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Angelo Gaja entered the Golden Vines Hall of Fame in London

The award recognized his lifetime influence on Italian wine, especially his role in globalizing Barbaresco and the Langhe

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Italian producers took two of the most closely watched honors at the Golden Vines Awards in London on Nov. 7, with Angelo Gaja entering the event’s Hall of Fame and Giacomo Conterno being named Europe’s best fine wine producer.

The awards, held at Banqueting House, are presented by the Golden Vines Academy, which organizers describe as a global group of nearly 1,300 professionals, merchants, critics, educators and collectors involved in fine wine and rare spirits. The event was launched in 2021 and combines industry awards with a charity auction that raises money for the Gérard Basset Foundation.

Gaja, one of the best-known names in Italian wine, was recognized for his long influence on the industry and for helping bring wines from Piedmont, especially Barbaresco and the Langhe, to a broad international market. His induction into the Hall of Fame placed him among a small group of figures honored for lifetime impact rather than a single year of performance.

Giacomo Conterno, the Piedmont estate now led by Roberto Conterno, received the award for best fine wine producer in Europe. The winery is widely associated with Barolo and with Monfortino, one of Italy’s most recognized collectible wines. The prize put the estate ahead of other European producers in a field that organizers said was meant to reward sustained quality and influence.

The Italian results stood out in an edition that also recognized major producers from Spain, South Africa, Argentina, Japan, Portugal and Sweden. Vega Sicilia, owned by Spain’s Álvarez family, won the Vino de Franciscus award for world best fine wine producer for the third straight year, a run that gave it all-star status in that category. In South Africa, Mullineux & Leeu Family Wines received the Robb Report world best rising star award for the second time, while The Sadie Family Wines was named best fine wine producer in the rest of the world category. In the Americas, Argentina’s Catena Zapata won best fine wine producer. Japan’s Yamazaki was named world best rare spirits brand. Star Wine List of Sweden was recognized for innovation, and Portugal’s Symington Family Estates received a sustainability award.

The Golden Vines Awards have positioned themselves not only as a ranking of producers and brands but also as a fundraising vehicle for the foundation created in memory of Gérard Basset, the late sommelier and hospitality figure. Organizers said the Nov. 7 auction raised 1.1 million pounds for scholarships, grants and mentoring programs aimed at helping people from underrepresented or economically

disadvantaged backgrounds enter the wine, spirits and hospitality industries.

That charitable side has become central to the event’s identity. Organizers said total fundraising from all editions is approaching 6 million pounds. Lewis Chester, co-founder and chief executive of Liquid Icons, the company behind Golden Vines, said in a statement that the awards were designed to recognize people and producers setting standards in fine wine and rare spirits, while the auction turns that recognition into longer-term support for the next generation.

Italian wineries were also visible in the auction results. Il Marroneto, the Montalcino estate run by Alessandro and Jacopo Mori, raised 20,000 pounds. A lot from Biondi-Santi Tenuta Greppo, the historic Brunello di Montalcino estate now owned by the French group Epi, brought in 12,500 pounds. Lots from Ornellaia and Emidio Pepe each raised 10,500 pounds.

The highest-priced wine lot came from Dom Pérignon at 75,000 pounds. The top bid overall, however, was 125,000 pounds for a private jet travel experience donated by Slate Aviation. Organizers said the package included flights on a Challenger 850 and luxury experiences in the United States and the Caribbean.

The ceremony was the closing event in a three-day program in London that included tastings, masterclasses and hospitality events for producers, collectors and other guests. The gala dinner featured a menu created by chef Simon Rogan, and entertainment included a performance by British singer Craig David.

For Italy, the strongest message from this year’s results was the continued international standing of its top estates. Gaja’s Hall of Fame recognition honored a producer whose work helped define modern Italian fine wine abroad. Giacomo Conterno’s European title underscored the place of Barolo among the world’s leading collectible wines and reinforced Piedmont’s position at the center of the global high-end market.

Organizers said the next edition of the awards will be held in Amsterdam.