

A GUIDE TO WINE CERTIFICATIONS

Wine Courses and Exams Explained:



WSET

Wine & Spirit Education Trust

Perfect for people in all areas of wine and at all levels (even those that want to learn about wine as a hobby)

BEST FOR those in retail, distribution, wine trade, and wine writing

More academic than other certifications (coursework is laid out, organized, and resources are provided for you)

Includes class time that you can either take in person or online (8 or 15 week programs to choose from)

FOUR LEVELS:

Level 1 (beginner course) – must pass a 30 question multiple choice test on food and wine, there is also a spirits portion, and service portion (not required)

Level 2 – must pass a 50 question multiple choice exam on basic wine theory (similar exam for spirits)

Level 3 – must pass a 50 question exam including multiple choice, short answer, and tasting notes portions, this is geared towards production and distribution

Level 4 – must pass a 6 part exam including various multiple choice, short answer, and blind tasting tests (this is a stepping stone for the Master of Wine program)

Each Level requires specific coursework/classroom time before taking the exam

You can start at any level (you do not need to pass level 1 and 2 to take level 3, but must pass level 3 to take level 4)

Also focuses on spirits, sake, beer, and tea



CMS

Court of Master Sommeliers

The best avenue for anyone wanting to become a Sommelier or Beverage Manager (a person who tends to wine lists, storage, and serving wine in a restaurant)

BEST FOR those in the service/restaurant industry
Independent study (no courses, coursework, or programs – must study on own) (can get a \$100 yearly membership to GuildSomm for study guides and other resources)

FOUR LEVELS:

1. Intro – two day class with multiple choice exam on the final day (90% passing rate), a prerequisite to the Certified exam, expires after 3 years

2. Certified – exam only, must pass all three parts of the exam including Theory (written and multiple choice), Blind Tasting (2 wines), and Service (servicing champagne correctly to a table while being questioned about food and wine pairings and cocktails etc.) (60% passing rate)

3. Advanced – similar to Certified, but at a higher level, must also be able to decant red wine and blind taste 6 wines (3 reds and 3 whites) (40% passing rate)

4. Master – similar to Advanced, but at a MUCH higher level, must know all there is to know about wine, one of the hardest exams in the world (8% passing rate)

You must pass each level to take the next level, for the Advanced exam you must submit an application and be approved as well as complete an advanced course, for the Master exam you must be invited and

have worked in the industry for 10 years

TIP: CMS 2 is similar in difficulty to WSET 3

Also focuses on spirits, sake, beer, and tea



SWE

Society of Wine Educators

An organization for wine professionals and wine novices

BEST FOR wine teachers or educators, as well as wine writers (you learn to instruct on a wide array of wine topics, which can make you more marketable in any industry)

Mostly independent study, but study guides and recommended reading are included (some educational programs and a yearly conference are optional)

TWO LEVELS:

CSW (Certified Specialist of Wine) – requires passing a 100 question multiple choice exam

CWE (Certified Wine Educator) – more rigorous exam, including multiple choice, essay, and 2 blind tastings

You must pass CSW to take CWE

This is the least expensive of the three

Also includes 2 levels for Spirits Certification