



Table Service

May/June 2005

Raising the Standard of Service

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How the Academy has helped our careers and is raising the Sommelier's profile

Two of the Academy's most enthusiastic individual supporters are Ronan Sayburn and Matthew Wilkin, who earlier this year both gained their Master Sommelier Diploma, adding to a string of personal achievements which include winning the Champagne Ruinart UK Sommelier of the Year title (in 1998 and 2005 respectively) and the AFWS Dom Perignon Award for Excellence.

Working for Michelin starred establishments, both are also at the top of their profession within sommellerie, Ronan as chef Sommelier with Gordon Ramsay and Matt as group consultant Sommelier with the Capital Group. On behalf of the Academy they are closely involved with technical director, Gerard Basset, in developing the newly established **AFWS Wine Committee**.

They readily agree that the Academy has played a pivotal role in helping them further their careers. As Ronan recalls: "About ten years ago, I was working in a restaurant in Scarborough, realised that I particularly enjoyed the wine side, so wrote to Gerard for advice on becoming a Sommelier. He put me in touch with Henri Chapon, who was then at Le Manoir Aux Quat' Saisons, where I spent two years before joining a wine merchants to learn more about wine."

When Ronan joined Gordon Ramsay as Sommelier six years ago, there was just the one restaurant. With the opening of Maze this May there are now eight and he has been closely involved in setting up wine lists appropriate to each, while remaining head Sommelier at the Chelsea flagship.

For Matt, who arrived here in 1999 with ten years' experience in restaurants and wineries in his native Australia behind him: "London is the mecca to gain knowledge and experience about worldwide wines. There are simply not the same job

or educational opportunities in Australia. However, until I arrived here, I wasn't aware just how much camaraderie and pro-active help there was in the UK, particularly through the Academy, the Court of Master Sommeliers and WSET."

Both believe that the Academy, particularly through the competitions it organises and the opportunities it provides to meet other like-minded professionals, plays a crucial part in highlighting the Sommelier's professional skills. Says Ronan: "In too many businesses wines are neglected. The national competitions show that having somebody there to select, serve and promote wines alongside the food is profitable for any establishment."

"Participating in competitions has definitely helped my career," adds Matt, who this year took the



Ronan Sayburn urges ambitious young people to take advantage of the Academy's expertise

national title at the sixth attempt, a d v a n c i n g progressively each year, from regional finalist in 2000 to reaching the last four finals. "Of course you have to put the work in yourself but to win the Ruinart competition and achieve the MS you need the support and encouragement

of others." Through their active involvement with the **AFWS Wine Committee**, both are committed to putting something back, by helping the Academy raise the profile of Sommellerie in the UK, encouraging young people to enter the profession and identifying and nurturing home grown talent. "Establishing a Sommelier qualification would be a very important development for



Matt Wilkin welcomes the camaraderie and pro-active help Academy contact brings the Academy and the industry," they agree.

Under another proposal, also being considered by the **AFWS Wine Committee**, college lecturers would be invited to single out their best beverage students with the objective of fast-tracking them into sommellerie. The idea is to bring, say, ten lecturers and students to London for a day's introduction to the major restaurants and their Sommeliers, a wine tasting and practical skills session. "One day which would give them an insight and an opportunity to decide if they would like to become Sommeliers," explains Ronan.

Pointing out that "the UK restaurant scene is one of the most dynamic, diverse and talented in the world," he added, "there are enough opportunities for ambitious people. The industry is crying out for Sommeliers and by taking advantage of the Academy's expertise, young people can develop skills and knowledge which will advance their careers".

And, emphasising that there is always another target to aim for, Matt reveals that a future personal ambition is to attain dual Anglo/Australian nationality "so that I can qualify to compete for Ruinart's European Trophy", he said.

