



Decanter Retailer Awards 2018

The Decanter Retailer Awards goes from strength to strength, defying challenging retail conditions to grow considerably over the past few years, just like the successful retailers themselves. ‘It’s an annual privilege to witness all the brilliant endeavour in UK wine retail,’ comments chairman Peter Richards MW. ‘The aim of the competition, though, is always constant: to raise a glass to all those who make that glass so delightful in the first place.’

The judging panel



Peter Richards MW
is chairman of the Decanter Retailer Awards, an awarded writer and broadcaster



Fiona Beckett
is a contributing editor for *Decanter* and a wine correspondent for *The Guardian*



Andy Howard MW
is a regular *Decanter* contributor, DWWA judge and runs wine consultancy Vinetrades



Peter Ranscombe
is a freelance journalist, wine columnist and drinks blogger for *Scottish Field* magazine



Matt Walls
is a wine writer, author and editor of The London Wine Guide app

The special awards ceremony was held on 20 September at OXO2 Tower Wharf on London’s South Bank. Our gratitude goes to González Byass for providing its Cava Brut Nature Reserva by Vilarnau, Lusco Albariño and Finca Constancia, Entre Lunas Organic Tempranillo. Look out for coverage in our next, December issue.



Outstanding Retailer of the Year

Winner
The Wine Society

A fair few names were in contention for this ‘best of the best’ award, but ultimately it was the ‘sense of joy’ that won it for The Wine Society. Top buyers, great wines, good value, impeccable service, constant improvement and a real sense of community. It doesn’t get much better.



Innovator of the Year

Winner
Vagabond Wines
Runner-up Wanderlust Wine

Restless innovation is what defines Vagabond. Lately, its engaging hybrid model has incorporated an urban winery (into its Battersea site) and a collaboration range between resident winemaker Gavin Monery and selected producers, plus a new ‘sister’ craft brewery. Wanderlust’s impressive ‘automated convenience’ was commended by the judges as a great example of innovation in wine retail.



Supermarket of the Year

Winner
Waitrose
Runner-up Co-op

Winner Waitrose was described by judges as a retailer ‘back on form’, with a focused buying team, impressive range, excellent customer engagement and ongoing improvements and innovation. The Co-op deserved recognition for its ‘underrated’ range, ethical sourcing policy and accessible approach.



National Wine Shops

Winner
Tanners Wines
Runner-up WoodWinters Wines & Whiskies

Tanners turned 175 in 2017 and remains a beacon for wine retailing in the UK. Innovation is evidenced in strong web growth; events have seen 300% uptick in two years; and discounts are funded by Tanners rather than suppliers. WoodWinters continues to grow impressively: ‘A quality outfit,’ said one judge.



Regional Wine Shops

Winner
D Byrne & Co
Runner-up House of Townend

‘It serves its region brilliantly – plus you’d travel a long way to visit this place.’ Such was one judge’s glowing verdict on D Byrne, the fifth generation Lancashire treasure trove of wine that remains unapologetically traditional but boasts a vast range (often brilliant value) with bags of character. Yorkshire-based House of Townend also impressed with its excellent list.



London Multi-Store

Winner
Lea & Sandeman
Runner-up Vagabond Wines

A reliable range of considerable depth as well as breadth (mostly sourced direct from producers), excellent service and an emphasis on customer engagement saw Lea & Sandeman prevail in this hard-fought category. Vagabond remains a delightfully innovative set-up with venues that are great places to enjoy wine. ➤



London Wine Shop

Winner

Harrods

Runner-up The Good Wine Shop

Harrods is on a mission to 'make fine wine fun' and, while in some ways daunting, its glittering wine store is showstopping and engaging in equal measure. Browse the 1,500-strong range (with 600 new recent additions), taking in the aroma tables and interactive videos. The Good Wine Shop continues to impress in this category.



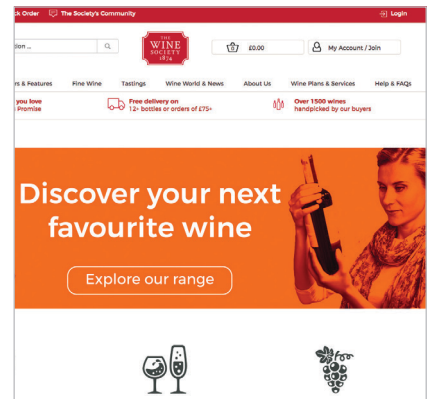
London Neighbourhood Wine Shop

Winner

Noble Green Wines

Runner-up Dynamic Vines

This category was for the smaller players and Noble Green won it for an excellent range, fairly priced and well presented, as well as a clear sense of personality and commitment to the local community. Dynamic Vines is growing fast – long may it thrive and develop.



