

Meet Our Wine Judges!

Belani-Ellis, Anna: After years in tech as a computer engineer, Anna traded algorithms for aromas in 2021 to follow her true passion: wine. She's now immersed in the WSET Diploma program, currently tackling the final and most demanding exam, D3: Wines of the World. She is also in her second year of the American Wine Society's Wine Judge Certification Program, deepening her sensory evaluation skills and judging experience. Through her brand *The Sommpour*, Anna designs immersive wine education and tasting experiences for private gatherings and corporate events alike, always with a focus on storytelling, connection, and mindful enjoyment.

Bileti, Jay: Director of Wine Education, Deep Sky Vineyard. International Wine Academy International Wine Master (IWM) graduate, Certified Wine Judge with the American Wine Society, UC Davis Advanced Wine Evaluation, WSET 3 certified. Over 25 years of judging wines at International and regional wine competitions to include International Wine and Spirits Competition, London, UK (2017, 2018, 2019), Lum Eisenman Competition, San Diego County (2016, 2018, 2019, 2022), Arizona Governor's Choice Competition, Sonoita, AZ (9 years), Colorado Governor's Choice (10 years), and many others.

Bloom, Emily: Assistant winemaker and vineyard coordinator for South Coast Winery and Carter Estate Winery located in Temecula Valley where they are certified sustainable. She is most passionate about farming in a sustainable way for the health of the surrounding ecosystem and those plants, animals and people that live there. She enjoys tasting wines locally and globally. She has her WSET Level 3 certification as well as a Certificate of Viticulture from Washington State University, and is currently in process of obtaining the WSET Diploma.

Cain, Lauren: Known as "Your Favorite Wino," Lauren is a wine professional with a background in hospitality and marketing. With over 17 years of experience in fine dining, catering, and bartending, her passion for wine led her to a career in marketing, where she has worked on large-scale wine and culinary events for both industry professionals and consumers. She also founded Vine Shine Marketing, specializing in marketing for wineries, and offers private and corporate wine tastings.

As *Your Favorite Wino*, Lauren is dedicated to educating consumers about wine and helping wineries promote their brands through engaging, approachable content and experiences. She has also been published in *The Somm Journal* magazine.

In 2020, Lauren deepened her wine expertise by earning her WSET Level II with Distinction and is currently pursuing WSET Level III and the Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) certification. She is passionate about sustainability in wine and thoughtful wine choices.

DeLucio, Rick: An Emmy Award-winning Creative Director based in Temecula, California. He's currently pursuing his WSET Diploma under the mentorship of Peter Neptune MS. A recent second-place finisher in the national Spanish Wine Master tasting competition, Rick also hosts Pour Temecula, a podcast exploring the region's wine, beer, and beverage scene. He occasionally dabbles in winemaking, championing local expressions of Albariño and Montepulciano.

Hart, Ryan: A third-generation winemaker based in Julian, CA where he creates world class wines alongside his father and uncle at Volcan Mountain Winery. Born and raised in San Diego, Ryan studied wine under master-winemakers in California as well as under his grandfather, Joe Hart, one of the founding vintners of Temecula. With over 10 years in the wine industry, Ryan is excited to bring his expertise in the cellar, vineyard, and refined palette to the panel.

Jesberger, Adam: Adam has been a hospitality professional for over 10 years in San Diego. He is a CMS Advanced Sommelier with an admiration for local winemaking. Adam is the resident sommelier for Rancho Guejito Vineyard in San Pasqual Valley. In addition, he operates his consulting company, AJ Wine Consulting, and is employed at Vino Carta in Little Italy

Kuta, Dane: A Level 2 Certified Sommelier, Champagne Master, Bordeaux Master, Champagne MOOC, Italian Wine Professional, Napa Valley Wine Expert, Rioja Wine Diploma, and Certified Level 2 Member of the Academy of Cheese. Dane is the official sommelier of the San Diego Botanic Garden. Dane is the founder of KutaSomm Tours, offering enrichment trips to destinations such as Bordeaux and Champagne. Dane has taught wine appreciation at San Diego State University; California State University, San Marcos; Mt. San Antonio College; and MiraCosta College. Dane is a member of the Guild of Sommeliers.

Wong, Tami: A 3rd generation hospitality professional, Tami achieved Certified Sommelier through the Court of Master Sommeliers in 2007. She served as Wine Director at La Valencia Hotel and then opened Juniper and Ivy. Tami won Best New Sommelier from Wine & Spirits magazine in 2014 and a Wine Spectator Award of Excellence in 2015. She left restaurants in 2017 to represent Estate Wines Ltd and Wine Wise. She loves sales and supporting local enterprises, so she founded Stay Classy Selections, the first wholesale distributor specializing in San Diego County wine and cider in 2020. She joined Avanelle Wine Company in January 2025.

Tami is a founding member of 2 key groups. Nat Diego, San Diego's fun-loving natural wine festival, was one of USA Today's 10 Best Wine Festivals in 2019. She is also the Acting President of Women's Wine Alliance which serves as an educational and networking body focused on advancing women in the wine industry.