



*Sonal Holland*

MASTER OF WINE

Sonal Holland is the first and only Indian to have been conferred the title of Master of Wine, the most prestigious title in the world of wines held by an elite group of less than 450 professionals across five continents. An award-winning broadcaster, she is a Tedx speaker, an acclaimed writer and a sought- after wine commentator with diversified entrepreneurial ventures. Sonal is the founder of India's premier wine consultancy business, SoHo Wine Consultants, and has conceived and chaired the pioneering India Wine Awards, the country's most authoritative competition dedicated to celebrating wines. A certified wine educator, her eponymous Sonal Holland Wine Academy has established itself as India's foremost wine-centric institution since its decade-long inception. She is the founder-director of Vine2Wine, purveyors of modern and sophisticated wine retail shops across the country. Through the SoHo Wine Club, Holland designs and curates exceptionally bespoke F&B experiences.

Her distinguished career has earned her several accolades. She has been featured in the list of Top 50 Most Powerful Women in Indian Luxury every year since 2015 and has held a spot in the list of Top 100 Most Influential People in Indian Luxury since 2016, by India's leading luxury business magazine LuxeBook. She has been recognised amongst the Top Women in Wine by the Indian Wine Academy and was conferred with a 'Wine Personality of the Year' award by India's leading food writers' guild, the Food Bloggers Association of India (FBAI). The Rotary International District Conference also felicitated her for her passionate contribution to India's wine industry.

The initial stages of her wine career had Sonal holding office as the Divisional Head of Wine & Beverage with a leading hospitality group in India, ITC Hotels. In 2009, Sonal founded the Sonal Holland Wine Academy, India's leading wine-centric institution and a licensed collaborator with Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET) headquartered in London, UK. The courses are tailored to suit corporates, hospitality and airline companies, wine industry, food & beverage professionals and connoisseurs of wine.

In 2016, Sonal launched SoHo Wine Consultants, offering bespoke services to the Hospitality and AlcoBev industry. With her domain expertise on the business of wines and spirits in India, Sonal is drawing global attention to the country's young and exciting beverage industry. Her vast cultural knowledge has made her a sought-after strategic consultant for international brands seeking a foothold in India's complex marketplace, through a 360-degree suite of services.

In 2017, Sonal conceived the India Wine Awards, considered as India's most authoritative wine competition, which recognises excellence in wine and restaurant wine programmes in the country. Powered and chaired by Sonal Holland, the competition is led by a jury of the most qualified wine professionals and the finest taste-makers from across the world. The India Wine Awards are regarded as the ultimate consumer guide to ranking the best wines and wine-forward restaurants in the country. Presently in its fourth edition, the scope of the awards continues to get bigger and broader in its vision, with consumer empowerment, education and experiences at its core.

In 2018, in collaboration with a London-based consumer research company Wine Intelligence, Sonal released the country's most comprehensive, research-backed survey on the urban Indian wine consumer, the India Wine Insider. These research findings provided valuable insights into the psyche and behaviour of the Indian wine drinker, uncovering prevailing consumer realities whilst also identifying future growth opportunities beneficial for Indian and international traders to make informed decisions.

It was in early 2019 that Sonal forayed into the wine retail business with her entrepreneurial venture, Vine2Wine. Designed as sophisticated retail spaces for wine, these outlets are located in Foodhall gourmet stores in key consumption cities featuring a carefully curated selection of the finest wines from across the world. To support the wine shops, Sonal started the SoHo Wine Club, an extensive community of wine-loving entrepreneurs, lifestyle patrons, corporate clientele and friends. The Club recommends exceptional wines to its members guided by Sonal personal selections, through invigorating events and tastings.

In addition to her educational and entrepreneurial ventures, Sonal is also a passionate broadcaster and is keen to reach wider audiences through the digital medium. Her pioneering digital channel Sonal Holland Wine TV, dedicated to wine education and entertainment, has bagged multiple awards, including the prestigious SheThePeople's Winner of Innovative Content Creation in 2015. The broadcast has achieved over half a million views with exciting, topical and relatable content on wine travel, pairing, enjoyment tips, reviews, expert opinions and tastings. In 2018, she gave her first TEDx talk, chronicling her journey from a Fortune 500 corporate house to becoming India's leading wine voice. A distinguished wine writer, her wine columns have been featured in Vogue, Conde Nast Traveller, Mid-Day, Times of India, Economic Times and LuxeBook, among other prestigious publications.

As a wine critic, she has judged several high-profile international competitions including the 2018 Decanter Asia Wine Awards, Concours Mondial du Bruxelles and the Hong Kong International Wine & Spirit Competition. Appointed as the Official Ambassador of the German VDP wine association and the Bourgogne Wine Board, Sonal is entrusted with the responsibility of promoting their wines in India.

In her previous avatar, Sonal was a director of national sales at a Fortune 500 company, and gave it up to pursue her passion in wine in 2007. She enrolled at the Wine and Spirits Education Trust (WSET) in London and completed her Level 4 Diploma in Wines & Spirits in 2010. Holland was named Master of Wine by the Institute of Masters of Wine (UK) in 2016. Holland also holds a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Mumbai, and a Diploma in Hotel Management from the IHM Mumbai. In February 2020, she added another feather to her cap by becoming the first Indian with an advanced certification in Saké and Shochu, conferred by the exclusive Japan Saké and Shochu Makers Association.

Sonal shares her love of wine with her husband, Andrew Holland, a celebrated financial expert, and their young daughter Rianna who can't wait until she is old enough to join in the fun.