

Wine Travel Awards' first edition: success at the London Wine Fair



In 2021, as a reaction to the coronavirus crisis the whole wine world was finally convinced of the need for the digitalization of their businesses. The Communication Media Group Drinks+ did not stay aside from this new opportunity and created a new global project dedicated to wine tourism – the Wine Travel Awards (WTA). Ironically, the online-offline hybrid strategy that was a core of the concept helped not only members of the WTA community to demonstrate their business-models to the world, but became a lifeboat to the media group and its team itself. Less than 6 months after launching the WTA, Putin began his invasion of Ukraine, where the Wine Travel Awards had their head office and where 70% of the team worked.

However, despite the Russian war in Ukraine and this being just the first year of the project and a startup spin-off, since the first days of existence the WTA has managed to bring together the leading experts in the field of wine and wine tourism from 30 different countries.

As the result of an exciting first campaign year, with extreme pride from the team and community members, **the First Wine Travel Awards Ceremony happened at the London Wine Fair in the “Industry Briefing Room” on June 8th, 2022** as a private event. The Wine Travel Awards Ceremony highlighted the results of the 2021-2022 campaign, where the winners of both public voting and professional jury

selection were appraised and new and prosperous names in the wine tourism business were revealed.

The 2-hour program agenda included a presentation of the project and its partners, announcement of the winners and WTA discoveries, and a walk-around tasting of wines of the WTA community members. Among the walk-around tasting participants, there were international nominees: **F.W. Langguth Erben (Germany), Castel Mimi (Moldova), Shumi Winery (Georgia), Chateau Mukhrani (Georgia), “Armenia Wine” Factory LLC (Armenia)**, as well as the nominees from **Ukraine: 46 Parallel Wine Group, Fathers Wine, Beykush Winery, Shabo Winery, Stakhovsky Wines, Prince Trubetskoi Winery, Honey Badger**. Some of these WTA members of Ukrainian origin are now under occupation or were destroyed.

The ceremony was attended by reputable WTA judges such as **Robert Joseph**, British wine expert, consultant, producer, an editorial consultant for Meininger's Wine Business International, **Felicity Carter**, Executive Editor, Pix+ Special Projects, and **Doctor Ricardo F. Nunez**, the owner of the Vinos de La Luz company, that just received three platinum medals at the Decanter, having won the opportunity to present the "platinum" bottle to Hannah Tovey, Event Director of the LWF.

The Consortium Asti DOCG, as an official sponsor of the WTA Ceremony, provided the guests with welcome drinks that demonstrated to the professionals gathered at the event how diverse Asti can be! Among the WTA Ceremony guests, there was Federica Zanghirella - Vice President of the UK Sommelier Association, another reputable organization that supported the WTA Ceremony.

All together the ceremony, which was invitation-only, received 80 VIP guests.

Presenting a WTA judge's perspective, **Robert Joseph** said during the ceremony: “When I was first invited to get involved with these awards, I thought really strongly about it. To be publishing in the Ukrainian magazine, that is not an easy place to be but I also had a personal interest because I did a book guide on wine tourism about 15 years ago, and I spent quite a lot of time looking at wine tourism all the years. And the variety of offerings across the world has exploded. As one of the judges of the WTA competition, I had a really hard time, there were a lot of really good entries. In my short list that I've got to evaluate, I thought everybody had the right to win and I would like to congratulate everybody that took part in this competition.”

The WTA results were published in The Wine Travel Awards Guide 2021-2022 which, since March 2022 and until the end of the year, have been distributed at the world's leading wine exhibitions and the WTA events, such as ProWein, London Wine Fair, Bordeaux Wine Week, etc.

Welcome the first-year edition's winners:

1. The Visiting Card of the Country

Must visit – #124 [Château Mukhrani](#) (Georgia)

Brand – the visiting card of the country – #33 [Vinaria Purcari](#) (Moldova)

Progressive approach – #160 [Frank](#) HYPERLINK

["https://winetravelawards.com/nominee/frank-john-winery/"](https://winetravelawards.com/nominee/frank-john-winery/) [John winery](#) (Germany)

Authentic location – #143 [Villa dei Misteri: the wine of Ancient Pompeii](#) (Italy)

Objet d'Art – #164 [Museo d'Impresa Mastroberardino Atripalda](#) (Italy)

2. Education in Enotourism

Unique program – #15 ["Master Class", the first sommelier school in Ukraine](#) (Ukraine)

Cultural mission – #136 [GuideMASTER Wine Tour Guide Program](#) (Armenia)

3. Enogastronomic Events

Magnet of the region – #152 [The Shumi Winery](#) (Georgia)

Effective event – #170 [London Wine Fair](#) (UK)

Event of the year – #150 [Yerevan Wine Days](#) (Armenia)

