

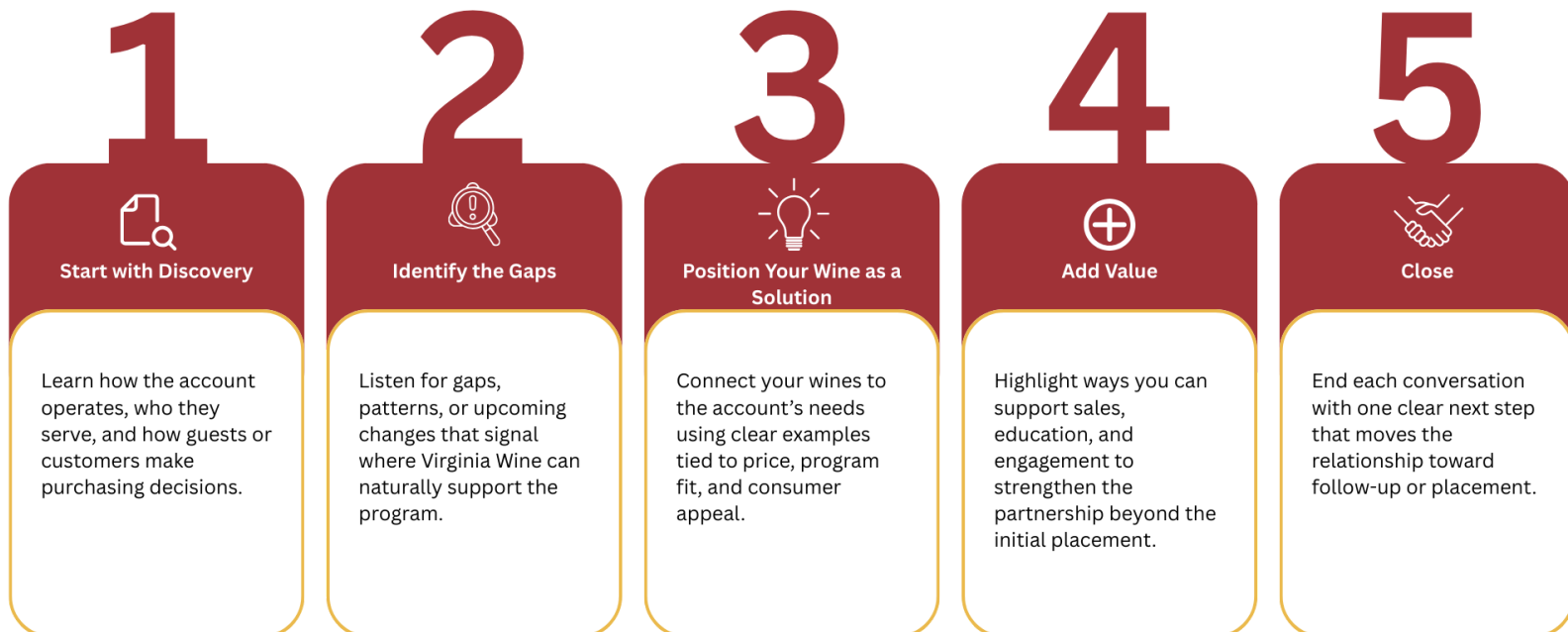
Virginia Wine Trade Tasting Conversation Guide

Virginia Wine trade tastings are designed to help buyers taste, discover, and ultimately place Virginia wines in their beverage programs.

For wineries, these tastings are also an opportunity to:

- Meet buyers and decision-makers
- Learn who the buyer serves and how their guests or customers drink
- Identify gaps in wine lists or retail shelves
- Position Virginia Wine as a solution that fits the account's needs

This guide is intended to help wineries move beyond just pouring wine samples and into meaningful conversations that lead to placements and long-term relationships. Refer to the worksheet at the end of this guide to prepare your messaging and organize your approach in advance.



Start With Discovery

Take time to understand the account and its audience.

Learn About the Account	Learn About the Consumer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you on-premise (restaurant/bar) or off-premise (retail)? • How would you describe your wine program or assortment? • How often do you refresh your wine list or bring in new products? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is your typical guest or customer? Are they more adventurous or more comfort-driven? • Do they shop or order by varietal, price point, or recommendation? • What price range do guests or customers feel most comfortable with?

Identify the Gap

Use what you've learned to recognize where Virginia Wine naturally fits into the account's program. Listen for areas where your wines can support the buyer's goals, fill a missing category, or make their program easier to sell.

Listen for Opportunities

- Guests frequently ask for certain categories or styles.
- The account already carries Virginia Wine but wants more variety.
- Seasonal updates or menu changes are coming soon.

On-Premise (Restaurants and Wine Bars)

When speaking with on-premise buyers, listen for areas where Virginia Wine can support service and pairing.

