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50 Years Later: Judgment of London Redefines the Wine World Order

Californian Wines Triumph Again? Judgment of London Rekindles 1976 Rivalry

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The London Wine Fair is set to host an event that promises to be as groundbreaking as it is nostalgic: the "Judgment of London." This homage to the legendary 1976 "Judgment of Paris," where Californian wines famously outshone their French counterparts in a blind tasting, aims to reflect the vast evolution of the global wine industry over the past five decades.

The original Judgment of Paris was a seismic event in the wine world, shaking the foundations of the established hierarchy and putting Californian wine firmly on the map. The 2024 Judgment of London, however, plans to offer a broader and more inclusive snapshot of the current fine wine landscape. While the original tasting pitted current vintages of Bordeaux and Burgundy against Californian wines, this updated version will feature a more diverse lineup. Iconic wines from various parts of Europe will be matched against their counterparts from across the globe, providing a more comprehensive benchmarking of the best wines available today.

Curated by Experts

The event will be curated by Ronan Sayburn MS, CEO of The Court of Master Sommeliers, and Sarah Abbott MW, Managing Director of Swirl Wine Group and a respected international taster. Together, they will oversee a panel of around 20 of the UK's most discerning palates, including leading buyers, top sommeliers, and esteemed wine writers. This prestigious panel will ensure that the tasting is both rigorous and insightful.

The Tasting Process

Taking place in a private room at Olympia under strict exam conditions, the wines will be tasted in pairs. Each pair will feature one European wine and one from the rest of the world, matched by grape variety, style, and texture. Producers will submit vintages that are at their peak, ranging from five to fifteen years old. The morning session will focus on eight pairs of whites, followed by eight pairs of reds in the afternoon.

All wines will be decanted and served in Jancis Robinson X Richard Brendon glasses, known for their ability to reveal the true character of a wine. Abbott and Sayburn will ensure each wine is in perfect condition, while logistics will be expertly handled by Sensible Wine Services.

Each wine will be scored out of 10, with half marks allowed. With 20 judges, the maximum score for each wine will be 200. This scoring system is designed to yield eight key findings, which will be revealed the next day on Centre Stage.

While the original Judgment of Paris had a clear winner, the Judgment of London aims to celebrate the quality and diversity of wine rather than declaring an outright champion. It's a reflection of how far the world of wine has come since 1976, showcasing exceptional wines from both the old and new worlds.

Esteemed Judges and Industry Reactions

Jancis Robinson OBE MW, one of the judges, expressed her excitement: "I'm really looking forward to being part of the tasting panel for the carefully designed Judgment of London tasting on the first day of the London Wine Fair. It's a fitting tribute to the late Steven Spurrier, whose pioneering Judgment of Paris changed the world of wine forever."

Hannah Tovey, head of the London Wine Fair, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing London's pivotal role in the international wine trade: "The tasting is set to be a celebration of the very best of wine; an appreciation of just how great fine wine can be."

Sarah Abbott MW highlighted the continued relevance of Spurrier's legacy: "The world of wine is rightly moving on from the 'old-world vs new-world' debate, but Stephen Spurrier's lesson—that great wine is of the whole world—is as important and timely now as it was nearly 50 years ago."

Ronan Sayburn MS added, "In the Judgment of London, we won't be looking for a clear winner as such, but more celebrating how far wine from the world over has come in quality and recognition since 1976."

Event Details

The Judgment of London will take place on Monday, May 20th, with results announced on Centre Stage on Tuesday, May 21st, at 4:45 PM. The event is supported by the Académie du Vin Library, which will provide each panel member with a copy of Steven Spurrier's memoirs.

The London Wine Fair will be held at Olympia from May 20th to 22nd. For more information and to register, visit **London Wine Fair**.

In celebrating the Judgment of London, the wine world not only honors a historic moment but also embraces the present and future of fine wine, showcasing the incredible strides made in viticulture and winemaking worldwide. It's a testament to how far the industry has come, and a tantalizing glimpse into what lies ahead.