

Decanter

Steven Spurrier named Decanter Man of the Year 2017

Steven Spurrier has been named the Decanter Man of the Year 2017 - for devoting his life to the service of wine with passion and the utmost distinction...



Steven Spurrier in his Bride Valley vineyards in Dorset. It's been an eventful 50 years... Credit: Thomas Skovrode / Decanter

Just some of the roles Steven Spurrier has taken on and excelled at over his wine career have been those of critic, journalist, buyer, entrepreneur, wine guide, vintner, visionary, mentor, restaurateur, author, educator, judge, communicator and consultant.

But it wasn't just what Spurrier did that counted. It was also how he did it – in his case with characteristic flair, style and élan.



After school at Rugby and university at the London School of Economics, he joined Christopher's in St James's in 1964, then the poshest of London carriage-trade merchants.

Soon afterwards he did the Grand Tour of Europe's vineyards. He worked a vintage in Burgundy and spent another six months in Bordeaux, the Rhône, Alsace, Champagne, Germany and Spain.

'It was wonderful,' he recalls. 'I was completely hooked for life.'



Steven Spurrier at Les Caves de la Madeleine in 1981. Credit: Bella Spurrier.

It was in the 1970s that Spurrier first came to fame as a wine merchant in Paris. These were the glory days of his wine shop, Les Caves de la Madeleine, which burst onto the scene as a treasure trove of then undiscovered gems, hand-picked by Spurrier.

Before long came the hugely successful L'Académie du Vin. Not only was it the first consumer wine school of its kind in France, it also became the model for so many more around the world.

The Judgement of Paris



Steven Spurrier at the infamous Judgement of Paris tasting in 1976, flanked by Patricia Gallagher (left), and influential French critic Odette Kahn (right). Credit: Bella Spurrier.

For his next trick, he went global with the **1976 Judgement of Paris**, which needs no introduction here.

Its transformative impact on the Californian wine industry cannot be overstated.

Yet it had an almost equally significant effect on the losers.

According to Aubert de Villaine of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, defeat also kick-started a much needed renaissance in French viticulture and winemaking.

Wine education

His lifelong passion for wine education began in Paris but has since been applied around the world.

In 1982, he worked with his acknowledged mentor, Michael Broadbent, to set up, launch and run the highly regarded Christie's Wine Course in London.



Steven Spurrier and Michael Broadbent catch up on fond memories.

Michael Broadbent said, 'There's so much more I could say, but if I had to sum up Steven in just one sentence it would be this: He is a man of unusual charm and versatility matched only by his insatiable appetite for work.'

In addition, Spurrier has been instrumental in setting up L'Académie du Vin schools in Tokyo and Rome.

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In the 1980s, Spurrier turned his hand to wine books and journalism and was soon welcomed into the *Decanter* fold as the magazine's consultant editor and globetrotting correspondent – not to mention award-winning columnist, taster and presenter.



Steven Spurrier addresses Decanter World Wine Awards judges in 2016. Credit: Decanter.

Neither the **Decanter World Wine Awards** nor the **Decanter Asia Wine Awards** would be what they are today without Spurrier's influence.

Apart from his active presence and support as Chairman, he created many of both competitions' rules and best-practice protocols.

His greatest achievement?

'I am best known for the Judgement of Paris tasting and the effect that it had on California,' he said. 'But the thing I am most proud of is L'Académie du Vin and the great people I worked with in Paris.'

Although he has now stepped down as Decanter's DWWA Chairman, to become Chairman Emeritus, the high-profile offers keep on coming. Most recently, he has just taken on the three-year role of Honorary President of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust.



Steven Spurrier with winemaker Ian Edwards at England's Furleigh Estate, where Spurrier's Bride Valley wines are made. Credit: Thomas Skovsende.

A youthful 75, he remains busy and active, especially now that he has his own Bride Valley sparkling wine estate in Dorset, southern England, which he runs with his wife Bella and daughter Kate.

'Given the roll-call of previous winners [of Decanter Man of the Year], I am completely over the moon,' he said.