



Success for Hampshire at the International Wine Challenge

Local wine legend Gerard Basset awarded the lifetime achievement award and Hampshire businesses scoop merchant prizes

At this year's International Wine Challenge (IWC) Merchant Awards UK Hampshire had much to celebrate, bringing home this year's awards for IWC Specialist Merchant Germany and IWC Specialist Merchant Fortified. In addition, renowned wine industry figure and former New Forest resident Gerard Basset was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at the IWC Awards.

IWC Specialist Merchant Germany 2019 went to [The WineBarn](#), Winchester, again retaining the title from 2018. With a list containing over 140 German Rieslings alone, the judges were impressed by the amazing choice of German wines that the WineBarn had to offer.

Fordingbridge's [Vintage Wine and Port](#) took home the prize for IWC Specialist Merchant Fortified 2019. The Fordingbridge shop is housed in a beautiful 1830s building, and is now the UK's largest retailer of vintage wine and port gifts online, housing nearly 25,000 bottles in its cellars.

This follows on from the success of local Hampshire winery **Raimes**, which won a sought-after Gold medal in the wine judging for the International Wine Challenge with its Classic Brut 2014 Sparkling, scooping up an impressive 95 out of 100 points. It was one of only two English wines to win a Gold medal in its stage of the competition. Raimes winery is a family-run vineyard that planted its first vines in 2010 and has already won many accolades to which vineyards across the world aspire. The winery exclusively plants Chardonnay, Pinot Meunier and Pinot Noir (the Champagne trio of grapes), which are all perfectly suited to the chalky slopes of the South Downs. All of its wines are made in the traditional Champagne method, using only its own grapes. The family's passion really shines through in everything that they do in the vineyard, which they run alongside a fully working farm in Hampshire.

Much-loved sommelier-turned-hotelier **Gerard Basset**, who passed away in January, was also honoured at the awards ceremony. The award comes a month after a Service of Thanksgiving at Winchester Cathedral for the remarkable life of Gerard Basset. His career included being the first to simultaneously hold the Master of Wine, Master Sommelier, MBA Wine Business and MSc from the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, and being a founding partner in the ground-breaking Hotel du Vin group.

In its 36th year, the International Wine Challenge is accepted as the world's most rigorous, impartial and influential wine competition. The International Wine Challenge Merchant Awards UK celebrate the most successful small and large businesses, who deliver an outstanding service to wine consumers. The awards are based on top quality wines, but, most importantly, in this sector of the awards, of a commercially successful, viable, and proven business model. This year's winners were announced on 9th July and the full list of those awarded can be seen [here](#), and the [Merchant Awards results here](#).

NOTES TO EDITORS:

The International Wine Challenge

In its 36th year, the International Wine Challenge is accepted as the world's most rigorous, impartial and influential wine competition. The IWC assesses every wine 'blind' and judges each for its faithfulness to style, region and vintage. Each medal-winning wine is tasted on at least three separate occasions by a minimum of 12

different judges including Masters of Wine. Awards include medals (Gold, Silver, Bronze) and Commended awards.

The IWC Merchant Awards UK

The Merchant Awards were introduced to the IWC in 1990. A distinguished panel of judges examines each entry and, over the course of two days, decides on the winners for each category. The judges focus on the business side of retailing; it's not just about having great wines. This year the judging panel comprised Laura Jewell MW, Helen McGinn, Peter McCombie MW, Tim Atkin MW and Charles Metcalfe. Laure Patry joined the team to assist with the judging of the Restaurant Wine List award.

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

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