# Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards 2026
# in association with LIEBHERR

## GENERAL RULES of the AWARDS

### BASIC INFO

**Who's behind the Awards?**

The Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards is organised by the Riga Wine & Champagne Festival (Nords Event Communications), in association with LIEBHERR, one of the world's leading manufacturers of premium wine storage cabinets.

**Our idea?**

***#1*** The Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards has been created to recognise and celebrate outstanding wine lists, drinks lists, retail portfolios, as well as the talented people and teams behind them across the Baltics.

**#2** Our aim is to encourage passionate and thoughtfully curated wine and drinks programmes that complement and elevate the Baltic gastronomy scene.

**#3** Our mission is to promote a deeper appreciation of wine and drinks, inspiring consumers to discover the diversity, craftsmanship and people behind the industry.

The awards are primarily intended for participants from the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). However, we also warmly welcome applications from those beyond the region who share a strong connection with the Baltics or consider themselves part of the Baltic wine and drinks community, including participants from Sweden, Finland, Poland and Denmark.

**Three types of awards + Top Baltic Sommeliers' Award!**

There are **three types of awards** at Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards 2026:

**#1 Baltic Wine List Awards**

Any restaurant, bar, hotel, café, club with a *good, great or extraordinary* **wine list** can apply for the Baltic Wine List Awards.

**#2 Baltic Drinks List Awards**

Any restaurant, bar, hotel, café, club with a *good, great or extraordinary* **drinks list** can apply for the Baltic Drinks List Awards.

**#3 Baltic Wine & Drinks Retailer Awards**

Any wine & drinks **retailer** with a *good, great or extraordinary* **wine & drinks selection** can apply for the Baltic Wine & Drinks Retailer Awards**.**

**#4 Top 50 Baltic Sommeliers Award**

As of 2026, the Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards includes the Top 50 Baltic Sommeliers Award, recognising outstanding sommeliers across the Baltic region. Please see page 9 for the award description and nomination criteria, and make sure to submit your nominations together with your application.

**General Timeline?**

#1 **Submission of applications: July 21, 2026 – September 21, 2026**.

#2 Judging process: October and November 2026.

#3 **Awards Ceremony** during *Riga Wine & Champagne* autumn session on **November 21**, 2026 at Hanzas Perons in Riga, Latvia.

#4 Publication of the Awards results in Baltic Outlook, airBaltic's in-flight magazine, and www.balticwinelists.com

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### Entry Fees?

*Early-bird* fee of €59 + VAT per applicant: July 21 – August 21, 2026

Regular fee of €99 + VAT per applicant: August 22 – September 21, 2026

An applicant may submit entries in one or more Award categories applicable to their business, including the Wine List Awards, Drinks List Awards, and/or Retailer Awards. Where an applicant submits entries for multiple Award categories, a separate entry fee will apply to each category.

*Please note*: each *Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards* **entry fee includes:**

**5 admissions** to the Awards ceremony on November 21, 2026.

**1 admission** to the Riga Wine & Champagne festival's "Top 100 Wines + Chefs" tasting show on November 21, 2026 featuring Top imported wines in Latvia, masterclasses, shows and opportunity to taste gastronomic creations of the leading chefs.

Participants of the Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards are entitled to a **20% discount** on selected Riga Wine & Champagne Festival events, including Top 100 Wines + Chefs (21 November 2026) and Bubble Parade (4 April 2027).

A promotional discount code will be sent upon submission of the application.

### How to apply?

**Step 1. Choose the Award** you're applying for! Remember it's three different awards this year you can apply for, and you can apply for multiple awards.

**Step 2. Filling in on-line application** for each of the Awards you're applying to and uploading documents via www.balticwinelists.com. The application and document upload can be done in several stages via google account. The

final version of the application form will be considered the version available on Sep 21, 2026.

*Please note*: Make sure you submit the original pdf of your wine and/or drinks' list including **vintages and prices** – do not submit excel sheets of your stock, since we really need to see how you present the wines/drinks to customers (see also WINE LIST DESIGN AWARD on page 9). P.S. A quick spell-check and final review before submitting your application can make all the difference!

*Please note*: Retail stores however are welcome to submit their current stock (please make sure to indicate **vintages and prices** not just brands or names of wines – otherwise there's no point in submitting) in excel, pdf or any other appropriate format.

