



THE INSTITUTE OF
MASTERS *of* WINE

Foreword

Master of Wine is recognised as the foremost title in the world of wine. The qualification, established in 1953, is today held by professionals across the international wine community who have demonstrated both theoretical knowledge and practical ability in the art, science and business of wine and who are committed to professional excellence.

Over the following pages we provide an introduction to the Institute and our work, including our global examination programme, which leads to the qualification Master of Wine, and to our events, which offer outstanding professional development opportunities for members of the wine trade.

The Institute and its Members

It is membership of the Institute of Masters of Wine and abiding by its Code of Conduct, not only passing the Master of Wine Examination, which confers the right to use the title Master of Wine.

A Master of Wine is someone who has demonstrated, by way of rigorous examination, a thorough knowledge of all aspects of wine and an ability to communicate that knowledge clearly. They actively encourage others in the pursuit of knowledge as well as seeking to bring wine communities together.

The Institute's vision is one of knowledge and integrity. Through our members – the international community of Masters of Wine – and our activities, we promote excellence, interaction and learning across all sectors of the global wine community.

The Master of Wine Examination was introduced in the United Kingdom in 1953 as a professional qualification of the highest standard that would be open to those actively engaged in the wine trade. Of the 21 candidates who sat in 1953, six passed and became Masters of Wine. They went on to found the Institute in 1955 and today it is the independent and international membership organisation for Masters of Wine.

Our membership has grown over almost 60 years, first in the United Kingdom and internationally since the late 1980s, and includes winemakers, importers, buyers, retailers, consultants, journalists, educators, sommeliers and senior industry executives.

In keeping with our original aims, we promote a cross-disciplinary approach to understanding wine at the highest level and conduct wine trade examination which leads to the qualification Master of Wine.

We also organise and contribute to some of the most significant wine trade events in the world. Annual visits are made to wine producing regions whilst the Institute's annual tasting and master class programme provides an independent and authoritative perspective on wine. Every four years, our international symposium brings together leading figures from the wine community to address topical issues in an independent forum.

The Master of Wine Examination

The examination is designed to test candidates' understanding of the international wine industry, as well as their depth and breadth of wine knowledge, with an emphasis on analytical skills, clarity of communication and the overall business of wine. It consists of three parts:

Theory

Four three-hour question papers on viticulture, winemaking, the business of wine and contemporary issues. The Institute subsidises the cost of translation for those not writing in English. All candidates also have the option of typing the Theory part of the examination.

Practical

Three 12-wine blind tastings, each lasting two-and-a-quarter-hours, in which wines must normally be assessed for variety, origin, winemaking, quality and style. Practical papers must be written in English.

Candidates who pass either the Theory or Practical element may retake the other in a subsequent year, subject to the examination rules. The Theory and Practical papers are examined concurrently over four days, usually in June, in three centres: London (UK), Sydney (Australia) and Napa (USA).

Dissertation

A 10,000-word original study, relevant to the wine industry, with the topic selected by the candidate and approved by the Institute. This is typically written after the candidate has passed both the Theory and the Practical parts of the exam.

Only after successfully passing all three elements of the examination is someone eligible for membership of the Institute.

To sit the examination a candidate must be a second year student in the Institute's study programme, have attended the residential seminar and be suitably proficient in knowledge and skills.

What to Expect in the Examination

The following are sample questions from the 2010 Master of Wine Examination. They provide a flavour of the type of question a candidate can expect.

Theory Papers

Paper 1 – The Production of Wine (Part I)

How might alcohol levels in unfortified wines be influenced in both the vineyard and the cellar and why might this be desirable?

What are the effects of different extraction methods used when vinifying a) Pinot Noir and b) Cabernet Sauvignon grapes?

How can vine nutrition be improved through soil management?

Paper 2 – The Production of Wine (Part II)

What issues should be considered when replacing an existing bottling line?

What impact does temperature have on the storage and maturation of wine?

What are the main factors, following the first alcoholic fermentation, that affect the quality and style of a sparkling wine?

Paper 3 – The Business of Wine

What are the risks and reward factors that need to be considered when evaluating whether buying fine wine is appropriate as part of an investment portfolio?

Evaluate the most effective ways in which wine producers can communicate with consumers.

Who makes the most profit on a bottle of wine in today's market? How is this changing?

Paper 4 – Contemporary Issues

Examine the extent to which 'wine is a social evil'.

Looking ahead towards 2050, what impact do you think climate change will have on wine production?