Catch up with the Academy's news on www.acfws.org

Academy Awards 2005

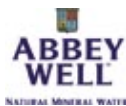
New venue and new features

For its **Annual Awards 2005**, taking place on Thursday 22 September, the Academy moves to a splendid new venue at the historic Fishmongers' Hall, London Bridge. We have also added some new features and will welcome new sponsors, to our established awards and presentations, which acknowledge individual and corporate achievements and contributions to the Academy's work during the past year.

New elements for 2005 are: a travel scholarship to Germany; a competition to determine the winner of our cigar service travel award; and the opportunity for a successful catering student to gain work experience in a top restaurant. You can read more about these awards and the entry criteria elsewhere on this page.

The Academy Awards 2005 are:

- The Dom Perignon Award for Excellence
- Savoy Educational Trust Sommelier Scholarship, in conjunction with Levin Wines
- Hunters & Frankau Cigar Service Travel Award
- Wine of Australia Travel Award
- Wines of Germany Travel Award
- Philip Thornton Award
- Aramark College of the Year
- Johansens Company of the Year



New Award recognises student achievement

This year, one successful catering student can look forward to gaining invaluable practical experience through the new annual *Philip Thornton Award*. The original proposal for an Award focusing on youthful achievement came from the Thornton family. The award will be made to the college student who gains the highest marks in the City



& Guilds Food and Drink Service Level 2 qualification, currently offered nationally at over 70 further education establishments. Tutors will be invited to nominate candidates for consideration.

The prize includes a week's food service work experience in a first class restaurant in the UK (with travel and accommodation), plus a cheque.



AFWS Travel Awards 2005

In co-operation with our sponsors, the Academy's Awards for 2005 include three Travel Scholarships, each offering one lucky recipient an invaluable 'in the field' opportunity to further his or her knowledge and understanding of a production region. This year they are **Australia, Cuba and Germany**.

As announced elsewhere on this page, the winner of the *AFWS Havana Cigar Service Award*, sponsored by **Hunters & Frankau**, will be decided through the inaugural *UK HabanoSommelier Contest 2005*. Winners of the

AFWS Australia Travel Award, sponsored by **Wine of Australia**, and the *AFWS Germany Travel Award*, sponsored by **Wines of Germany**, will be decided through written entries on a set theme, as follows:

Australia Travel Award

Theme: What would you do to promote Australian wines as food wines in your establishment?

Entries, for example, can take the form of a written essay; or a visual approach, such as a proposed 'by the glass' list or a suggested tent card/blackboard promotion.

In addition to the travel scholarship, the prize also includes a tutored tasting by the Australian Wine Board for all staff at the winner's establishment.

Germany Travel Award

Theme: Entrants will be required to complete a short questionnaire about German wines and submit a 250 word response to the following question: 'Do you think German Riesling is a versatile food match and why?'

The winner will travel, in April 2006, to *Mainzer Weinbörse*, the prestigious annual German wine fair organised by the VDP, which represents some of the country's prominent wineries.

This fair will be the showcase for the 2005 vintage, featuring wines from 150 exhibitors. The prize also includes a short tour around the wineries of a local wine growing region.

Further details will be published in the next issue of *Table Service* (July/August). If you would like more information about the *AFWS Travel Awards* and how to enter, do contact *Sophie Brown* on tel: 020 8943 1011 or email: info@acfws.org

AFWS joins with Hunters & Frankau to launch UK HabanoSommelier Contest

Put your Cuban cigar knowledge and service skills to the test!

In a competition which mirrors Cuba's annual *World HabanoSommelier Contest*, the AFWS has joined with **Hunters & Frankau** to launch the *UK HabanoSommelier Contest 2005*. The winner will also receive the company's travel scholarship to Havana at the *AFWS Annual Awards 2005*.

To qualify, entrants for the UK contest should meet at least ONE of the following criteria:

- Sell *Hunters & Frankau* Cuban cigars in their establishment;
- Have reached the Finals of the *UK Wine Waiter of the Year* competition;
- Be a past winner of the annual *UK Quizmaster* event; or
- Be a current or past member of the *AFWS*.

