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International Wine Challenge crowns Portugal’s Menin Porto Tawny 80 Anos and France’s Rare Champagne Rare Magnum 2012

The competition’s 2026 results showed stronger global competition, with entries up 7% and medals awarded to wines from 39 countries.

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The International Wine Challenge has released its 2026 medal and Trophy results, showing a wine market that is becoming more global, more competitive and, in many cases, more accessible to consumers. The competition, which is based in London and judged blind by international panels, said entries rose 7% from a year earlier. The results are the last to be issued under the contest’s current format before a major rebrand planned for June.

France again led the overall medal table, but the most striking theme this year was the spread of top awards across a wider range of countries and styles. Historic regions such as Champagne, Burgundy, the Douro, Jerez and Rioja remained dominant at the highest levels, yet wines from England, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and several smaller producers also won major recognition. Judges said the results reflected both enduring benchmarks and a broader global reach for quality wine.

Two wines tied for the highest score in the competition at 98 points: Menin Porto Tawny 80 Anos from Portugal and Rare Champagne Rare Magnum 2012 from France. Both also won Trophies. Fortified wines and sparkling wines were among the strongest performers overall, with judges highlighting the depth of flavor and balance found in top examples from Champagne, Port and Sherry.

England stood out for a different reason. It recorded the highest Gold medal conversion rate among major wine-producing countries, with more than 16% of English entries earning Gold. Sam Caporn MW, one of the competition’s co-chairs, called that result an important sign of how quickly English wine quality is advancing. Oz Clarke said Champagne now has a genuine rival in England for top sparkling wine.

France entered the largest number of wines and won the most Gold medals and Trophies overall. Champagne led the regional Gold table with 30 Gold medals, ahead of Burgundy with 26. Among France’s notable results was Rare Champagne Rare Magnum 2012, which won two Trophies. Burgundy also performed strongly, led by Maison Albert Bichot’s Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru Domaine du Pavillon 2024, which scored 97 points and won four Trophies. Another attention-grabbing result came from Queen Côtes de Provence Rosé 2025, which won the Provence Rosé Trophy.

Spain had one of its strongest showings in recent years, driven by Jerez and Rioja. Jerez-Sherry earned 14 Gold medals and Rioja 11. Castillo de Monteviejo won Gold for two VORS Sherries at 95 points each, while El Coto de Rioja's Imaz Gran Reserva 2019 took three major awards at 97 points. Spain also won key white wine Trophies from Galicia and Menorca.

Portugal moved up to third place in the medal rankings and posted one of the best success rates relative to entries. The Douro was described as the strongest non-French region in the competition, with 23 Gold medals. Menin Porto Tawny 80 Anos was one of the headline wines of the year, while D'Oliveiras Verdelho 1981 and Taylor's Single Harvest 1976 added to Portugal's fortified wine strength. Lua Cheia Reserva 2021 showed that still wines from the Douro are also gaining ground.

Italy climbed to fourth place and showed broad strength across red, sparkling and sweet wines. G.D. Vajra's Barolo Ravera 2022 won both the Barolo Trophy and Italian Red Trophy at 96 points. Derbusco Cives Franciacorta Pas Dosé Épique 2016 took both the Franciacorta Trophy and Italian Sparkling Trophy. Tenuta di Capezzana's Vinsanto Capezzana Riserva 2018 was another standout at 97 points.

Australia remained one of the competition's most efficient performers by Gold conversion rate, with South Australia and Tasmania leading its medal haul. Beresford Wines' Classic Shiraz 2023 was among the most decorated wines in the contest, winning four Trophies at 97 points. Penfolds Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon 2023 also won two Trophies at 96 points, while Tolpuddle Chardonnay 2024 took both Tasmanian Chardonnay and Australian White honors.

South Africa continued to build on its reputation for strong Cabernet Sauvignon blends and Shiraz, with Stellenbosch again serving as a benchmark region. New Zealand had major success with Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc. Nga Waka Lease Block Pinot Noir 2024 won four Trophies at 96 points, while Delta Sauvignon Blanc 2025 took three awards for Marlborough's signature style.

Argentina's results were led by Mendoza Malbecs. Huentala Calizo Albar Block 06 Malbec 2023 scored 97 points and won three Trophies. Chile also posted strong results across Carmenère, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, including Viña Undurragga's Extinto

2024 and T.H. Syrah Leyda 2024.

Japan continued its rise with five Gold medals and a Trophy win for Chânmoris Kankitsu-Ka Katsunuma Koshu 8600 Bottles 2025, reflecting growing attention to Koshu wines. Croatia won a Croatian White Trophy for Damjanić Malvazija Istarska 2025. Austria posted a strong Gold rate despite a smaller entry base, while Georgia gained notice for both qvevri-fermented whites and modern reds.

The United States moved up five places in the medal rankings but remained outside the top tier by total medals. California continued to anchor its performance through Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay.

The competition said medals were awarded to wines from 39 countries this year, including first-time entrants to the table such as Switzerland, Montenegro, Sweden, India, Malta and Ireland. The full list of winners has been published online, while Champion Wines selected from among the Trophy winners will be announced later this year after a final re-tasting by the co-chairs.