Online Retailer

Winner

The Wine Society

Runner-up Vin Cognito

Two very different operations, both worthy of commendation in a competitive category. The Wine Society continues to improve and innovate, reaching out to new consumers and engaging existing ones via its community and forum, investing in its online operations while delivering an outstanding range. Vin Cognito is all about homespun, quirky personality – refreshingly different.



Newcomer

Winner

Tivoli Wines

Runner-up L'Oculta

Tivoli displays 'a genuine passion for wine' that impressed the judges and represents 'a great bonus for the people of Cheltenham'. The new owners have been busy since taking over in 2016, launching a Wine Library (with Enomatics plus Coravin for fine wines), a new website and a wine school.



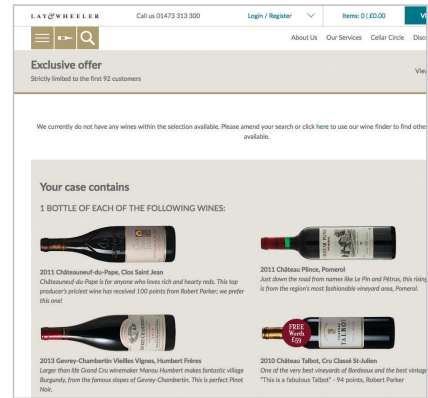
En Primeur

Winner

Goedhuis & Co

Runner-up Corney & Barrow

A genuinely personal touch and innovative communications (videos and WhatsApp, among others) helped Goedhuis & Co to perform impressively in both Bordeaux and Burgundy campaigns. Reasonable, user-friendly cellarage operations also help. It's hard to fault the notably personal and professional service offered by Corney & Barrow too.



Subscription Wine Club

Winner

Lay & Wheeler – Fine Wine Discovery Club

Runner-up Tanners Wines

The personal touch is crucial when helping customers buying fine wine – and Lay & Wheeler has got the balance spot on with its Fine Wine Discovery Club. 'Unfussy, simple, delightful: bravo!' said one customer. It has also boosted average spends significantly. ➤



Australia specialist

Winner

Z&B Vintners/ The Vinorium

The judges were wowed by The Vinorium's mouthwatering range, focused on premium Australian wines with impressive back vintages and a range of formats. In fact, this 'good-looking, well run' Kent-based retailer impressed the judges all-round.



Bordeaux specialist

Winner

Berry Bros & Rudd Runner-up BI Wines & Spirits

The year-round commitment to Bordeaux, including its fine own-label bottlings (including the iconic Good Ordinary Claret) and Bordeaux-focused education and communication, won it for BBR. Meanwhile, BI continues to provide an impressive and engaging Bordeaux offering too.

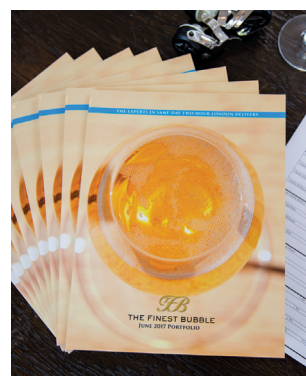


Burgundy specialist

Winner

Goedhuis & Co Runner-up Justerini & Brooks

Goedhuis & Co displays a laudable drive to innovate and communicate effectively, majoring on personal service, which has delivered excellent results. An outstanding list helps, ranging from good value to mature bottles, along with engaging events.



Champagne & Sparkling specialist

Winner

The Finest Bubble

Runner-up The Good Wine Shop

The Finest Bubble is all about a jaw-dropping line-up of grande marque Champagne, with the depth (vintages back to the 1970s, for example) as well as breadth to wow any wine lover. The Good Wine Shop's grower Champagnes and engaging events are a contrast, but also commendable.



England & Wales specialist

Winner

Waitrose

Waitrose is a long-standing champion of the English & Welsh wine category, featuring local wines in stores and even going so far as to plant a vineyard and make its own Hampshire fizz. It has helped to grow the category as a whole and remains a leader in this field.