4. Ambassador

Ambassador of the year – #133 [Wine Paths](#) (France)

Creative strategy – #97 [Vinuri de Comrat](#) (Moldova)

5. Wine & Food Influencer

Author of the year – #34 [Alder Yarrow](#) (USA)

Research of the year – #159 [Wine consumption study](#) (Armenia)

Expert opinion – #38 [Alder Yarrow](#) (USA)

The brightest journey – #83 [AdVINEtures](#) (Canada)

6. Wine Guide

Guide of the year – #147 [Vini Armenian Wine Guide](#) (Armenia)

Unique route – #45 [Tanisha Townsend](#) (France)

Educational tour of the year – #109 [WineStatistics](#) (Romania)

All the winners received trophies and diplomas, rare wines from the WTA partners and educational courses and gift certificates from the most reputable wine tourism institutions. An additional bonus is that all the winners are automatically participating in the 2nd edition of the WTA campaign.

However, there are no losers in the Wine Travel Awards. And this is the main feature of the project: places and prizes are just the cherry on top. And the main dish of the project is a global tailored-made advertising campaign for each nominee that lasts throughout the year and includes both digital promotion and offline activities - such as participation in the world's largest wine exhibitions and private events of the WTA. Up to the London Wine Fair, the nominees have been presented in a number of events - in Ukraine, Italy, Spain, as well as in large-scale exhibitions - such as **ProWein** (5,700 exhibitors + 38,000 visitors from 145 countries) and **Vinitaly** (4,400

exhibitors and 25,000 visitors from 139 countries). Now it was the London Wine Fair. Followed by **the Balkans International Wine Competition 2022** (Greece) and the premiere of **Bordeaux Wine Week**. Taking into account the audiences, including online, to which information about the nominees of the Wine Travel Awards was presented, today the awareness of this project reaches the figure of almost half a million operators in the wine and tourism industry.

The WTA team appreciates all the help and support from **the London Wine Fair** that made this event possible. Besides, the London Wine Fair - one of the major events in the wine world, opened the doors, hearts and market of Great Britain for Ukrainian winemakers!

For the first time in the history of LWF and Ukraine, wines of Ukrainian producers were widely presented at the joint stand of **Wines of Ukraine** during this large-scale international event. To support Ukraine in times of hardship, the organisers of the LWF 2022 initiated the creation of a joint stand, and gave Ukrainian winemakers the opportunity to present their products for free. Logistic efforts and organisational costs were borne by LWF in cooperation with **Drinks+ Communication Media Group** and **Ukrsadvinprom** from the Ukrainian side. This stand located in the heart of LWF became a great success, as it had a little bit of everything - from entry-level drinks to high-price limited edition wines already with international recognition, such as Beykush winery. The winery is located in the area shelled by Russia and just won gold at Decanter wine awards. It was fantastic to see so many people with such a desire to understand and taste Ukrainian wines.

Volunteer at the Wines of Ukraine stand **Richard Bampfield MW** kindly left his feedback after tasting some Ukrainian products: "I liked EL CAPITAN Pinot Noir from 46 Parallel Wine Group. I thought the Brandy Aznauri XO 8 from Akkerman Distillery was particularly good. All 3 wines from Beykush Winery were excellent: Yafe Nagar 2019, Arbina 2019, Kara Kermen 2017. In my opinion, Beykush is the standout producer there. I got plenty of interest in and likes for the Pet-Nat White Blend 2020 and Orange wine from Biologist (doubts about the packaging...)."

Mr. Bampfield also noted that Chateau Chizay had good Furmint and Cabernet Franc, Shabo Winery - Telti Kuruk Grand Reserve 2017 and Cabernet Franc / Merlot / Saperavi 2019. Stakhovsky Wines - Merlot 2019, Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 and Saperavi 2018 - all 3 of these were very good. "I really enjoyed presenting them, they deserve UK distribution," added **Richard Bampfield MW** in the end.

Another volunteer of the Ukrainian wines stand **Bradley Horne**, Founder of WineTimeLondon, commented: "I really loved the vibe behind the LWF and wines of Ukraine stand, the passion from the staff and the volunteers was fabulous. Beykush Winery stood out to me, I love all the wines and the Arbina 2019 100% Rkatsiteli skin

contact was fantastic, great fruit characters - apricot, orange zest, limes - with stunning texture and balance; the skin contact well-judged and nice acidity.”

The WTA team has already prepared the ground for WTA 2022-2023 that will start officially on the 1st of September. Join the community and receive a year-long advertising campaign! You'll be highlighted in the WTA Discovery area <https://winetravelawards.com/> on the official website right away - and be automatically included in the WTA campaign next year, too!

Congratulations to the Wine Travel Awards first year edition winners! We wish all of you the future prosperity, growth and more victories you deserve!

Photo: Oleg Savca