Initial entries will be assessed by judges from the *AFWS* and **Hunters & Frankau**, chaired by the latter's *Simon Chase*. From these, ten candidates will be chosen to go forward to the

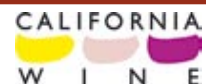
semi-final and final, which both take place on 5 September 2005 at *Claridge's*, London. To help



Candidates will be tested on their knowledge of Cuban cigar sizes and flavours as well as service style

them prepare, entrants will receive literature from **H&F** in advance of the competition. On the day, the morning phase of the competition will comprise a written examination followed by a practical exercise. During lunch, *Simon Chase* will announce the three finalists who will compete in the afternoon's written and practical exercises.

The winner will attend the February 2006 *Festival del Habano* in Havana and represent the UK at the *World HabanoSommelier Finals*, won this year for the first time by the UK's *Björn Eriksson*, from *Claridge's Fumoir Bar*. Deadline for entries is 15 July - further details are available through *Sophie Brown* at the *AFWS* on tel: 020 8943 1011; fax: 020 8977 7802 email: info@acfws.org



The Academy has linked up with **California Wine** to launch the first-ever tasting of this region's wines specifically geared to those working in, and buying for, hotels, restaurants and bars. The *California Wine Hotel and Restaurant Tasting* takes place on Monday, 13 June 2005, from 10.30am-4.30pm in the Ballroom at *Claridge's* Hotel in London. Designed to introduce the region's diversity - both in style and price - the tasting will be laid out with busy *Sommeliers* in mind. Wines will be presented entirely by varietals, rather than importer, and will reflect a wide price spectrum. Whether you are looking to expand your range of wines by the glass, add a new house wine, or find specific wines to recommend with signature dishes, this is the ideal forum for you to discover and explore *California's* potential for your wine list.

Further details are available from the *AFWS* on tel: 020 8943 1011



Action highlights from this year's national finals

As we reported in the last issue of *Table Service*, Matthew Wilkin, group Sommelier for the Capital Hotel group, triumphed in the Champagne Ruinart UK Sommelier of the Year finals, held at the London Hilton on Park Lane. He pipped runners-up Claire Thevenot (Hotel du Vin, Winchester) and Nicolas Clerc (Summer Lodge Hotel, Evershot) to take the 2005 title in a closely fought competition in which all three contestants scored over 200 out of 260 possible marks.

As chairman of the judges, David Molyneux-Berry MW, commented: "All three did incredibly well and today's competition produced the highest level of quality I've seen in both Theory and Tasting."

Our pictures of the three finalists in action reflect the challenge of nerve and skill as, orchestrated

liqueurs presented in black glasses designed by Riedel, which gave no visual clues to colour or appearance, so making the task even more difficult!

After identifying factual errors on a wine list, cigar product and service followed, as each finalist presented and described the



Nicolas Clerc handles a pressurised restaurant scenario

by master of ceremonies, **Rodney Briant-Evans**, they performed practical and knowledge tests on stage in front of a live audience. These included a pressurised restaurant scenario – meeting the differing requests of six demanding 'customers' - and a blind tasting of six spirits and

contents of a humidor, before recommending and lighting a cigar each for two 'guests'. In keeping with tradition, all three came on stage together for the spectacular finale – filling 16 glasses evenly from a magnum of Ruinart champagne in one continuous pour.



Congratulating all three finalists, Champagne Ruinart's President, Bernard Peillon, looked forward to strengthening and widening the competition's visibility and so raising industry and general public awareness of the professional Sommelier's skills.

Left: Claire Thevenot during the blind tasting, when Riedel's black glasses proved an extra challenge
Below: Matthew Wilkin in a title-winning performance



technical director); **Simon Chase** (Hunters & Frankau); **Richard Edwards** MI FHCIMA (AFWS chairman); **Susanna Forbes**



AFWS chairman, Richard Edwards, then thanked all those involved in the competition's success, among them our judging panel: **David Molyneux-Berry** MW (chairman); **Nick Adams** MW (Lay & Wheeler); **Tim Atkin** MW (wine critic of *The Observer*); **Gerard Basset** MS MW (AFWS

(wine contributor to *Square Meal*); and **Ronan Sayburn** MS (head Sommelier, Gordon Ramsay Restaurants).

