

THE 2020 WINNERS



'This year, judges were brought to tears by the selflessness, devotion and resourcefulness of the UK's wine retailers,' recalls competition chairman **Peter Richards MW**. 'This speaks volumes about how challenges have been met and, in many cases, overcome in style by purveyors of wine all over the country. It's also why we were determined to hold these awards: to honour these achievements in adversity. Thanks to the entrants, we were able to raise £25,000 for The Drinks Trust and The Ben charities. Wine may not be the most important thing in life, but it's at times like these we learn to value such pleasures and moments more than ever.'



OUTSTANDING RETAILER OF THE YEAR

WINNER

Honest Grapes

It takes something special to win the top gong and this year Honest Grapes nailed it. What swung it? Factors like a fierce commitment to sustainability, an engaging online presence and rewarding wine club all helped. But at the heart of it all were a delightful wine list and an unashamed sense of personality and fun. If *Decanter* readers haven't checked out Honest Grapes yet, they should.



THE JUDGING PANEL



Peter Richards MW is an awarded wine writer and broadcaster. Chairman of our Retailer Awards since 2013, he is the DWWA Regional Chair for Chile



Laura Clay is chairman of the Association of Wine Educators, and an internationally accredited Bordeaux and Rioja tutor



Kate Hawkings is a wine writer, author and columnist. Her book *Aperitif* was shortlisted for the Fortnum & Mason Best Debut Drinks Book Award 2019



Andy Howard MW is a contributing editor to *Decanter*, a wine trade consultant, and was formerly a retail wine buyer for more than 30 years



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



JUDGES' CHOICE

WINNER

D Byrne & Co

Runner-up: Majestic Wine

At the historic D Byrne & Co in Lancashire, Covid-19 has enforced a change of venue to the brewery, a move undertaken with bravery and brilliance by all concerned. Meanwhile, deserved recognition here for Majestic, which the judges were delighted to see getting back to what it does best after a turbulent few years, with a bright future ahead.



National Wine Shop

WINNER

Cambridge Wine Merchants

Runner-up Tanners

Two outstanding names here. Cambridge Wine Merchants sources a fine and often eclectic range while communicating and engaging their clientele in inspired fashion – never more so than during lockdown. As they say, it's been a 'super-busy year of hard work, evolution, pragmatism, creativity'. Tanners combines an exceptional list with, as they say, an ambition to 'sell the fun'.



Local Multi-Store

WINNER

Loki Wine

Runner-up WoodWinters

Loki is a beacon of wine brilliance in the Birmingham area, selling excellent wines with humour and personality. A new site is on the cards for Solihull – long may its well-deserved growth continue. When it comes to retailers with more than one shop in a specific area, WoodWinters does a fine job in Scotland, with a vast list and impressive new website.



Supermarket

WINNER

Booths

Runner-up Co-op

Booths remains an engaging and lip-smacking destination for wine lovers, with commendable buying and customer engagement leading to well-deserved growth. The Co-op's environmental and ethical commitment continues to impress as it moves to recyclable packaging, renewable electricity and ever more organic and vegan wines.



Local Wine Shop

WINNER

St Andrews Wine Co

Runner-up The Whalley Wine Shop

When lockdown hit, St Andrews (purveyors of a fine, extensive list) invested in a Morris Minor van to use as a mobile bar for weddings, gave away bottles to those most deserving and helped other local businesses deliver for free. This local community spirit was also in evidence at last year's winner The Whalley Wine Shop, which has pivoted online in impressive fashion. ➤



London Multi-Store

WINNER

Lea & Sandeman

Runner-up Jeroboams Group

Lea & Sandeman goes the extra mile when it comes to sourcing an extensive and rewarding wine list – its shops across London are true temples to wine. A revitalised, dynamic Jeroboams is another boon for London wine lovers.



London Wine Shop

WINNER

Noble Green

Runner-up Philglas & Swiggot

It's been a year of ups and downs for London wine shops, but both Noble Green and Philglas have not only coped but thrived in commendable fashion. Noble Green continues its impressive growth, based on a wide-ranging list and excellent customer engagement.



London Neighbourhood Wine Shop

WINNER

The Good Wine Shop (Richmond)

Runner-up Davy & Co (Greenwich)

The Good Wine Shop's Richmond outlet is a recent but exciting arrival with an excellent range. Instigating audio shelf-talkers and a refilling initiative, together with raising £7,000 for the Greenwich food bank were all testament to the creativity at Davy's Greenwich shop.