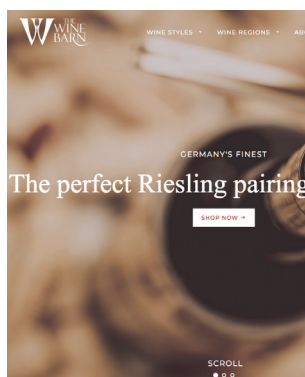


Fortified & Sweet specialist

Winner

Waitrose

It's heartening to see a supermarket offering such an outstanding range of fortified and sweet wines, with the Sherry range particularly impressive. Well worth a protracted rummage.

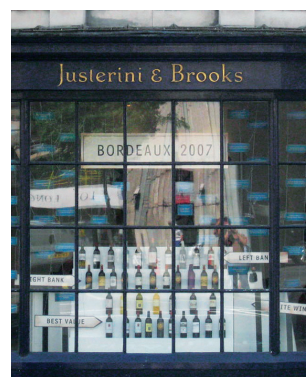


Germany specialist

Winner

The Wine Barn

The Wine Barn is all about a bespoke, personal service – and a pioneering list. The company continues to innovate, having recently launched its new dedicated e-commerce site.



Italy specialist

Winner

Justerini & Brooks

Runner-up Vini Italiani

Italy is not perhaps what J&B is best known for, but it has quietly built up an 970-strong, 'extraordinary', wide-ranging and delectable list, particularly exciting in Piedmont, with events to match. Vini Italiani continues to expand and 'seduce' us with its energy and excellent Italian offering. ➤



Loire specialist

Winner

Lay & Wheeler

Runner-up Yapp Bros

The Loire rarely dominates ranges, but nonetheless represents a great opportunity for merchants. Lay & Wheeler has seized the initiative brilliantly, with a small but growing range based on reputable producers and terroirs, plus an enthusiastic, ambitious approach.



New Zealand specialist

Winner

The New Zealand Cellar

It's been quite an adventure for Melanie Brown since she opened this South London outpost stocking delicious Kiwi bottlings in 2014 – but the business continues to thrive, reflecting the compelling nature of the New Zealand wine scene itself.



Regional France specialist

Winner

The Wine Society

Runner-up Yapp Bros

Hard to fault The Wine Society's strength and breadth when it comes to regional French wine, from Alsace to Corsica via Madiran and Beaujolais, with three outstanding buyers covering more than 150 wines at competitive price points. Yapp also has a tempting regional French list.



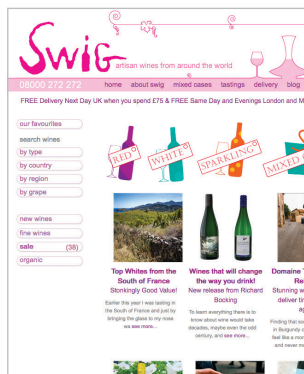
Rhône specialist

Winner

Lay & Wheeler

Runner-up Yapp Bros

Lay & Wheeler is doing a laudable job building the Rhône category, with a fine producer base, competitively priced, showing impressive growth. Yapp also delivers well on the Rhône front.



South Africa specialist

Winner

Swig

Runner-up Love Wine

What set Swig apart was a long-standing commitment to the region together with a mouthwatering range and commendable activities to promote the South African category. Love Wine also over-delivers in terms of championing the Cape.



Spain specialist

Winner

L'Oculta

Runner-up The Wine Society

A genuine specialist, with just 60 new-wave wines, L'Oculta 'lives and breathes Spain'. It does an excellent job fostering a love of the category locally in Lewisham, majoring on eclectic, buzzy, natural charm – with a bit of an attitude.



USA specialist

Winner

Roberson Wine

Runner-up Berry Bros & Rudd

Roberson's US wine selection is a cutting-edge range that continues to evolve and grow – from 40 wines in 2013 to 222 now, some 19% of the entire list. Roberson also supports the category on a broader basis, raising funds following the wild fires. Berry Bros boasts an excellent and growing list.



Organic/Biodynamic specialist

Winner

The Natural Wine Co/ Buon Vino

Another impressive year for these natural and organic/biodynamic specialists, with a second store, imaginative staff and customer engagement building on a comprehensive list. 'They put their heart and soul into this,' said one judge. It shows. **D**