vinetur

Court of Master Sommeliers awards 2,000th certificate in Asia as wine education reaches new heights

Shanghai celebration to honor milestone reflects rapid growth of sommelier expertise and wine culture across the region

Tuesday, June 10, 2025



The Court of Master Sommeliers has reached a significant milestone in Asia, awarding its 2,000th certificate to a student in the region. The organization, founded by Bryan Julyan in 1977, made the announcement in June. The Court first introduced its courses in Asia more than 19 years ago, starting with Hong Kong and Singapore. Since then, it has expanded its educational programs to India, Vietnam, Malaysia, and mainland China.

Ronan Sayburn, Master Sommelier and CEO of the Court of Master Sommeliers, reflected on the progress made since the organization’s arrival in Asia. He noted that when the Court began offering courses in these markets, knowledge and skills related to wine were limited. Access to a wide range of wines was also restricted. Sayburn credited the rapid improvement in standards to the strong study ethic found among students in these countries. He said that today, Asian sommeliers’ skills are comparable to those of their European counterparts.

To mark the occasion of awarding 2,000 certificates in Asia, the Court will host a celebration at Shanghai’s Okura Garden Hotel in July. The event will include a walk-around tasting featuring wines from leading Asian wineries. This will be followed by a dinner where top sommeliers will select and present wines. Bryan Julyan, founder and current president of the Court of Master Sommeliers, is scheduled to deliver the welcoming speech. The guest list includes about 150 former students from the Court’s programs as well as dignitaries from China’s wine and hospitality sectors.

The Court of Master Sommeliers now operates in 18 countries and 26 cities worldwide. Its curriculum includes several levels: Introductory Sommelier Certificate, Certified Sommelier Certificate, Advanced Sommelier Certificate, and the prestigious Master Sommelier Diploma. The first Master Sommelier exam took place in London in 1969. Since then, only 282 candidates have passed this challenging test.

Sayburn expressed pride in the organization’s role in developing wine education across Asia. He noted that many Asian students are now preparing for the Master Sommelier title itself and expects more successful candidates from the region in coming years. The upcoming celebration in Shanghai highlights both the growth of wine culture in Asia and the increasing recognition of sommeliers trained through international standards.