En Primeur

Winner

Goedhuis & Co (Bordeaux)

Runner-up Lay & Wheeler (Bordeaux)

Two excellent campaigns here, backed up by reasonable storage rates and impressive customer engagement. Goedhuis' Bordeaux 2018 campaign raised £4.3m (up 109%) and contained not only an excellent range of wine, from stellar to accessible, but an outreach strategy that was both highly personalised and user-friendly.



Subscription Wine Club

WINNER

Honest Grapes

Runner-up The Wine Society

Honest Grapes' wine club is a major focus for the company – 'We are very much something to be part of, not just buy from' – involving excellent engagement via Wine Gurus, tastings, its cash-back 'pips' loyalty points, commendable flexibility, as well as a cracking wine range. Judges praised The Wine Society's Wine Without Fuss buying plan as user-friendly and showcasing excellent wines.



Online Retailer – Small

WINNER

Wanderlust Wine

An innovative retailer with an engaging online presence, Wanderlust was a deserving winner, with its emphasis on direct sourcing, sustainable production and an engaging wine club proposition.



Online Retailer – Large

WINNER

The Wine Society

Runner-up Roberson Wine

Some 80% of The Wine Society's sales are now online and, with a sensational range and ingenuity in customer engagement, it remains a standard-bearer for UK wine retail. Roberson displays a commitment, nimbleness and style online that sets it apart – at the peak of the pandemic, its online retail was up 1,000% year-on-year, with proceeds reinvested in the site.



Newcomer

WINNER

Diogenes the Dog

Runner-up Savage Vines

It's heartening to see the number of new players entering this category – many, including Savage Vines, with a great sense of personality. Diogenes (great name) is a self-styled 'counter-culture wine bar and shop' in London's Elephant & Castle with a fiercely eclectic but rewarding list, 95% available by the glass, and an admirable sense of adventure.



Green Champion

WINNER

Marks & Spencer

Runner-up Honest Grapes

This timely new award saw M&S triumph, the result of its outstanding long-term commitment to sustainability – carbon neutral since 2012, it has reduced bottle weights, introduced recyclable packing and works with suppliers to reduce carbon footprints. Honest Grapes has taken effective action right across its business following its recent Grape to Glass study.



Australia specialist

WINNER

The Vinorium

Runner-up Majestic

'Hard to compete' was one judge's pithy assessment of The Vinorium's Australian offering and can-do attitude, exemplified by a general rolling up of sleeves and team spirit during the Covid-19 pandemic. 'We live and breathe Australian wine,' they say, although planting a new Kentish vineyard with Australian clones may result in some split loyalties...



Austria specialist

WINNER

The Wine Society

While not the most extensive Austrian listing, The Wine Society's offering is a tantalisingly tasty prospect. It's no surprise that sales are up by 47%, topping £1m for the first time, even extending into en primeur territory. More of the same, please! ➤



Bordeaux specialist

WINNER

Goedhuis & Co

Runner-up BI Wine & Spirits

Always a hard-fought category. This year BI, with its encyclopaedic listing and unique service model, narrowly missed out to Goedhuis & Co. The judges were impressed by Goedhuis' impressive sales numbers, engaging approach to communication and palpable dedication to reaching beyond Bordeaux's traditional clientele to grow the market.



Burgundy specialist

WINNER

House of Townend

Runner-up Goedhuis & Co

A fourth-generation business based in the East Riding of Yorkshire, House of Townend is not only an historic vintner that has survived the test of time, it is also a great place to buy Burgundy. Competitive prices and a great selection – 492 wines, or 28% of the range – including mature stock, make an irresistible proposition for wine lovers.



Central & Eastern Europe specialist

WINNER

Novel Wines

Runner-up Best of Hungary

Novel Wines is expanding fast, testament to its engaging range and communication, and focus on demonstrating 'that wines from central and eastern Europe can be as good, if not better, than the more classical wines at the same price'. Best of Hungary are, in their own words, 'two Hungarian foodies in Wales, delivering an eclectic range with passion and a unique style'.



Champagne & Sparkling Wine specialist

WINNER

Waitrose

Runner-up The Whisky Exchange

Waitrose tracks well above its market share in Champagne, but perhaps more commendable is its commitment to less obvious sparkling styles, from top-value Cava to English and beyond. Fizz sales are booming at The Whisky Exchange, which sparkling lovers would do well to check out, particularly Champagne aficionados.