He also thanked sponsors: **Abbey Well**; **Allied Domecq**; **Hilton UK**; **Hunters & Frankau**; **Lay & Wheeler**; **Quadrant Services**; and **Riedel UK**.



All three finalists on stage for the champagne 'pour'

An award winning performance in Havana

as the UK's Björn Eriksson clinches World HabanoSommelier title

Having found out about 2003's Travel Scholarship to Cuba after the deadline had passed, I made sure that I would not miss the chance last year! A few weeks later, I received a very welcome phone call from the AFWS. When receiving the award, I discovered that I would also be representing the UK in the International Habano Sommelier competition.

This meant that some quite intense studying had to take place in the months leading up to departure. The trip would take place during the annual *Festival del Habano*, a week-long event dedicated to Havana cigars that gathers enthusiasts from all corners of the world.

During the following weeks, my expectations and excitement about the trip grow more and more, as regular guests and colleagues found out about the scholarship and started telling me about their own adventures in Cuba. This would be a perfect opportunity to get first hand



Björn Eriksson (left) 'on location' in Cuba with Simon Chase

experience of the production of cigars as well as visiting a place that everyone described to me as truly unique.

On 19 February 2005, we left for Havana. After the flight, the group gathered for well-deserved mojitos on the terrace of the Hotel Nacional. Soon we all stopped complaining about the effects of the flight when informed that London had received its first snow of the year.

The week which followed excelled all expectations. Our host, Simon Chase of Hunters & Frankau, had arranged a

programme taking in legendary sites such as the famous El Laguito factory as well as the Hoyo de Monterrey plantation. Walking between the shoulder high tobacco in the fields and then taking in the heady aroma of the fermenting tobacco in the sorting and stripping house was a joy for all senses.

During the week, we also attended a master class on rolling cigars, an event marrying whisky and cigars attended by the British ambassador to Cuba and had the opportunity to meet the cigar brands master blenders and factory directors.

The evenings, however, were strictly dedicated to having a good time attending the dinners and cocktail parties which are part of the annual festival.

The trip culminated on the Friday with the final of the Habano Sommelier competition and a gala dinner. Having reached the final of the competition through a preliminary contest that took place earlier in the week, I must admit to feeling a bit of pressure! Luckily, I was armed with some very useful advice provided by Matthew Wilkin prior to leaving for Cuba.

The final was very even but I managed to clinch the first spot, closely followed by the Cuban and French contestants. After attending the gala dinner that evening we all ended up where we started our visit, on the hotel's terrace overlooking the sea sharing experiences from the past week. Now I am looking forward to claiming the competition's prize - another visit to Havana next February!

Skill Build Seminars

The Academy's current series of regional Skill Build seminars continues – dates and venues are:

13 June Newport

Celtic Manor Resort

20 June Lake District

Lakeside Hotel, Newby Bridge,
Lake Windermere

27 June Edinburgh

Carlton Hotel

11 July Blackpool

Hilton Blackpool

Among our sponsors for these last four before our summer break are Canada's Mission Hill (Marne & Champagne); Faustino (Cellar Trends); Wines of

Bordeaux; Rioja Wines; Hunters & Frankau; Edinburgh Wine Importers (fortified wines); and Abbey Well.

Take this opportunity to secure a free place for members of your front-of-house service team at the local seminar of your choice. To register please e-mail the AFWS at: info@acfws.org

DIAGEO



Focus on after dinner whiskies at RAC Pall Mall seminar

Our Skill Builds seminar held in April at the RAC Pall Mall in London introduced a new element to the 'after dinner' session. Thanks to Diageo Reserve Brands and Roger Mallindine, delegates were introduced to the concept of whisky as a digestif, to be enjoyed after a meal with coffee and perhaps a cigar. They tasted a range of single malts including: Clynelish 14 year old and Glen Ord 12 year old (differing styles from the Northern



Highlands); Glen Elgin 12 year old (Speyside); Talisker 10 year old (Isle of Skye); and Caol Ila 12 year old (Islay).

