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## UK SOMMELIERS PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES AT THE WINES OF SOUTH AFRICA SOMMELIER CUP COMPETITION

**June 2016**

The UK round of the Wines of South Africa Sommelier Cup 2016 took place on 13<sup>th</sup> June at the prestigious private members' club in London, 67 Pall Mall. Sommeliers from the UK's leading restaurants gathered to compete for the title of UK winner and win a trip to South Africa to compete in the grand final.

The competition was tough: first entrants were asked to sit a written exam, consisting of 50 questions on the South African wine industry, they had to create a five course food and wine matching menu, inspired by South African cuisine, then they were asked to name three regions on a map. Once that was completed the sommeliers were tasked with a blind tasting exercise, where they were poured a Chardonnay, Chenin and new wave style Pinotage.

Finally, there was an interview with the two judges, Greg Sherwood MW, South African born and a buyer who has a huge passion for South African wines, and Ronan Sayburn MS, one of the UK's top sommeliers. Entrants were expected to show their knowledge and passion.

The UK team at Wines of South Africa were very impressed with the standard of entrants to the competition, the sommeliers knew a great deal about South African wines and some had blind tasting abilities that were seriously remarkable!

At the end of the day the winner was Erik Simonics from The Savoy. Erik shone in all elements of the competition – his exam held the highest score, his blind tasting was well thought through and accurate, his menu captured the spirit of South Africa and his interview showed him to be passionate about his role. There were two runners up in Yoel Abarbanel, sommelier at The Ledbury and Dorian Guillon, assistant head sommelier at Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester.