England & Wales specialist

WINNER

Grape Britannia

Runner-up Waitrose

A hotly contested field. Grape Britannia's shop in Cambridge celebrated its first anniversary in June, and is armed with an 'eco-friendly cargo-tricycle' and a total commitment to English and Welsh wines, from pét-nat to orange and even fortified. Waitrose's championing of English and Welsh wines remains highly laudable.



Germany specialist

Winner

The WineBarn

Based in Hampshire, The WineBarn is known for the range and quality of its exclusively German list. Service is personal and, despite having had to pivot from wholesale to direct online sales during the pandemic, the business remains a fine purveyor of German wines to the UK. ➤



Italy specialist

WINNER

Jeroboams Group

Runner-up Noble Grape

Jeroboams is exemplary on Italy, boasting an extensive list and clear dedication to the cause. Noble Grape does an excellent job with limited resources: its Italian list is exquisitely selected.



Loire specialist

WINNER

Lay & Wheeler

Runner-up Majestic

The Loire offers many gems of all hues for the specialist to unearth and champion. Majestic is fast improving, while Lay & Wheeler is growing its producer range (new Loire buyer Catherine Petrie MW used to live in the region) as well as sales, with a clear commitment to engaging and broadening its buying base.



New Zealand specialist

WINNER

Majestic

Runner-up Jeroboams Group

Kiwi wines account for a surprising 15% of the range at Majestic, and sales are up 88% since a range review. The list showcases a healthy range of styles: buyer Beth Pearce MW is encouraging customers to see beyond 'Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc'. It's a similar story at Jeroboams, where stellar names illuminate the New Zealand list.



Organic & Biodynamic specialist

WINNER

Buon Vino

Runner-up Wanderlust Wine

Yorkshire (and indeed the UK) is lucky to have Buon Vino. With 738 organic, biodynamic or natural wines, it's a treasure trove for wine lovers. No wonder its website 'went mental' during lockdown, and the business has been 'sprinting' to keep up ever since. Great attitude, top wines: worthy winner.



Rhône specialist

WINNER

Lay & Wheeler

Runner-up The Wine Society

Lay & Wheeler has tremendous strength and depth to its list, which features not only the kind of established classics to make you salivate, but also excellent producers from less prestigious areas such as Lirac and Ventoux, for those on a budget. The Wine Society is a fine place to buy Rhône wines, with some mouthwatering bottles on offer. ➤



South & Regional France specialist

WINNER

The Wine Society

Regional France is a true forté for The Wine Society. It represents 17% of the range, with sales totalling £15m (and rising), 13 own-label wines and even en-primeur Bandol and Beaujolais. Outstanding buyers doing a great job, providing excellent range and value.



South Africa specialist

WINNER

Museum Wines

Runner-up Stone Vine & Sun

Museum Wines offers not only a carefully curated (and growing) South African selection, but also an enthusiasm and proactive spirit that befits the category, typified by a decision to pay producers early when the export ban hit the Cape, passing on savings to customers at the same time. Stone Vine & Sun has long been an admirable champion of SA wine.



South America specialist

WINNER

Taste Argentina

South America is not best served by independent retail in the UK, so it's great to see Howard Jones' England-Wales borderland-based business deliver commendable diversity and value from Argentina – a wine nation where there is much to discover.



Spain & Portugal specialist

WINNER

The Wine Society

Runner-up The Tapas Room

Across both Spain and Portugal, from crisp whites to fortified delights, The Wine Society has notable strength and depth. The Tapas Room, across south and southeast London, has an eclectic and extensive Spanish list and is well worth checking out.



Sweet & Fortified specialist

WINNER

Vintage Wine & Port

Runner-up Waitrose

An advent calendar brim-full with fortified wine is now on all the judges' Santa list, and is just one of the ways Hampshire-based Vintage Wine & Port impresses – its 1,100 wines, online tastings, great range and charitable endeavours during lockdown also help. Waitrose also offers a brilliant range.



USA specialist

WINNER

Roberson Wine

It's not just about the posh stuff – Roberson supplies Aldi with its successful label The Wrangler Zinfandel too. But what a range it is – truly mouthwatering, at the cutting edge of California wine and now helping to grow the market and reach of its products. The 'California at Home' lockdown campaign was inspired. [D](#)