



## **WineLovers Wine Awards: Results are in for one of the most significant International Wine Competitions in the CEE Region**

Judges from around the world gathered in Budapest to evaluate wines at the third annual WineLovers Wine Awards. This year, 868 wines were entered, establishing the competition as a prestigious event in terms of the number of entries.

From the beginning, the WineLovers Wine Awards has been distinguished by its international focus: this year, 22 countries and 60 wine regions were represented. The long-term goal is to become the most significant wine event in the Eastern and Central European region.

Hungarian wines performed well in all eight categories. Out of the 868 entries, six scored 95 or above and received the highest honor, the Grand Gold award. All six Grand Gold wines were from Tokaj-Hegyalja, including Tokaji Esszencia wine, Tokaji Aszú Wines, a Tokaji Fordítás, a dry Furmint, and a dry Hárslevelű. The highest score, 97 points, was awarded to the Matyisák Pince és Kádárüzem Tokaji Esszencia 2008.

The best reductive white wine was Hárslevelű 2021 from Dóka Éva Winery, and the best barrel-aged white wine was Balassa István "KAKAS" 2022 Tokaji Furmint. The best rosé went to Szentpéteri Borpince Nero Rosé 2023, and the best sparkling wine was Kreinbacher Birtok Extra Brut Magnum 2019.

The best fruit-forward red wine was Maul Zsolt Creator Kékfrankos 2020, and the best tannin-focused red wine was Fritz Birtok Primus Szekszárdi Cuvée Prémium 2020. The best sweet wine and best furmint were both the Matyisák Pince és Kádárüzem Tokaji Esszencia 2008. The best Olaszrizling was Illés Borászat Badacsony Holdkő 2022, the best kékfrankos was Fyrmonia Organic Winery Kékfrankos 2022, and the best indigenous white grape variety was Zsirai Pincészet Középhegy Tokaji Hárslevelű 2021.

The competition's top 100 wines came from 11 countries: the best ranking foreign wine was the 2022 Late Harvest Furmint from Ukraine's Chateau Chizay Winery (ranked 9th), followed by the 2016 Canyon (tannic red wine) from Azerbaijan's Savalan Aspi Winery (ranked 16th), and the Carassia Rosé Magnum sparkling wine from Romania's Carastelec Sparkling Winery (ranked 25th). Additionally, wines from France, Slovakia, Austria, Italy, Spain, South Africa, and the United States were represented in the top 100 wines of the competition.

The best Cabernet Sauvignon was the 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon from Romania's Pivnitele Birauas Winery. The Best of Chardonnay became the 2022 Battonage Chardonnay Selection from Slovakia's Csernus Winery & Vineyards. Romania's Recas winery won the Best of Syrah award with their 2021 vintage. Unplugged Zweigelt 2022 from Hannes Reeh GMBH, Austria received the award of the Best of Indigenous Black Grape Variety.

In total, 163 gold medals, 393 silver medals, and 222 bronze medals were awarded. The most successful Hungarian winery was Trifecta Wines with six gold medals, earning them the Winery of the Year title, while the most awarded foreign winery was Romania's Crama Girboiu with four gold medals.

The results and medals are available on the competition's website.

"Tokaji Aszú is undoubtedly among the best sweet wines in the world, and there were several examples this year that beautifully demonstrated this. These wines showcase extraordinary complexity alongside the balance of sugar content and vibrant acids," highlighted Caroline Gilby, Master of Wine, who has judged every year and this time specialized in sweet wines.

The Winelovers Wine Awards consistently invites renowned figures in the wine industry to serve as judges, including numerous Masters of Wine, Master Sommeliers, and acclaimed wine writers and consultants from Europe, the United States, and Asia.

Familiar faces like Essi Avellan MW, Caroline Gilby MW, and Julia Scavo, sommelier champion, appeared alongside new judges such as Jonas Röjerman MW from Sweden, Job de Swart MW from the Netherlands, and Piotr Pietras MS from Poland. Hungarian experts included Tamás Czinki MS, Sebastian Giraldo Makovej Advanced Sommelier, and Kristian Kielmayer DipWSET, Weinakademiker.

The competition's president and host for the third time was László Bálint DipWSET, instructor of the Wine College. Besides the experts, experienced tasters and buyers knowledgeable about wine trends participated as well, aiding wineries in establishing international connections.

Czinki Tamás MS emphasized the diversity of the judges: "Sommeliers, wine experts, wine bloggers, and marketing professionals were present, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the wines. The market doesn't always seek the perfect wine, and this diversity reflects that."

"In the current market situation, wineries most need help finding export markets. Thus, each year we increase the number of trade-oriented side events to help wineries establish business connections," said István Tábor, founder and owner of Winelovers.

Events like Winelovers X "trade tasting" provided informal opportunities for winemakers and buyers to meet. The "Meet the Buyer" event, a more structured occasion, allowed traders specifically looking for wines from Central and Eastern Europe to meet potential wineries in

10-minute sessions. "We aim to strengthen this strong B2B focus in the future," emphasized Mr. Tábor.

The results will be published in an English-language online brochure distributed to thousands of traders, wine experts, and journalists worldwide. The 100 best Hungarian wines will be featured in a print magazine, and the award-winning Hungarian wines from the Winelovers Wine Awards will be available for tasting at the Winelovers 100 Grand Tasting on 14th of September.

Web: <https://wineloverswineawards.com/>

Detailed results: <https://wineloverswineawards.com/2024-results>

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