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Paolo Basso crowned world's best sommelier



The 47-year-old Swiss-Italian was crowned champion at the 14th finals held by **Association de la Sommellerie Internationale** in Japan. The global contest takes place every three years.

Veronique Rivest of Canada and **Aristide Spies** from Belgium were named as runners-up to **Basso**, making Rivest the first woman to achieve a top three finish.

Only 12 sommeliers made it through to the semi-finals, including the UK's **Eric Zwiebel**, of the **Summer Lodge** in Dorset, and Turkey's **Isa Bal**, of the **Fat Duck**.

‘It was very hard and only gets tougher and more pressurised when you get to the finals,’ said a delighted Basso, who was presented with silver jeroboam engraved with his name for winning the three-day event. Basso received his trophy from **Benoit Gouez**, chef de cave of **Moet Hennessy**, alongside his wife and daughter in front of a 4,000-strong audience and live on Japanese television.

‘It is a very important moment for me,’ he said. ‘I would like to thank first of all my family because they allowed me the time for the hard training.’ Basso, who lifted the **European Sommelier** title three years ago, was runner-up in the world competition in 2000, 2007 and 2010, missing out to **Gerard Basset** in the last final.

Having trained at the **Swiss Sommelier Association School**, Basso currently lectures on wine, runs a consulting business named **Ceresio Vini** and is a Judge at the **Decanter World Wine Awards**. He is also wine director of **Conca Bella** restaurant near **Lake Como** in northern Italy.

He plans to spend a few days holiday with his family in Japan, following his win.