**Step 3**. **Confirmation** - once your application has been processed and confirmed as complete, we will send you a confirmation email together with the invoice.

*Please note*: This year, we kindly ask all applicants for the Baltic Wine List Awards to **send one printed copy of their wine list by post** no later than 21 October 2026 to:

SIA Nords Event Communications, Brīvības street 40–34, Riga, LV-1050, Latvia.

Please mark the envelope - Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards.

The wine lists will be displayed during the Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards ceremony and returned to you after the event.

## #1 BALTIC WINE LIST AWARDS







The Jury will consider the following aspects of the submitted wine lists.

**What's inside the WINE LIST?**

How well does the wine list reflect the cuisine, concept and personality of the venue? Does it offer a balanced selection of countries, regions, producers, wine styles and vintages? Is there a clear focus or unique strength, such as a particular country, region or producer? Does the list include a strong by-the-glass programme, as well as half-bottles and larger formats where appropriate?

How original and distinctive is the selection? Does it feature rare, small-production or hard-to-find wines, producers, grape varieties or vintages? Have the owners or sommeliers made a particular effort to curate a unique collection? Finally, how knowledgeable and experienced is the team responsible for creating and serving the wine list?

**PRESENTATION & DESIGN**

How clearly is the wine list organised and presented? Is it accurate, complete and easy to navigate? Does each wine include essential information such as the producer, wine name, country or region of origin, vintage, price, and serving size or bottle format? Does the design and overall presentation of the wine list reflect the style and concept of the venue?

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

Does the wine list offer good value for money? Are mark-ups appropriate in relation to the market and the venue's concept? Does the pricing provide attractive entry-level options while encouraging guests to explore higher-priced wines? Are premium wines fairly priced, and does the pricing strategy offer value throughout the list rather than applying a uniform markup? How are iconic and highly sought-after wines priced in comparison with the rest of the selection?

## #2 BALTIC DRINK LIST AWARDS








The Jury will consider the submitted drinks lists based on the following criteria.

**What's inside the DRINKS LIST?**

How well does the drinks list reflect the concept, style and identity of the venue? Does it offer a balanced selection of spirits and other beverages from a diverse range of countries, categories and producers, or demonstrate a clear focus on a particular region, style or category? Is the selection thoughtfully curated, with depth across key categories and a distinctive point of view?

Where applicable, does the venue offer a well-developed cocktail programme featuring both classic and signature cocktails? Is the cocktail list seasonal, creative and aligned with the venue's concept? Does the overall drinks selection include rare, limited or hard-to-find products, demonstrating originality and careful curation? How knowledgeable and experienced is the team responsible for creating, recommending and serving the drinks?

**PRESENTATION & DESIGN**

How clearly is the drinks list organised and presented? Is it easy to navigate, visually appealing and consistent with the concept and atmosphere of the venue?

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

Does the drinks list demonstrate a well-considered pricing strategy that delivers value to the guest while reflecting the positioning of the venue? Are mark-ups appropriate in relation to the market and the venue's concept?

Does the pricing encourage guests to explore the range while offering fair value across different categories and price levels?

## #3 BALTIC WINE & DRINKS RETAILER AWARDS








The Jury will consider the submitted wine & drinks retailer portfolios based on the following criteria.

**PORTFOLIO SELECTION**

How comprehensive and well-curated is the retailer's portfolio? Does it offer a balanced selection of wines and drinks from a diverse range of countries, regions, producers and styles, or demonstrate a clear focus on a particular category, country or region? Is there sufficient depth across key categories, including vintages, formats and price points where applicable? Does the portfolio feature distinctive, limited or hard-to-find products, reflecting originality, expertise and careful curation? How knowledgeable and experienced is the team responsible for selecting and presenting the portfolio?

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

Does the retailer demonstrate a well-considered pricing strategy that delivers value to customers while reflecting the positioning of the business? Are mark-ups appropriate in relation to the market and retail segment? Does the portfolio offer attractive entry-level options alongside compelling value at higher price points? Are premium and iconic wines and spirits priced fairly within the overall range?

