

# Two of world's most influential wine personalities are South African women

[Su Birch](#), CEO of Wines of South Africa and [Lynne Sherriff MW](#), who chairs the Institute of Masters of Wine, based in London have been shortlisted by UK-based Wine Intelligence for its line-up of the world's most influential figures in wine over the past decade.

A leading international research company that consults to wine producers worldwide on strategy and branding, it has compiled what it calls "a 10 for 10 list" in celebration of its first decade in business.

In the opinion of the judges, the two women have positively influenced the global wine industry.

Birch was named the first winner of the 10 for 10 Wine Business Awards, Wine Intelligence announced this morning, 7 March 2012.

## Su Birch



Su Birch, winner of the first 10 for 10 Wine Business Awards.

Image: Wine Intelligence

The "instrumental role" of Birch, who has been CEO of WOSA since 2002, "in developing South Africa's wine producing reputation has been exceptional," states the judges.

Under the banner "variety is in our nature," she has been actively promoting the country's competitive advantage in producing a rich variety of wine styles. She is also credited with spearheading South Africa's far-reaching Biodiversity & Wine Initiative (BWI) that has seen producers set aside more land for conservation than the equivalent of the national vineyard.

Birch has also played a key role in advancing the country's reputation as one of the most progressive amongst wine-producing nations in driving eco-sustainable wine production. She has been one of the major advocates of the country's Sustainability Seal, the first industry-wide initiative of its kind anywhere in the world, to promote production integrity from the vineyard to the consumer.

At an international level she has also been one of the key drivers for co-operation amongst normally competing New World wine producing countries, playing an important part in bringing South Africa, New Zealand, the US, Chile and Argentina together at the annual international trade fair ProWein, where the countries annually present a collective showcase.

Birch has been widely acknowledged for her contribution to the South African winemaking industry. She won the International Wine and Spirit Competition's Women in Wine Award (2005), the Institute of Cape Wine Masters' Wine Personality of the Year (2005) and Woman of the Year (2009), conferred by leading UK industry journal The Drinks Business.

## Lynne Sherriff

South African-born Sherriff is a former winemaker who trained in Stellenbosch, Germany and France. She has been chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine (IMW) since 2010. The IMW currently has 300 members who have the title of Master of Wine, the wine industry's highest professional accreditation. The membership now spans 23 countries, a big leap since its inaugural examinations in 1953.

Sherriff was one of the first two South Africans to earn her MW, in 1993. Currently there are only four South Africans to have achieved this distinction.



Lynne Sherriff, chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine.

The panel has lauded her for "both inspirational and determined leadership in the world of wine experts." Fluent in English, French, Dutch, German and working on her Japanese, she has consulted to some of the world's leading producers and marketers of wine across Europe, as well as in North America, Chile and Japan, advising major multi-nationals and generic marketing organisations.

Although living in the UK for almost 20 years, she remains closely involved with the South African wine industry and serves on the Veritas judging panel for the annual SA National Wine Awards.

## Other nominees

They have been nominated alongside some of the most prominent names in the international wine fraternity, such as Robert Parker, whose palate is believed to hold such weight that producers all over the world have changed their winemaking styles to ensure positive ratings in his widely read Wine Advocate.

Also on the list is Gary Vaynerchuck, who revolutionised wine communication with his video blog, Wine Library. Both men also appear on the Decanter magazine's Power List of the 50 most influential people in the world of wine.

Other nominees include John Casella, MD of Casella Wines, whose Yellow Tail brand is ranked as one of the most successful in the US market, now the biggest worldwide in terms of spend; the famous French winemaker Michel Rolland, who consults to producers worldwide; Miguel Torres, president of the prominent Spanish company Bodegas Miguel Torres, and Eduardo Guisasa, CEO of giant Chilean company Vina Concha y Toro.

For the full list of nominees, go to [www.wineintelligence.com](http://www.wineintelligence.com).

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