The day's regional sessions included presentations by Hallgarten and Canada's Mission Hill (courtesy Marne & Champagne). Our thanks to all the presenters and suppliers and, particularly to our host, Simon Allen, for making this unique venue available to the Academy.

Buy your AFWS training programmes on line at www.acfws.org

All seven of the Academy's training programmes are now available for purchase on-line. It couldn't be easier. Visit our website at www.acfws.org and just click on the Training Packs link for further details. Our study packs cover four areas in front-of-house service – Food, Wine, Bar, or Meetings and Events – and Customer Service at three levels – Frontline Staff, Supervisory or Management. Using these tools, employers can deliver tailored on-the-job training or individuals can progress at their own rate through self-study.

At £125+VAT each to AFWS Members and £200+VAT to non-members, these offer superb value to smaller businesses.

College students get a taste of Bordeaux wines

Through its involvement with the National College Network the Academy recently organised two tutorials which introduced students at Westminster Kingsway College and Thames Valley University to the concept of food and wine matching featuring Bordeaux wines.

Taking six of this versatile region's dry white, red and dessert wines our presenter, wine educator Patricia Green, first guided her young audience at Westminster Kingsway College through the basic principles of wine tasting. The same wines were then sampled against a variety of dishes, to demonstrate how certain flavours and textures complemented each other, whereas others clashed or overpowered the wine. Judging by the students' responses and comments, Patricia's presentation was an enlightening introduction to what can seem a daunting subject.



Left: presenter Patricia Green and Geoff Booth, Head of the School of Hospitality with Westminster Kingsway College students, Louise Melina, Nicole Austin and Calum Ogilvie

Below: concentration as the students are guided through food and wine matching principles



How to Join the Academy

Membership is open to organisations and individuals.

Annual fees are:-

| | | | |
|------------|--------|--------------------------|---------|
| Student: | £15.00 | Fellowship: | £75.00 |
| Associate: | £40.00 | Establishment: (hotel or | |
| Full: | £60.00 | restaurant) | £185.00 |

Contact James Brown on 020 8943 1011 for further details



Port and food tasting

Specialist tutorials continue to be a highlight of the Academy's events programme. On 9 May, Mentzendorff's Alan Montague Dennis hosted a port and food matching seminar for AFWS members at the Carlton Tower Hotel in London. Five ports - Bin 27; Tawny 10 year old; Tawny 20 year old; LBV; and Guimaraens vintage – were tasted and compared alongside blue cheese, pecan pie, chocolate, fudge and foie gras.

Other recent tutorials include: Cotes du Rhone, held in

Birmingham at the Hyatt Regency; Alsace, at the East India Club, London; and the wines of Italy's Emilia-Romagna, taking place on 6 June in Edinburgh at the Intercontinental George Hotel.

Advance notice: we are planning to hold another afternoon tutorial at a Manchester venue on 28 November, devoted to the wines of Roussillon.

NEW MEMBERS UPDATE

ESTABLISHMENT MEMBERS

Hilton Cobham Hotel, Surrey
Tooks Wine Bar &
Restaurant, London
Crowne Plaza London St
James

Swinton Park Hotel, Masham
Thornbury Castle Hotel,
Thornbury

Durley House, London
Home House, London
City Hotel, London
Reform Club, London
Warren House Conference
Centre, Kingston Upon
Thames

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Full
Stanley Siu Tai Liu, Mansion
House, Walbrook

Bruno Murciano, Ritz Hotel,
London

Associate
Adrian Sarin, Weetwood Hall,
Leeds

Edson Jose De Oliveira, Roux
Fine Dining



Table
Service

May/June 2005

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Service

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