## THE AWARDS

The Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards will feature three types of STARS to award the best wine & drinks programmes as well as retailers:

- ✔ ONE STAR – a very good wine/drinks list or retailer.
- ✔ TWO STARS – an excellent wine/ drinks list or retailer.
- ✔ THREE STARS – an outstanding wine/ drinks list or retailer.

## AWARD CERTIFICATES, STICKERS, LOGOs

Award recipients are encouraged to proudly display their Award certificates at their venues as a mark of excellence and recognition.

Award recipients are also encouraged to display the official Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards door stickers and use the Award logos and stamps in their communications. Please contact the Organiser to receive the door stickers and the electronic versions of the Award logos and stamps.










## SPECIAL WINE & DRINKS AWARD CATEGORIES - EXAMPLES

Based on the applications received, the Jury reserves the right to present additional Special Awards, including but not limited to:

- ✔ *Best Wine List of Latvia/ Lithuania/ Estonia/ Best Baltic Wine List;*
- ✔ *Best Wine & Drinks Retailer of Latvia/ Lithuania/ Estonia/ Best Baltic Wine & Drinks Retailer;*

- ✔ *Best Hotel Wine List/ Best Wine Bar List / Best Restaurant Wine List / Best Fine-Dining Restaurant Wine List/ Best Wine Bar-Shop list, etc.;*
- ✔ *The Most Complete/ Best Value/ Best Presentation/ The Most Surprising List;*
- ✔ *Best Champagne/ Sparkling/ Fortified/ Bordeaux/ Best Old-World List / Best New World List, etc.;*
- ✔ *Best Large/ Medium-size/ Compact Wine list;*
- ✔ *Best by-the-glass list, Best selection of Large format bottles.*
- ✔ *The Most diverse spirits list*
- ✔ *The Best Single Malt Whisky list*
- ✔ *Best Cocktail Card of Latvia/ Lithuania/ Estonia/ Best Baltic Cocktail Card;*
- ✔ *The most innovative and creative cocktail card*

The main partner, **LIEBHERR**, may present Special Prizes based on the Jury's recommendations.

## WINE LIST DESIGN AWARD

In cooperation with Mārtiņš Pīlēns, Jury Member of the Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards, a dedicated WINE LIST DESIGN AWARD will be presented to recognise the best designed and presented wine list in each of the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Mārtiņš Pīlens, the designer of the iconic “wine basket” by My Wine Design, will personally present the “wine baskets” to the lucky winners during the Awards ceremony. Mārtiņš has also kindly agreed to share his insights with regards to wine list design & presentation during the Awards.

## TOP 50 BALTIC SOMMELIERS AWARD

In our effort to promote the understanding and prestige of the sommelier profession, Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards in association with LIEBHERR is continuing the 3rd edition of the "Top 50 Baltic Sommeliers" Award.

**#1 – Nominations**

1.1. As part of the application process, all applicants to the Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards will be invited to nominate five outstanding sommeliers who deserve recognition for their professionalism, expertise and contribution to the wine and hospitality industry.

1.2. Applicants may nominate sommeliers from their own organisation as well as from other restaurants, bars or retailers.

1.3. Nominees should be actively working in the industry and actually involved in guest service and wine presentation - in other words, *working on the floor.*

The selected nominees will participate in a public vote to determine the Top 50 Baltic Sommeliers, organised in cooperation with Delfi.

**#2 – Public Voting, First round, 26.10.-08.11.**

2.1. Following the nomination stage, the 50 sommeliers receiving the highest number of nominations and recognition from the industry and wine community will proceed to the first round of public voting.

**2.2. Finalist selection**

2.2.1. Based on the results of the first round, 25 sommeliers will advance to the final voting round.

2.2.2. To ensure balanced representation across the Baltic sommelier community, the group of 25 finalists must include at least two female and two male sommeliers from each Baltic country. The remaining places among the 25 finalists will be determined solely by the voting results, regardless of country or gender.

2.2.3. If the initial Top 25 based on voting results does not meet these representation requirements, the next highest-ranked eligible sommelier(s) from the underrepresented country and gender category, based on the

number of votes received in the first round, will advance to the final round. For each such addition, the lowest-ranked sommelier within the initial Top 25 whose exclusion would not result in another representation requirement being breached will be excluded, until all representation requirements are met while maintaining a total of 25 finalists.

