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INTERNATIONAL WINE CHALLENGE ANNOUNCES NEW GLOBAL REGIONAL STRUCTURE

**Four regional competitions to launch across the Americas, Asia Pacific,
Europe and the UK as IWC enters a new chapter**



The International Wine Challenge, widely regarded as one of the world's most influential, impartial and meticulously judged wine competitions, has announced a major new regional structure that will see the competition evolve into four regional wine competitions across the Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and the United Kingdom, while maintaining the international standards and blind tasting process that have made IWC one of the wine world's most respected benchmarks.

The new structure will launch from July 2026, with entries opening for both IWC Americas and IWC Asia Pacific ahead of their first judging events later this year in Mendoza, Argentina and Adelaide, Australia.

Under the new format, wines will continue to be judged blind by expert panels within their regions before Gold medal-winning wines progress to London for International Trophy judging.

The move marks the most significant evolution in the history of the International Wine Challenge and reflects the changing geography of the global wine industry, with a greater focus on regional engagement, accessibility and producer connection.

The new competition structure includes:

IWC Americas

Mendoza, Argentina
2–6 November 2026

IWC Asia Pacific

Adelaide, Australia
30 November – 4 December 2026

IWC Europe

Montpellier, France
12–16 April 2027

IWC UK

London, United Kingdom
10–14 May 2027

Gold medal-winning wines from all regional competitions will then progress to London for International Trophy judging on 15 May 2027, followed by the IWC Awards in September 2027 at Guildhall, London.

Chris Ashton, Chairman of the International Wine Challenge, said:

“IWC remains the global benchmark, but closer to home. Wine is global, but wine communities are regional. The new IWC structure has been designed to bring the competition closer to the producers, people and places shaping the future of wine, while protecting the integrity and international benchmark standards that IWC is built on.

“For producers, this means greater regional visibility, stronger local engagement and a more accessible route into one of the wine world’s most recognised competitions. What does not change is the standard. Wines will continue to be judged blind by leading experts, with the very best progressing to International Trophy judging in London.”

Alongside the regional competitions, IWC has also announced the appointment of Regional Co-Chairs who will help lead judging, regional engagement and ambassador activity across

each geography, working alongside the existing Global Co-Chairs who continue to oversee standards, Trophy judging and the wider international benchmark of the competition.

The new Regional Co-Chairs include some of the wine world's most respected voices from wine production, buying, journalism, education and the sommelier profession, bringing unparalleled local expertise and global perspective to every stage of judging.

Interview opportunities with the newly appointed Regional Co-Chairs are available on request.

Oz Clarke OBE will move to a new position of Judge Emeritus, to bring his extensive experience in the competition to assist the new team of Co-Chairs.

The UK Co-Chairs — **Sam Caporn MW, Peter McCombie MW, Helen McGinn and Dr Jamie Goode.**

The new Regional Co-Chairs include an exceptional line-up of internationally recognised wine experts:

Asia Pacific Co-Chairs - **Cathy van Zyl MW** (South Africa), **Erin Larkin** (Australia), **Yang Lu MS** (China), and **Kenichi Ohashi MW** (Japan)

Americas Co-Chairs, **Matías Prezioso** (Argentina), **Patricio Tapia** (Chile), and **Christy Canterbury MW** (United States)

Sake Co-Chairs - **Kenichi Ohashi MW** (Japan), **Simon Hofstra** (Netherlands), **Åke Nordgren** (Sweden) **Natsuki Kikuya** (Japan) and **Jennifer Docherty MW** (Canada/Hong Kong)

Together, they represent some of the most respected voices in global wine and sake, bringing unrivalled regional expertise to the International Wine Challenge judging process.

Europe Co-Chairs will be announced in autumn 2026.



Yang Lu MS, Regional Co-Chair, IWC Asia Pacific, said:

"Wine reflects the places where it is grown, so it is fitting that judging should become more closely connected to those regions while maintaining a single international standard. The new structure brings the International Wine Challenge closer to producers, while preserving the independence, rigour and blind tasting process that have earned its global reputation."

The new structure has also been designed to reduce international shipping requirements, strengthen regional trade relationships and allow the International Wine Challenge to bring leading judges closer to the wines, producers and cultures they are assessing.

Regional competitions will include judges drawn from across the international wine trade, including winemakers, buyers, sommeliers, journalists and educators, combining regional expertise with international perspective.

The launch is accompanied by a newly redesigned International Wine Challenge website, reflecting the competition's new regional structure and providing dedicated regional hubs, local leadership and information for producers entering from around the world.

The International Wine Challenge was founded in London in 1984 and today judges thousands of wines and sake from across the world through a multi-stage blind tasting process.

Entries for IWC Americas open on 1 July 2026 with IWC Asia Pacific following later on in July.

For more information, visit the newly redesigned website: internationalwinechallenge.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The International Wine Challenge

Now entering 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 stages of judging before results are confirmed, with Gold medal wines progressing to International Trophy. Awards include medals (Gold, Silver, Bronze) and Commended awards. Trophies are awarded to the very best wines in each category.

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.

Interview opportunities are available with all IWC Regional Co-Chairs on request.

For more information on the IWC, please contact the IWC team at Phipps.
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