- A cuisine style that pairs naturally with fresh, food-friendly wines.
- Gaps in by-the-glass offerings or a need for versatile options.
- Wines staff feel confident recommending — or categories they want more support with.

Off-Premise (Retail)

Try to reveal opportunities through sales patterns and shopper behavior.

- Fast-moving categories where a Virginia option could add local appeal.
- Wines that require hand-selling versus those customers actively seek out.
- Price points that move fastest in an account

Position Your Wine as a Solution

Once you understand the account, connect your wine to their needs using price, program fit, and consumer appeal.

Angle	Solution (examples)
By-the-Glass and Program Fit (On-Premise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This works well as a by-the-glass option around a specific price point because it is approachable, food-friendly due to the acidity, and easy for staff to recommend. ● This provides a Virginia option in a category guests already recognize.
Shelf and Case Positioning (Off-Premise)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This performs well as an everyday Virginia option within a specific retail range. ● Customers who enjoy similar styles (light reds, crisp white) often respond well to this wine. ● This is an easy hand-sell because it is locally rooted.
Food Pairing Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pairs well with seafood, poultry, or vegetable-forward dishes ● The acidity makes it a strong match for richer sauces or spice. ● The versatility allows it to work across a menu, increasing server confidence.
Consumer Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A strong bridge for guests who typically drink Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Bordeaux, etc. ● Approachable for newer wine drinkers while remaining interesting. ● A strong introduction to Virginia wine

Add Value Beyond the Bottle

Buyers often prioritize partners who help support sales, education, and engagement.

Value-Add Opportunities

On-Premise	Off-Premise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Winemaker dinners ● Virginia Wine Month activations ● Staff tastings or pre-shift trainings ● Menu pairing support and talking points for servers ● Share trends that you are seeing in the tasting room ● Create discount pricing for by-the-glass wines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-store tastings or sampling events ● Shelf talkers or concise staff talking points ● Staff education sessions focused on Virginia wine ● Highlight Sustainability and Trends: Focus on eco-friendly, sustainable, or low-intervention wines, as these certifications and stories are increasingly popular with consumers.

Ask the Closing Question (Create a Next Step)

Before ending the conversation, ask one clear question to move things forward.

- Does this feel like a fit for your program or shelf?
- Is this something your guests or customers would respond to?
- Would you like to explore this further with your distributor?
- Who is the best person to follow up with?
- Which distributor do you work with for Virginia wines?
- Offer to set up at appointment to showcase other wines of interest
- Collect a business card or confirm the best contact information before the conversation ends

Winery Portfolio Positioning Worksheet

Purpose:

This worksheet is meant to help you clarify how your wines fit into on- and off-premise programs overall. Use this sheet to identify your strengths, understand where your wines typically fit, and feel confident adjusting your message in real time.

1. Core Strengths of Your Wines

What do your wines consistently do well?

Check all that apply and add context.

- Approachability
- Food-friendliness
- Strong value for price
- Familiar styles with a Virginia angle
- Distinctive or unique expressions
- Consistency vintage to vintage
- Sustainability or farming practices
- Estate-grown or single-vineyard focus

In one sentence, my wines are best known for:

2. Common Gaps Your Wines Can Address

Where do your wines most often fit in trade programs?

My wines are especially strong solutions for:

- By-the-glass price point
- Everyday retail shelves
- Local or regional sections
- Seasonal list updates (rosé in the summer, sparkling near the holidays, etc.)
- Entry-level discovery for Virginia Wine
- Alternative to more expensive European comparison
- Interesting fit in a particular category (interesting aromatic white)

The gap I most often help fill is:

3. Positioning: How to Frame Your Wines

How should buyers think about your wines?

My wines are best positioned as:

- Familiar and easy to recommend
- A bridge from well-known styles
- A step-up or premium local option
- A food-driven choice
- A conversation-starting Virginia Wine
- Unique story (sustainability, interesting winemaking practices, hybrids, etc.)

When I describe my wines, I usually emphasize:

4. Price Awareness

Know where your wines make sense financially.

Typical wholesale range of my portfolio:

\$_____ – \$_____

My wines most often succeed at:

- Entry-level BTG pricing
- Mid-range BTG pricing
- Premium BTG or feature placements
- Everyday retail pricing
- Special-occasion retail pricing

My strongest price-to-value wines are:

5. Consumer Translation

What makes your wines easy to understand or sell?

My wines are most appealing to guests or customers who usually drink:

The “this is like” comparison I rely on most:

6. Value-Add Support You Can Offer

How you help accounts succeed after placement.

- I can realistically support placements with:
- Staff tastings or trainings
- In-store tastings
- Menu pairing support
- Virginia Wine Month participation
- Winemaker involvement
- Sustainability or production storytelling

The value-add I am most comfortable offering is:
