

CHAÎNE DES RÔTISSEURS YOUNG SOMMELIERS COMPETITION PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND RULES 2019



Updated on October 15, 2018

Joseph J. D'Ambrosio – Grand Echanson

Geoff Labitzke MW – Vice Echanson des Jeunes Sommeliers

Email: gdlabitzke@comcast.net or glabitzke@kistlervineyards.com



Welcome to the 2019 Chaîne Young Sommeliers Competition!

The Chaîne des Rôtisseurs' Best Young Sommeliers Competition is entering its 18th year as the oldest such national competition in America. We have much to celebrate! Each year the competitors and the quality of the competition have improved. The knowledge and service skills available to American restaurant patrons in selecting the perfect wine to pair with their meal have never been greater.

A new season begins. On January 12, 2019, we will hold the first round of competitions for the 2019 Best Young Sommelier title, to be awarded in Napa, California in late April. **Young sommeliers from across the United States may sign up now, and this includes sommeliers in the Caribbean that reside in countries where the U.S. Chaîne has chapters.**

A competitor must be at least 21 (twenty-one) on January 12, 2019 and must not yet have reached his or her 31st (thirty-first) birthday by September 30, 2019.

If you are a sommelier –whether new to our competition or a veteran–look at the next few pages describing the competitive process and calendar, then click on the application on the competition page to sign up at www.ysommc.us. There's no cost, and lots of professional benefits and prizes. The prizes awarded to our 2018 winner were likely the most valuable ever given to a winning sommelier in a competition of this type. The signup deadline is December 31, 2018.

If you know other sommeliers under 30 who are polishing their skills and looking for an educational challenge, tell them to visit the Chaîne Young Sommeliers Competition website (www.ysommc.us) and enroll in this year's contest right away! If they need a "nudge", send us an email with their name and contact information and we will follow up.

Sommeliers benefit by increasing their professional knowledge and skills through the competitive process, by enhancing their resumé through Chaîne recognition, and by meeting new people both in their profession and in the Chaîne who can help them succeed in the future. Of the 42 individuals who placed in the top three over the last 16 years, 18 have become Master Sommeliers—a success rate of 43%.



Young Sommeliers Competition

There are benefits/prizes for our regional and national winners (see below). Each regional winner will have his or her expenses paid to participate in our national competition and other events held for Chaîne members during the competition. Among the prizes at the national competition are substantial monetary scholarship awards. Over the years we have sent our National Winner to compete in an international competition in various parts of the world. Our 2019 National Winner may receive an invitation to have an expense-paid trip to Seoul, South Korea in September 2019, to compete for the title of the Best Young Sommelier in the world to be awarded at the Confrérie de la Chaîne's International Young Sommeliers Competition. Five of our competitors have won the International title, three of our competitors have come in second, and two have placed third since the international competition began in 2007.

On the following pages, you will find detailed information about the 2019 Young Sommeliers Competition. Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you. Vive La Chaîne and Mondiale!

Geoff Labitzke MW, National Vice Echanson des Jeunes Sommeliers

gdlabitzke@comcast.net

glabitzke@kistlervineyards.com



Preface

Société Mondiale du Vin USA was created to promote the enjoyment, knowledge and understanding of fine wines and crafted beverages. The framework of the Mondiale provides for professional and amateur participation, with one of its goals being to provide help, encouragement and support for the young professionals who are to be the best sommeliers of the future. The Young Sommeliers Competition promotes the expertise of the young wine and spirit professional and encourages mastery of wine and spirit knowledge.

Eligibility

The 2019 Young Sommeliers Competition is open to any qualified individual who:

- Is an American citizen (by birth or naturalization) or a citizen of one of the Bailliage des Etats-Unis countries or territories (USA, Bahamas, Barbados, Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, St Lucia, Turks & Caicos; other islands please contact us) AND has demonstrated an active interest in the wine and crafted beverage industry;
- OR is a legal resident of one of the Bailliage des Etats-Unis countries, holding a valid work permit in that country, AND is actively employed in that country as a sommelier on the date of each stage of the competition in which the individual seeks to compete.
- Is at least 21 (twenty-one) years of age on January 12, 2019 and has not yet reached his or her 31st (thirty-first) birthday on September 30, 2019; and
- Is sponsored by a member of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs (if you don't yet have a sponsor, let us know and we'll assist you with meeting that requirement).

To attain the distinction of being selected as the Best Young Sommelier of the year at the National Finals, the candidate must successfully progress through three stages: a first-round national theory test administered online, a second-round test held in person in one of our 10 regions, and the national finals to be held on April 24-26, 2019 in Napa, California.

The winner of the National Young Sommeliers Competition is not eligible to compete again. An individual may compete up to three times at a regional competition, and no more than two times at the National Finals, and must complete the entire qualification and eligibility process each time. Master Sommeliers and Masters of Wine are *not* eligible to compete. International rules may differ, which may affect who we may send to compete internationally after the national competition in which we select the Best Young Sommelier in the United States.

Still photographs and video images may be taken at any time during the competition and they may be used by the US Chaîne in such manner and at such times as it deems appropriate and without any prior consent, including print, internet, press releases, and other materials created by or for the US Chaîne.



Chaîne Young Sommeliers Competition Overview

- Sat., Jan 12, 2019:** The first-round theory test will be administered electronically. Candidates whose applications have been previously accepted may log into a testing website and complete the one-hour exam from any computer with internet access. This is a closed-book test. **The test will be given at a single time (noon EST) on this day ONLY.** No other dates or times are possible for taking this test. The results of the first-round exam will determine the competitors that may be invited to advance to the regional tests. The initial theory test result may also be a component of the regional testing score.
- Jan.–April, 2019:** Each Chaîne region will schedule a date within this window with the Vice Echantillon des Jeunes Sommeliers for their regional test. This regional competition will feature the top-scoring candidates from the first-round test. The second-round test comprises an oral wine knowledge test, a wine service test and a blind tasting test of six wines. There will be no written test at the regional level. Regional competitions will generally have three competitors each. The winner from each region traditionally is invited to the national competition.
- April 24-26, 2019:** The national finals will be held in Napa, California, featuring one candidate from each of the Chaîne's regions. The test will occur over two days with a one-hour written test, a blind tasting test, and multiple service tests. After these tests, the top three sommeliers will compete to determine the winner in a final set of challenges, in front of an audience. Judges include Masters of Wine, Master Sommeliers, previous national winners, and a small number of Chaîne members with extensive wine knowledge. The day is capped with an awards ceremony and gala dinner which all competitors are to attend. Before advancing to the regional competition, make sure that you will be available for these dates to be in Napa, CA.

There is no cost to the young sommeliers to participate at any level of the competition. Selected travel and meal expenses for the second (regional) and third (national) stages of the competition are covered by the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs and for a competitor selected after the national competition to represent the Chaîne U.S. at the International Competition.



The Application

Applicants must have an interest in the wine and crafted beverage industry. The applicant must be sponsored by a Chaîne/Mondiale member (which we can help applicants to arrange) and must file an online application which is linked online via www.ysommc.us or <https://www.chaineus.org/member-benefits/societe-mondiale-du-vin/#young-sommelier-competition>.

A description of the Competition rules is reached by clicking on the “Rules” link on that page. An online application can also be found there. Click the link to complete and submit the application.

Misrepresentations on the application are grounds for disqualification before or after an award, without appeal. A completed application is mandatory. The application and a government-issued photo ID verifying date of birth must be presented to the competition chair at or before the time of testing.

An Equal Opportunity Organization

The Chaîne is an equal opportunity organization and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military status or status as a disabled veteran. Information provided on the application will not be used for any discriminatory purpose.

