Old Vine Hero Awards 2025: meet the finalists for the communication & education award

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The Old Vine Hero Awards 2025 honors outstanding communicators and educators advocating for old vines. This year's Communication & Education category recognizes figures like Michèle Shah, Dylan Grigg, Alder Yarrow, and Nacho León for their efforts in promoting awareness and preservation. The winner will receive a trip to the Old Vine Conference in California.

We've received another inspiring haul of nominations for the third **Old Vine Hero Awards** and our judges have had the agonising task of reaching 5 shortlists from 14 countries!

Below you'll find the profiles of the finalists in the **COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION AWARD** category, a new category that broadens the scope of the original Communication award, recognising not only exceptional communicators in the wine industry but also the educators who are working to inform, inspire, and raise awareness about the importance of old vines.

Thanks to the generous support of the IWSC the winners of the Communication & Education Award will receive AN INCREDIBLE PRIZE:

A ticket (including flight and accommodation) to the *Old Vine Conference Meeting of the Minds 2025* in California, taking place from October 31st to November 4th! The winner will also be **commissioned to write an article for *Club Oenologique*,** sharing their journey, reflections and insights from the California conference.

Voting will close on **Wednesday 26th March at 21.00 GMT**.

To vote for your Old Vine Hero in this category:

VOTE NOW

Michèle Shah:

Michèle Shah has been a driving force in promoting Italian wine for over 30 years, working as a marketer, writer, communicator, and judge. Her deep expertise and extensive network have made her a respected advocate for preserving and promoting old vines. Since becoming the Old Vine Conference (OVC) Regional Ambassador for Italy in 2022, she has played a pivotal role in advancing its mission.

Her passion for old vines stems from a lifelong appreciation of their resilience, history, and cultural significance. She sees them as living legacies that embody both heritage and

future excellence. Leveraging her decades of experience, Michèle has significantly increased awareness and engagement around old vines on both national and international stages.

Key achievements include identifying and promoting critical old vine projects across Italy, supporting growers committed to preserving historic vineyards, and fostering high-level industry connections to secure recognition and resources for old vines. She has also led strategic communication efforts that have elevated the profile of old vine wines in global markets.

As a shortlisted nominee for a communications award, Michèle's tireless advocacy continues to shape the future of old vines, ensuring their legacy endures for generations to come.

Dr. Dylan Grigg:

Dr. Dylan Grigg is a viticulturist, winemaker, and old vine researcher with over 20 years of experience in the field. Born and raised in Barossa, Australia, he completed his PhD in 2016 on the influence of grapevine age on vine growth and wine quality, challenging conventional wisdom about old vines and their economic viability. His research on epigenetics highlights old vines as a crucial source of genetic robustness for the future of wine.

Dylan actively shares his findings through social media, educational seminars, and global consulting. With over 7,000 engaged Instagram followers (@gdylla), he makes complex viticultural concepts accessible to a broad audience, including wine professionals, students, and consumers. He has contributed to *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, hosted the MW Seminar on old vines, and advises old vine custodians in regions such as Rioja, Empordà, Malta, South Africa, and the UK.

Through vineyard visits, guest lectures, and international

speaking engagements, Dylan fosters a deeper appreciation for old vines. His passion, combined with his scientific expertise, continues to shape the global conversation on old vines, ensuring their preservation and recognition for future generations.

Alder Yarrow:

Alder Yarrow is a pioneer in wine journalism and the architect behind The Old Vine Registry, the world's most comprehensive database of historic vineyard sites. As Founder & Editor of Vinography.com, he has been a leading voice in wine writing since 2004, shaping conversations about wine through insightful reviews, editorials, and industry analysis.

Under Yarrow's leadership, The Old Vine Registry evolved from a spreadsheet into a fully digitalized, globally accessible resource in June 2023. This search-based tool now catalogs over 3,100 vineyards across 35 countries, providing critical visibility for old-vine sites. The Registry's foundation was laid by Jancis Robinson MW and wine writer Tamlyn Currin, with ongoing stewardship by The Old Vine Conference and support from Jackson Family Wines.

Beyond The Old Vine Registry, Yarrow's work emphasizes the preservation of old vineyards as cultural and biological treasures. He has spoken at global wine events, contributed to major wine publications, and authored The Essence of Wine. His contributions to wine media earned him a place in the Wine Writer's Hall of Fame and recognition as "The Wine World's Brightest Cyberstar."

The Old Vine Registry's impact was cemented when it won Best Heritage Initiative at the V d'Or Awards in Paris, highlighting Yarrow's dedication to old-vine conservation.

Nacho Leon:

Nacho León, a dedicated grower and winemaker from El Bierzo, Spain, is a leading advocate for old vine preservation and sustainable viticulture. As the owner of Demencia Wine, he manages 3.5 hectares of head-pruned old vines, focusing on restoring soil vitality and revitalizing historic vineyards impacted by chemical overuse. Since founding Demencia in 2016, he has worked tirelessly to bring abandoned vineyards back to life, cultivating them with minimal intervention and a deep respect for ecological balance.

Beyond his vineyard work, Nacho is a passionate defender of Bierzo's viticultural heritage. He campaigns against the removal of old vines and has protected nearly 500 hectares of historic vineyards. As the founder of initiatives like Bierzo Fuera de Serie (BFdS), he promotes local wine culture through educational tours and events. He also founded the Aspronautas Project, which integrates individuals with disabilities into the winemaking process, demonstrating his commitment to both social and environmental sustainability.A former president of Bierzo's quality control board and a representative of small viticulturists, Nacho's efforts are pivotal in shaping the future of old vines. His work has earned him recognition as a key figure in preserving the region's unique viticultural identity and advancing sustainable practices.

Read also: Applications open for the Old Vine Hero Awards 2025 with four new categories

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Key points

1. **The Old Vine Hero Awards 2025** recognizes advocates raising awareness about old vines' cultural and historical importance.

2. **The Communication & Education category** includes finalists from 14 countries, acknowledging communicators and educators.
3. **The winner will receive a trip to the Old Vine Conference 2025** in California.
4. **Nominees include Michèle Shah, Dylan Grigg, Alder Yarrow, and Nacho León**.
5. **Voting closes on March 26, 2025, at 21:00 GMT**.