



Tim Martin Wetherspoon boss knighted in New Year Honours Free 221224

Description



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Wetherspoon pub chain founder Tim Martin has been knighted in the New Year Honours list.

The Brexit campaigner has been recognised for his services to hospitality and culture.

He was one of the most high-profile business people to argue in favour of leaving the EU during the 2016 referendum campaign.

Meanwhile, there was also a knighthood for Conservative MP and former cabinet minister Sajid Javid.

Sir Tim said the news of his knighthood came “out of the blue” and “had never been expected”.

“I always think that, in the pub world, it is a team effort – even if you’ve just got one pub there are many people involved,” he told the PA news agency.

“I think it’s the Wetherspoon colleagues and customers who are getting the award really, that’s the way I look at it. I’m just the lucky recipient.”

He added: “I’d like to think [the knighthood] is not for my rarely disclosed political views – I hope it is for what it says on the tin.”

Sir Tim, who was born in Norwich, founded the pub chain in 1979 and has been the company's chairman since 1983.

The businessman had previously studied law and qualified as a barrister.

His first venue was in Muswell Hill, north London, and was originally called Martin’s Free House, before being renamed JD Wetherspoon the following year.

The chain, which became known for its affordable prices, floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1992.

In its early years the company’s pubs were all in the capital but from the 1990s it expanded across the UK and now has more than 800 venues.

An outspoken supporter of Brexit, Sir Tim was a major donor to the Vote Leave campaign, which was fronted by Boris Johnson and Michael Gove.

During the 2016 campaign Wetherspoon’s spent nearly £95,000 on pro-Brexit beer mats, posters and booklets, which were distributed across the company’s pubs.

Despite backing Mr Johnson to be prime minister, Sir Tim went on to be a vocal critic of the impact of lockdowns on hospitality venues during the Covid pandemic.

He accused the then-PM of “hypocrisy” over parties held at Downing Street, while pubs were forced to close.

Fellow Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage said the honour was “well deserved”.

“Tim Martin has created an extraordinary business, given great value to customers and preserved

some wonderful historic buildings,” he told the BBC.

“I have appeared with him all over the country in the battle for Brexit and he is great company.”

Sir Sajid, who has served six cabinet roles, is among the political names to be honoured.

Elected as the Tory MP for Bromsgrove in 2010, he became the first cabinet minister of Asian descent when he was appointed culture, media and sport secretary four years later.

He has since served as home secretary, chancellor and health secretary but last year said he would stand down as an MP at the next general election.

His resignation from Mr Johnson’s cabinet in July 2022, alongside then-Chancellor Rishi Sunak, marked the beginning of the end for the then prime minister, who announced he would stand down just two days later.

Labour’s Dame Margaret Beckett, who was the first woman to serve as foreign secretary, also received an honour.

She will become a Dame Grand Cross after already being made a Dame Commander in 2013.

First elected as the MP for Lincoln in 1974, Dame Margaret has represented Derby South for more than 40 years but is standing down at the next election.

She briefly served as acting leader of the Labour Party in 1994 after the sudden death of John Smith.

However, she lost out to Tony Blair in the leadership election that followed.

Other politicians to receive honours include:

- Labour MP for Mitcham and Morden Siobhain McDonagh will be made a Dame Commander
- Labour MP for Makerfield Yvonne Fovargue becomes a CBE
- Conservative MP for Erewash, Maggie Throup, who served as vaccines minister during the later stages of the Covid pandemic, becomes an OBE
- Conservative MP for Wyre Forest Mark Garnier and Bristol’s Labour mayor Marvin Rees have also been made an OBE

New Year honours are awarded by the King, following recommendations by the prime minister or senior government ministers.

Members of the public can also recommend people for an award.

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