Conduct

Candidates are always expected to conduct themselves professionally and politely during and after any and all stages of the competition, at all levels, and in all social settings relating to the competition. This expectation extends to personal interactions, mode of dress, use of appropriate language, intoxication, honesty and truthfulness, and any other issue that may reflect upon the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs. The Chaîne may disqualify a candidate at any stage of the competition, including after an award has been made, if the candidate’s conduct does not meet a high standard of honesty, professionalism, respect for others, and polite social interaction consistent with the traditions of the Chaîne as well as the Sommelier profession. Disqualified competitors may not represent themselves as having been competitors or winners at any stage of the competition, and may not compete in any subsequent year. In the event of a disqualification, the Chaîne may name an eligible competitor next in performance order to receive any award or recognition previously given to the disqualified competitor. Decisions of the Chaîne Grand Echanson or Bailli Délégué des Etats- Unis, Consul Délégué Société Mondiale du Vin, are final and not subject to appeal.



First Round Theory Test

The first-round test consists of a multiple-choice exam. Knowledge in all areas of wine and wine production, laws, viticulture and vinification, as well as spirits, beers, ales, ciders, port and sherry may be tested. The theory exam will not exceed one hour. The first-round test will be conducted electronically at noon eastern time (and the corresponding hour in other time zones, except Hawaii) on Saturday, January 12, 2019, and is open to all qualified candidates who successfully complete the application process as outlined above. This is **the ONLY date and time** at which the test will be available. This is a closed-book test.

Second Round Regional Competitions

Each candidate who takes the first-round written test on January 12 will be assigned to one of the US Chaîne's regions based on their place of employment or residence. The highest-scoring candidates in each Chaîne region on the theory test (above a minimum score) will be invited to participate in the regional competition. Normally, up to three candidates will advance in each region. The final selection of candidates who advance to the regional competitions will be made by the national Vice Echanson. Regional competitions may involve only one region, or there may be two or more regions having a competition in the same location.

The regional competitions will be held within the regions between January and early April 2019. Specific dates and locations for each regional competition may be decided only after the first-round test, based upon the locations of the sommeliers who advance to the region level. Travel to the regional competition by invited competitors will be at the Chaîne's expense.

The time required for the regional competition will be approximately eight hours. Invited competitors who are unable to participate in their regional competition at the designated day, time and place will forfeit their place, and the Chaîne may invite the next-highest scoring competitor in the region to compete instead.

Each regional test will consist of a blind tasting evaluation of six wines (three whites and three reds) described orally to the judges in 25 minutes, and a service test requiring the opening of a sparkling wine, the decanting of a red wine, and one or more tableside wine pairing exercises. The regional competition will also include an oral examination of the candidate's wine knowledge. There is no written test at the regional competition; the results of the first-round written test may be used as a factor in the regional competition outcome.

Judges for each regional exam will be drawn from a combination of industry wine professionals and experienced Chaîne members with strong wine knowledge. All regional judges must be approved in advance by the national Vice Echanson des Jeunes Sommeliers responsible for the competition. There will be a Master Sommelier or judge with similar qualifications at each regional competition.

The first-place winner of each regional competition will be invited to participate in the National Competition April 24-26, 2019 in Napa, California. Selection will be based on scores from both the first- and second-round tests.



Third Round National Competition

The format of the National Competition is similar to the International Chaîne Young Sommeliers Competition and is conducted by a panel of Judges selected by the national Vice Echanson. Judges are a mix of Masters of Wine, Master Sommeliers, other recognized, accomplished sommeliers, previous winners of the Chaîne Young Sommeliers competition, and Chaîne members with extensive wine knowledge and prior judging experience. The format features three areas of examination. These areas are Theory (written), Service, and Blind Tasting. The exam format may be modified as deemed necessary by the Chaîne.

Theory (Written) Test

The national written test is one hour, covering the same areas of knowledge as the first-round test but at a higher level of difficulty. Questions will test competitors' knowledge of wine regions, wine grapes, wine labels, wines styles, vintages, wineries, wine companies, wine laws, and key people in the world of wine, and will also address wine growing and winemaking, vine diseases, and the history of wine, as well as beers, spirits, and other crafted beverages including tea service. There will not be any cigar questions.

