

Entering Wine Competitions: Guidelines & Tips

Wine Competitions can be a powerful tool for wineries. They provide feedback, elevate Virginia Wine on national and international stages, and create recognition opportunities. To make the most of these programs, consider the following guidelines:

Benefits of Participation in Wine Competitions

- **Feedback for Growth** – Judges provide professional, often blind, evaluations that can highlight strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Visibility & Recognition** – Awards raise the profile of your winery with trade, media, and consumers.
- **Virginia on the Map** – Every medal and mention contributes to the collective story of Virginia Wine.

Enter With Intention

Not all competitions are created equal. Entering thoughtfully ensures your time, resources, and wines are well spent.

- **Alignment Matters** – Choose competitions that fit your winery's goals, market positioning, and style.
- **Know the Audience** – Some competitions are consumer-facing, others are trade-driven, and some have international influence.
- **Cost vs. Benefit** – Factor in entry fees, shipping, and sample costs against potential exposure and recognition.

Take Advantage of Funding Support

The Virginia Wine Board Marketing Office periodically offers funding assistance for competition entry fees and shipping. In addition, we often work with partners such as Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to secure supplemental support for wineries participating in select competitions.

All opportunities are shared through the monthly Virginia Winery Newsletter, so be sure you and your team are subscribed and reviewing updates regularly. If you are not currently receiving the email communications, please email information@virginiawine.org and request to be added to the list.

Tips for Success

- **Do Your Research** – Review past winners and judges to understand if the competition aligns with your brand.

- **Select Your Wines Carefully** – Enter wines that are ready to show their best (bottle age, balance, and availability all matter).
- **Meet Deadlines** – Plan ahead for submission windows and shipping cut-offs.
- **Leverage Results** – Share any recognition through your website, social media, newsletters, shelf talkers, and with distributors.
- **Track Participation** – Use the competition spreadsheet to monitor which wines you've entered, the outcomes, and ROI.

Virginia Governor's Cup® Competition

The Virginia Governor's Cup® is one of the most respected state-level wine competitions in the country and an important platform for showcasing the quality of Virginia Wine.

Why Participate:

- **Prestige & Recognition** – Medals and Cup Case selection generate strong attention from consumers, trade, and media.
- **Governor's Cup Gala** – All Gold Medal wines are featured at the Gala, providing a high-impact opportunity to pour for trade buyers, consumers, media and industry leaders.
- **Meaningful Feedback** – Judges offer professional evaluations that can support winemaking decisions and long-term planning.
- **Elevating Virginia Wine** – Broad participation strengthens the collective message of quality across the state.

For the most current rules, eligibility, and deadlines, visit the Virginia Wineries Association website: <https://www.vawine.org/about-governors-cup/>

Using the Competition Spreadsheet

Use the attached Wine Competitions Spreadsheet to explore the vast array of industry wines competitions, including key dates, costs, and entry details. The spreadsheet is a helpful starting point to understand the landscape, compare opportunities, and plan ahead.

However, always reference each competition's official website for the most accurate, up-to-date deadlines, rules, and submission requirements.

You can access the spreadsheet here: [📄 Wine Competitions](#)

Making Competitions Work for You

Competitions can be an excellent tool when entered strategically. Choose those that align with your winery's vision, and use results not only as accolades but as valuable learning opportunities.