Can Riesling challenge Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc for dominance on the world stage?

Practical Papers

Each paper addresses 12 wines, which are presented to the candidate blind. The following are sample questions from the 2010 examination and are provided for illustrative purposes.

Paper I – White Wines

Wines 1 and 2 are both made from the same single grape variety, by the same producer and in the same region of origin. For both wines:

- a) Identify the grape variety and origin as closely as possible
- b) Compare the methods of production employed for the two wines
- c) Compare the levels of quality, clearly stating which you consider to be the better of the two
- d) Consider each wine's capacity to age and develop

(The wines in question were 2008 Bourgogne Blanc, Lafôret, Drouhin and 2006 Meursault 1er Cru, Perrières, Drouhin, France.)

Paper II – Red Wines

Wines 9 to 12 are from three different countries. Three are from different single grape varieties and the fourth is a blend. For each wine:

- a) Identify the grape variety/varieties and origin as closely as possible

- b) Comment on the method of production, noting how it has affected the wine's style
- c) Comment on quality with reference to the commercial potential of this style

(The wines in question were: 2006 Chinon, La Baronnie Madeleine, Couly-Dutheil, Loire, France; 2008 Pinot Noir, Gladstone, Wairarapa, New Zealand; 2008 Beaujoulais Villages, Louis Jadot, France; and 2008 Valpolicella, Allegrini, Veneto, Italy.)

Paper III – Sparkling, Dessert & Fortified Wines

Wines 4 to 6 are from different countries. For each wine:

- a) Quantify the levels of residual sugar in grammes per litre
- b) Quantify the levels of alcohol in % abv
- c) Comment on the levels of botrytis influence and the overall balance and quality
- d) Identify the origin as closely as possible

(The wines in question were: 2009 Cordon Cut, Mount Horrocks, Clare Valley, Australia; 2004 Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos, Dobogó, Tokaj, Hungary; and 2005 Pinot Gris, Selection des Grains Nobles, 'Heimbourg', Domaine Zind Humbrecht, Alsace, France.)

The Study Programme

We provide a guided, self-study programme which helps to prepare candidates for the examination. It takes a minimum of two years to complete. The academic year runs from October to May. All education is conducted in English and students require a good standard of spoken and written English. The programme comprises compulsory annual residential seminars which are complemented by course days and assignments.

First Year

Introduces the breadth of the syllabus and helps students to identify their strengths and weaknesses in knowledge, understanding and expertise. Students develop their tasting/practical skills and their self-study regime. At the end of the year, the First Year Assessment tests theory and practical knowledge, determining whether a student progresses to the second year.

Second Year

Reflects the build up to the examination and addresses theory, practical, and examination skills in greater depth with the residential seminars and course days augmented by regular assignments. At the end of the year students will be eligible to sit the examination if they have demonstrated suitable levels of proficiency.

Seminars

At the beginning of each year, students must elect to attend one of the compulsory residential seminars which last five days. These are held in Europe (Rust, Austria,

for first years; Bordeaux, France, for second years; and Cookham, United Kingdom, for students who have already passed either the practical or theory part of the examination); Australasia (Adelaide, Australia); and North America (Napa, United States). The Australasian seminar is usually held in November with the European and North American seminars taking place in January and February.

Course Days

These small group days provide students with the opportunity to look at practical and theory issues with a Master of Wine in an environment that encourages debate and critical analysis.

Mentoring

Each student is allocated a Master of Wine as a mentor. They are a source of guidance, including advising students about structuring and monitoring their revision programmes and providing feedback on assignments.

Student Trips

Students have the opportunity to participate in visits to wine producing regions, including annual trips to Bordeaux and Burgundy.

Scholarships & Bursaries

Thanks to the generosity of individuals and organisations from the international wine community, the Institute is able to offer a number of scholarships and bursaries which provide assistance and learning opportunities to students.

Applying to Study

Applications for our study programme open in July each year, via our website. Candidates are notified whether or not they have been accepted onto the programme in early autumn.

Study Programme Open Days

We run open day events around the world each year. These are conducted by Masters of Wine and offer an insight to what is involved in studying with us and an opportunity to discuss professional development. Details of forthcoming open days are posted in the Events section of our website.

Institute Events

Every year, we host a range of wine events which offer professional development and learning opportunities. These range from master classes with single producers to themed seminars, debates and tastings. Many attendees are Masters of Wine and students but we usually also have spaces available for other trade professionals and private individuals.

More Information

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