Service Skills Testing

The Practical Service Skills test is a station-based service performance exam that includes decanting, sparkling wine service, blind identification of spirits, sparkling wine pouring, mixology, and other real-world tasks conducted within a time limit. There is also an exercise to recommend wines for pairing with various meal choices. These tests require full restaurant service skills, composure, appropriate dress and personal sommelier equipment.

Blind Tasting

The Blind Tasting test is a timed (25-minute) double-blind tasting of six wines. Scoring will be done on the deductive tasting method. Scores will be assigned for assessment by sight, nose, and palate and by initial and final conclusions of each wine.

Final Three Competition

At the conclusion of the full set of testing components, the three highest-scoring competitors will be announced. These three will then face each other in an additional set of challenges including an oral knowledge quiz, blind tasting, and service. This final competition will be held in front of an audience. It may also be aired on the Internet and videoed.



Other Test Elements

In the spirit of keeping current with the evolving demands of a sommelier's job, the national exam may include new components from time to time that are not divulged in advance.

National Competition Location

The National Competition will be held on April 24-26, 2019 in Napa, California.

Attire

Attire at both the regional and national competitions for female contestants is business suit or after-five/evening attire appropriate for a professional sommelier. Attire for male contestants is a business suit or tuxedo (black tie) appropriate for a professional sommelier. Attire for the judges is business attire.

Results

The final results of the National Competition will remain unknown to anyone except the judges and the Bailli Délégué, Grand Echanson, and national Vice Echanson supervising it, until the awards ceremony on the evening of April 26, 2019. At that time, the winner is announced. Scores and results of competitors are not disclosed nor subject to review by the competitor or anyone acting on his or her behalf, or any other person. The determination of the judges, and decisions of the Chaîne Grand Echanson or Bailli Délégué des Etats-Unis, Consul Délégué Société Mondiale du Vin, are final and not subject to review or appeal. Appeals will not be considered. All competing sommeliers at the National Competition *must* attend the entire announcement and awards ceremony to be eligible to receive an award. The announcement of the results will be recognized with photographs and press releases. The Chargée de Presse National (or her or his representative) is responsible for all photographs and press releases to be included in *Gastronome*, *Gastronome Extra!* and other Chaîne publications.

Prizes

Competitors who are invited to advance to the regional competition will receive a bronze medal and certificate upon their completion of the regional competition, except the regional winner, who will receive a silver medal.

At the national competition, engraved medals will be awarded as follows:

First Place Medal and Trophy to Winner. A \$2000 Educational Scholarship.

Second Place Medal to the next competitor. A \$1500 Educational Scholarship.

Third Place Medal to the next finisher. A \$1000 Educational Scholarship.

The first-place winner's name will be engraved on the perpetual Sommeliers Competition trophy, which is kept by the Chaîne National Office at its office for display purposes.



Young Sommeliers Competition

It is anticipated that the 3 competitors placing first, second and third in the national competition will be awarded an educational trip to Bordeaux, France, thanks to support from the Conseil Interprofessionnel du Vin de Bordeaux (CIVB). Details will be provided.

Each regional winner will receive a membership in the Confrérie de la Chaîne des Rôtisseurs through December 31 of the year in which he or she competes. The national winner will receive five years of membership. The memberships awarded include both U.S. Chaîne and International Chaîne memberships for the periods stated.

Fourth Round International Competition

All participants in the National competition must agree in advance, as a condition of their eligibility to compete, that if invited to advance to a higher level of the competition, they are committed to do so. A sommelier who has participated in the national competition and is subsequently invited to represent the US Chaîne to compete in the Chaîne International Young Sommeliers Competition (Concours International des Jeunes Sommeliers), agrees to do so. Expenses for the US winner to attend internationally are paid by the Chaîne. The 2019 International Competition will be held in September 2019 in Seoul, South Korea.