Port Trophy* and *Port Trophy*. Judges highlighted its classic treacle, toffee, fig and prune aromas, with apricot and cocoa nib notes on the palate.

AUSTRALIA's Ed Carr named Sparkling Winemaker of the Year

Australia maintained its reputation for world-class sparkling wine, with Tasmania producer House of Arras once again among the competition's top performers.

- **Ed Carr of House of Arras** was named **Sparkling Winemaker of the Year** for the second time. The accolade follows another exceptional year for the producer, which secured four Gold

medals. House of Arras Grand Vintage 2017 also scored 96 points and was awarded the *Australian Sparkling Trophy*.



IWC Sparkling Winemaker of the Year, Ed Carr of House of Arras, Tasmania, Australia

SPAIN makes history with two of the world's best winemakers

Spain retained second place in the global medal table in 2026, underlining its strength across a diverse range of wine styles. The country also produced two of this year's Winemakers of the Year.

- For the first time in IWC history, **Red Winemaker of the Year** was awarded to a winemaker from Spain. **Javier Martínez de Salinas** of Bodegas Olarra received the accolade after the Rioja winery won 19 medals, including Gold medals for Olarra Clásico Reserva 2021 and Reciente Reserva 2021.
- **Sergio Martínez** of Emilio Lustau was named **Fortified Winemaker of the Year** for the seventh time and the third consecutive year. The latest win follows another impressive competition for Emilio Lustau, whose wines secured the *Amontillado Trophy*, *Cream Sherry Trophy* and *Pedro Ximénez Trophy*. Martínez said, "This is amazing, this is a dream."



IWC Fortified Winemaker of the Year, Sergio Martínez of Emilio Lustau, Jerez, Spain

AUSTRIA's sweet wine master extends an extraordinary record

Austria's reputation for exceptional sweet wines was reinforced once again, with Hans Tschida extending one of the most remarkable winning records in IWC history.

- **Hans Tschida** of Hans Tschida Angerhof was named **Sweet Winemaker of the Year**. This marks the sixth consecutive year he has received the title and the twelfth time since 2010.

The latest accolade follows another strong performance for the Burgenland producer, whose sweet wines secured three Gold medals and one Trophy in the 2026 competition. Tschida said, *“This is so fantastic and wonderful. We are so happy. It shows that there is no compromise in the way that we make our wines.”*



IWC Sweet Winemaker of the Year, Hans Tschida of Hans Tschida Angerhof, Burgenland, Austria

The lifetime achievement award went to Pieter Ferreira, the legendary founding cellar master and COO at Graham Beck. Known globally as Mr Bubbles, Ferreira is known for defining South Africa’s premier Cap Classique sparkling wine industry. Ferreira said, *“It is important that we recognise the contribution of the many Cap Classique producers who have taken this category forward. There are so many talented people who have worked incredibly hard over the years. We have learnt from each other, challenged each other and, ultimately, raised the quality of the category.”* Ferreira now produces boutique wines with his wife Anne under their own Pieter Ferreira Cap Classique label.

IWC Champion Wines 2026

France	Rare Magnum 2012, Rare Champagne	IWC Champion Sparkling Wine 2026 – Daniel Thibault Trophy , Champagne Trophy, Classic Blend Vintage Champagne Trophy
	Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru Domaine du Pavillon 2024, Maison Albert Bichot	IWC Champion White Wine 2026 , International Chardonnay Trophy, French White Trophy, White Burgundy Trophy, Corton Charlemagne Trophy
Argentina	Huental Calizo Albar Block 06 Malbec 2023, Huental Wines	IWC Champion Red Wine 2026 , Argentinian Red Trophy, Argentinian Malbec Trophy, Mendoza Malbec Trophy
Italy	Vinsanto Capezzana Riserva 2018, Tenuta di Capezzana	IWC Champion Sweet Wine 2026 – Alois Kracher Trophy , Italian Sweet Trophy
	Franciacorta Pas Dosé Épique 2016, Derbusco Cives	IWC Best Wine in First Year of Production 2026 , Italy Sparkling Trophy, Franciacorta Trophy
Portugal	Menin Porto Tawny 80 Anos, Menin	IWC Champion Fortified Wine 2026 – Manuel Lozano Trophy , Port Trophy, Tawny Port Trophy

IWC Winemakers of the Year 2026

Australia	Ed Carr, House of Arras	IWC Sparkling Winemaker of the Year 2026
France	Estelle Roy, La Chablisienne	IWC White Winemaker of the Year 2026
Spain	Javier Martínez de Salinas, Bodegas Olarra	IWC Red Winemaker of the Year 2026
Austria	Hans Tschida, Hans Tschida Angerhof	IWC Sweet Winemaker of the Year 2026
Spain	Sergio Martínez, Emilio Lustau	IWC Fortified Winemaker of the Year 2026

Chris Ashton, Director, International Wine Challenge, said, *'The Champion Wines and Winemakers of the Year represent the very highest level of achievement at the International Wine Challenge. Each winning wine has succeeded through a series of rigorous blind tastings by an international panel of experts, while the individual awards recognise winemakers whose skill, consistency and dedication have placed them at the forefront of their field. This year's winners demonstrate the extraordinary quality and diversity found across the global wine industry.'*

The full list of Trophy and Champion winners at the 2026 International Wine Challenge announced on 8th September can be viewed [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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