

Oxford tips Cambridge in merchants' blind taste-off

Forget the Oxford and Cambridge boat race, there's a whole new competition to sort out who has the brains as well as the brawn between our two famous university cities.

It was a case of the blind leading the blind when the Oxford Wine Company challenged Cambridge Wine Merchants to a blind-tasting evening last month at Oxford's Portabello restaurant.

There was more than just city pride at stake – the wine-tasting talents of two of the proudest independents in the country were on the line. With so much up for grabs it was only right that Harpers Wine & Spirit be on hand to make sure everything was all above board.

Mind you, our fair-play services were hardly needed as the proceedings were overseen, and wines chosen by, the steely and superly even-handed president of the Oxford University Wine Varsity team, Hanneke Wilson, who set the sternest of challenges.

It was, therefore, with some trepidation that Hal Wilson and Ted Sandbach led their respective Cambridge and Oxford five-a-side tasting teams into battle.

They were faced with two rounds, the first covering five whites, the second five reds. The tasting was held under strict exam conditions and the tasters had to identify the grape variety, country, region, sub-region and vintage.



Above: Oxford's Ted Sanbach (front left) and Cambridge's Hal Wilson (front right) backed by their teams
Left: The Oxford tasters get nosing in the battle for wine supremacy

So, to see how you would have fared, try some of these for size. The whites included: Calera Viognier 2009, Central Coast, California; Pazo Señorans Albariño Rías Baixas 2009; and St Daumary Coteaux du Languedoc La Boca Loca 2008, Valflaunès.

The reds included: Les Complices de Loire Les Gravières 2009, Chinon; Camigliano Rosso di Montalcino 2008; and Sélection J-L Chave St Joseph Offéris 2007.

So, enough of the preamble. It was the Oxford tasters who emerged triumphant in the end, winning by, in boat race terms, a nose, or, in wine-tasting terms, 40 points. Oxford also fielded the top overall performer, with John Chapman clocking up 110 points, closely followed by team-mate Theo Sloot on 99 points. Cambridge's Hal Wilson notched up 96 points.

But it was the taking part that was important, stressed

AMAZING REPHRASE

With the football season reaching a climatic crescendo this weekend as the potential Premiership title decider match kicks off between Manchester United and Chelsea, this week's Amazing Rephrase looks to its own Harpers team for inspiration.

I REF IN MANCHESTER

Christine Freeman (art editor) charades as World Cup final referee Howard Webb for the Sunday showdown ...

BE THE LINER

... while **Ben Theller** (account executive) is the perfect referee's assistant for any goal-line escapades

CHELSEA ... R ... RED

But **Charles Reed** (managing director) just doesn't know who to support ...

If you would like your office to feature in your own Amazing Rephrase team then contact Richard Napier at richard@fgsmedia.co.uk

Sandbach and Wilson. "We have been able to learn more about each other's businesses and build a stronger bond," said Sandbach.

Wilson, although disappointed in defeat, said it was "really enjoyable" and invited Oxford to come to Cambridge next year for a rematch.

And they can have the president of the Cambridge Wine Varsity team as the adjudicator next time!

THE
NEXT
ISSUE

Harpers' Agenda: industry leaders debate future of the wine trade

Part two of our LIWF show preview

South Africa's premium wines keep consumers coming back

Something very different from Copestick Murray

**Harpers
Wine & Spirit**