

2017 New York Wine & Food Classic Basic Information and Guidelines for Judges

- **SOCIAL MEDIA:** No judge or staff person is allowed to use any social media about the New York Wine & Food Classic or the New York Wine & Grape Foundation from the time the official judging opens until at least one hour after the NYWGF has issued its press release announcing the winners.
- **CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS:** The Foundation staff is always looking to improve the Classic and its other activities, and welcomes suggestions from judges and staff within the confines of the competition. It is guaranteed that all suggestions will be considered, but not guaranteed that they will be adopted.
- **PANELS:** There will be seven or eight panels of three judges each. We have tried to mix different professions (retailer, restaurateur, media, educator, researcher) and geographical origins to get good representation on each panel.
- **CHAIRPERSONS:** Each panel has a designated Chairperson who will coordinate the overall panel activities and report the final medal determinations. All of the panel Chairs have judged with us before, and are familiar with our procedures.
- **COMPETITION SCOPE:** All wines entered (except ringers, below) are New York wines, as this is basically a competition to determine which wineries are doing the best job with various wines at this time. We also have small categories of New York craft spirits and ciders.
- **LIMITED PRODUCTION WINES:** Our general guidelines for entries are that at least 100 cases must have been produced, and to be eligible for the Governor's Cup round at least 100 cases must be available at the time of entry. The Governor's Cup criterion will not change, but we also allow "limited production" wines (under 100 cases produced) to be entered in order to accommodate new wineries and special wines where quantity is limited. These will be mixed in with the normal wines, and eligible for the normal medals (Double Gold, Gold, Silver and Bronze) **but not** for Best of Class, Best of Category, or the Governor's Cup. You will not know which are "limited production" wines, as they will be tracked only by the back room staff for the purposes of medal announcements.
- **WINES:** We have divided up the wines to give the best representation possible among panels, given the number of wines entered. For example, all panels have some Chardonnay and Riesling; two or three panels each have either Cabernet Sauvignon or Cabernet Franc; and all panels have a mixture of vinifera, French-American, Native American, Minnesota varietals, and specialty wines such as fruit or mead. You will know at the beginning of the day your flights and the number of wines in each. Each panel will taste about 140 wines on the main (first) day of judging, which is easily do-able if we all move along. The Governor's Cup (sweepstakes) round the following morning usually involves about 40-50 wines, but it is easy to move through them very quickly due to the acclamation voting system which will be explained for those of you who are not familiar with it. We normally begin about 9 am and finish around 11 am.
- **RINGERS:** In the major categories (Chardonnay, Riesling, Cabernet Sauvignon, etc.) we will include high-quality wines from other states or countries as benchmarks to see how New York is measuring up. Fear not: This is NOT intended to trick the judges, only to provide points of reference. All ringers will be high-quality, well-known, higher priced wines from other regions and countries. As soon as a flight is over, we will let the judges know what the ringers were and how they scored.
- **MEDALS:** Possible medals include Double Gold (Exceptional Wine, requiring unanimous panel recommendation for Gold), Gold (Excellent, with a majority Gold vote sufficient), Silver (Very Good), Bronze (Good), and No Award (Mediocre, or worse). We do not have any pre-set percentages of these awards; that is up to you.
- **TOP AWARDS:** The ultimate award of the competition is the "Governor's Cup" for best of show. We will also include a "Winery of the Year" award based on the type and number of medals won and other criteria such as "Best Varietal", "Best of Category", etc. There will also be a "Specialty Wine Champion" (fruit, mead, etc.) separate from the "Winery of the Year Award", and those wines will not be included in the Governor's Cup round, nor will a "Best Craft Spirit" award or a "Best Cider" award. The "Best of Category" awards include Sparkling, White, Pink, Red, Dessert, and Specialty (such as

meads or fruit wines). The “Best Varietal” awards will be given in classes with an adequate number of wines (minimum of seven); we will also include “Best Blends” for red and white table wines. These awards will be unveiled at the luncheon following the competition after we have notified the big winners and appropriate media. (Judges are not required or expected to attend the luncheon—but it’s good!)

- **SCORE SHEETS:** We will use a simple evaluation sheet, similar to that used in many other competitions, for you to jot down your comments and recommendations for medals. You may use a number system, write elaborate comments (or none at all), or otherwise evaluate the wines however you wish. Ultimately what we want is your (and the panel’s) recommendations for medals and scores (for Gold and above), which will be recorded on a separate summary sheet by the panel chair, who will also notify us of which wines go to the Governor’s Cup round. It’s important to move along quickly, but without rushing.
- **PROCESS:** Your awesome back room staff will provide you with a flight of wines, which you (three) will all taste independently and make your individual evaluations. When all panelists have finished, the Chairperson will ask each panelist for medal recommendations (we urge rotation in terms of who goes first in order to avoid potential domination). If there is consensus on a particular wine (e.g., all Silver, or two Silvers and a Bronze), the panel coordinator notes the medal on a form.
- **DISCUSSION:** We expect to have over 950 wines for you to judge (about 135 per panel), so we encourage you to move along as efficiently as you can while being fair to the wines and yourself. If there is unanimity, consensus, or a majority for a particular wine, there is no need to discuss it. On the other hand, if there is significant disagreement (e.g., Gold, Silver, Bronze, or No Award votes), by all means re-taste and discuss it. Double Gold medals are those which have unanimous agreement from the judges that the wine is of Exceptional quality, before or after discussion. (IMPORTANT NOTE: All Double Gold wines automatically advance to the Governor’s Cup round. If your panel also wishes to push up a Gold—e.g., two Golds and a Silver—that is also OK as long as the panel Chair notes it for the backroom staff.)
- **OPEN-PALATEDNESS:** This is a complicated word, but an easy concept: Be open-minded with your mouth. New York’s strength is its diversity. Yes, we have some great Rieslings and Merlots, but we also have some great Seyvals, Cayugas, Catawbas, and now even Brianna and Frontenac (“Minnesota” varieties). Please don’t be a viticultural racist, assuming that great wine can only be made from certain varieties; if you have that opinion, please have the courtesy to disqualify yourself from a particular flight. If you are unfamiliar with a particular variety or type of wine so you don’t know what to expect or how to best judge them, by all means ask your fellow panelists who will be happy to help you out.
- **PACE:** Some judges move faster than others, and it will probably take you a few flights to come to a good pace for everyone. For the faster judges, please be patient (bring a newspaper, crossword puzzle, or sudoku); for the slower ones, try to keep up without sacrificing your honest evaluations. Take the time you need to give each wine a fair evaluation, but no more.
- **CORKED?** If any panel member thinks a wine may be corked, let the Chairperson know ASAP and we’ll get you a re-pour right away. It helps to speed things along if one or more panel members smell all the wines as soon as they’re brought out in case we need another bottle, and let the staff know right away. If in doubt, please err on the side of giving the wine another chance.
- **PLEASE DUMP:** When you’re finished with a flight, it would be helpful to the backroom staff if you could remove the paper tuits and dump your remaining wine into your dump buckets; this helps them clear the glasses more quickly.
- **HAVE FUN!** That’s what this is all about (in addition to judging a bunch of great wines, of course).