**#3 – Public Voting, Final round, 09.-16.11.**

**3.1.** The 25 finalists will proceed to the second and final round of public voting, organised in cooperation with Delfi. Voting in the final round will start from zero, and votes received in the first round will not be carried over.

**3.2. The results of the final voting round will determine the sommeliers recognised at the Top 50 Baltic Sommeliers Award ceremony.**

**#4 – Awards**

4.1. Based on the final voting results, up to five highest-ranked female sommeliers and up to five highest-ranked male sommeliers overall will be awarded during the Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards ceremony in Riga on November 21, 2026. If fewer than five female or male sommeliers have qualified for the final voting round, all qualified sommeliers of the respective gender will be awarded.

4.2. In addition, the highest-ranked sommelier from each Baltic country will be recognised.

4.3. The Organisers and Jury reserve the right to present additional Special Awards to recognise outstanding achievements, including but not limited to categories such as Sommelier Debut of the Year and other exceptional contributions to the wine and hospitality industry.

4.4. Any exceptional or unforeseen circumstances not explicitly covered by these rules shall be resolved by Jury.

## AWARDS CEREMONY

The results of Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards will be presented on November 21, 2026.

## THE JURY MEMBERS

The Jury panel brings together some of the most respected names in the international wine world:

**Aigars Nords** / Latvia / – founder of Riga Wine & Champagne Festival and Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards. WSET Diploma holder and author of *Vīns un Nords*.

**Mārtiņš Pīlēns** / Latvia / – champagne expert and founder of My Wine Design, pioneering the grower champagne movement in the Baltics.

**Agnese Gintere** / Latvia / – award-winning sommelier, wine expert and founder of Wine Collectors, with 19 years of experience in the wine industry.

**Ronalds Pētersons** / Latvia / – sommelier and wine consultant at Noble Wine. Best Sommelier of the Baltic States 2018.

**Jānis Volkinšteins** / Latvia / – head Sommelier and manager of Vieta, a three-time winner of Best Wine List in the Baltics. WSET Diploma holder.

**Lauris Grass** / Latvia / – cocktail bar owner, spirits enthusiast and masterclass host, with over a decade of experience in the cocktail industry.

**Martynas Pravilonis** / Lithuania / –four-time Lithuanian and two-time Baltic Sommelier Champion, WSET Diploma and Advanced Sommelier holder.

**Simonas Laukaitis** / Lithuania / – wine Director for Michelin-starred restaurants and advocate for sustainable wine, with an award-winning wine list at Nineteen18.

**Arūnas Starkus** / Lithuania / – editor-in-Chief of *Vyno žurnalas*, co-founder of Vyno dienos and Wine + Dessert Lietuva, and co-owner of Vyno klubas.

**Greta Skamarociute** / Lithuania / – award-winning bartender and global winner of the 2026 Graham's Blend Series, currently managing Nomads Cocktail Bar.

**Mikk Parre** / Estonia /– current Best Sommelier of Europe, Africa & Middle East and two-time Best Sommelier of the Baltics. ASI Gold Diploma holder.

**Karoline Reinhold** / Estonia / – two-time Best Sommelier of Estonia and ASI Gold Diploma holder, with experience at Michelin-starred restaurants worldwide.

**Kevin Lilleleht** / Estonia / – head Sommelier at two-Michelin-starred 180 Degrees and winner of the 2025 Michelin Estonia Sommelier Award.

**Kristo Tomingas** / Estonia / – award-winning bartender with 30+ years of experience, four published cocktail books and founder of Butterfly Lounge.

## PUBLICITY

**Baltic Outlook, airBaltic's inflight magazine**:

A complete list of Award winners will be published at Baltic Outlook, the official media partner of Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards, in December, 2026. The publication will feature profiles of the winners and will act as a guide to gourmet travellers & restaurant audience.

**Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards website**:

www.balticwinelists.com will showcase the award winners as well as provide a database searchable by country, wine strengths along with information on wine specialties, pricing information, links to wine lists, etc.

**Social media Profiles:**

Baltic Wine & Drinks Awards Facebook and Instagram accounts as well as strong support from Riga Wine & Champagne Facebook and Instagram accounts.

**General publicity:**

General publicity & PR via media relations in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania.

## CHANGES in RULES

The Organisers reserve the right to amend these Rules and Regulations at any time.

Last updated: 5 October 2026.