



The San Diego County Fair's Wine Competition celebrates the full spectrum of winemaking—from passionate amateur artisans to accomplished professionals—across San Diego, Imperial, and Riverside counties. This unified exhibition provides valuable visibility within Southern California's winemaking community and honors the creativity, craftsmanship, and dedication behind every bottle, whether crafted at home or produced by a commercial winery. From vibrant whites to bold reds, each entry reflects the artistry, pride, and innovation that define our region. Raise a glass with us as we toast the remarkable skill and spirit flourishing across our local wine community!

Exhibition Timeline

Early Bird Deadline	Friday, February 27, 2026, 5:00 PM
Entry Deadline	Friday, March 27, 2026, 5:00 PM
In-Person Entry Delivery	Monday, March 30 – Thursday, April 2, 2026, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Last Date to Receive Shipped Entries	Thursday, April 2, 2026, 4:00 PM
Judging	Wednesday, April 8 – Thursday, April 9, 2026
Fair Dates	Wednesday, June 10 – Sunday, July 5, 2026 (closed Mondays and Tuesdays)
Awards Ceremony (Invitation Only)	Friday, June 12, 2026, 7:00 PM

Contact Us

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Agriculture, Education, & Arts Department – entry@sdfair.com

Office (858) 792-4207



Eligibility

Professional Division: Wines that are currently, or are soon to be, distributed by a licensed wholesale distributor. Wines may only be entered by a winery or its representatives. **Wines must be produced by and distributed by wineries bonded in San Diego, Riverside, or Imperial Counties.** Grapes may be sourced from outside counties.

Amateur Division: All amateur winemakers who are at least 21 years old by the Entry Deadline shown above. Entrants may not be professional winemakers or have applied for State or Federal licensing. **Only hobbyists in San Diego, Riverside, or Imperial Counties may enter.** Grapes may be sourced from outside counties.

Entry Information

All entries, Professional and Amateur, must be created via ShoWorks. Entry fees are payable online, via credit card, and are not refundable.

Professional: Early Bird: \$65 per entry

Regular Entry Fee: \$80 per entry

Amateur: Early Bird: \$20 per entry

Regular Entry Fee: \$35 per entry

There is no limit to the number of entries per producer. No single wine may be entered more than once.

Entries & Delivery

Each entry shall consist of one of the following:

Professional:

- Four (4) 750 ml, 375 ml, or 500 ml bottles
- Two (2) 1.5-liter bottles
- Four (4) cans or "alternative packages."
- Two (2) 3-liter or larger boxes

Amateur:

- Two (2) 750 ml bottles (All categories except dessert)
- Two (2) 350 ml bottles for the dessert category only.

Award winners may be asked, based on availability, to provide additional bottles for Awards Reception.

Entries may be delivered in person or shipped to the Fairgrounds:

Delivery: Hand-Delivered Entries will be accepted at the fairgrounds Monday, March 30 through Thursday, April 2, 2026, between the hours of 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM. A copy of the drop-off map will be emailed to exhibitors after entries have closed.

Shipping: Shipped entries must arrive at the San Diego County Fair Entry office by Thursday, April 2, 2026. The Fair is not responsible for lost or delayed shipments.

Ship to: San Diego County Fair
Ag & Ed Department • Wine Competition
2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd.
Del Mar, CA 92014



Judging & Awards

All judging will be blind and held in a closed session. Entries will be chilled upon arrival and prior to judging as appropriate. Wines are bagged and given a number the night prior to the judging event. That number is used throughout the competition with access to the key given *only* to competition staff throughout the entirety of the competition. All wines will be entered in a Department and Division by the entrant and prior to judging, will be assigned to appropriate panels as needed based off information provided during registration, such as varietal, ABV, residual sugar, etc. to create an adequate judging pool of similarly structured wines. In the event that a varietal does not have enough bottles to complete a panel, it will be placed with wines of similar structure.

The decisions of the judges are final. The Danish system of judging will be used, and awards will be made on a merit basis where wines are ranked against an industry standard. For the purpose of this competition, the **American Wine Society (AWS) guide** will be used for evaluation. Double Gold, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Awards will be awarded on a 100-point scale, as merited in each class. Based on the numbers only, the highest point wines are pulled and compete against each other for the Special Award categories for each Division.

Standard Awards- Professional & Amateur Divisions

Double Gold: Chosen from the finest of the Gold Winning wines, scoring 95 points or higher on a 100-point scale, as agreed upon unanimously by the assigned judging panel.

Gold: Wines receiving a score between 90 and 94 points that show exceptional complexity and depth of aroma, flavor, and finish.

Silver: Wines displaying character beyond the norm, reflecting balance and typical qualities of that class and price point; an excellent wine without obvious flaws, scoring between 80-89 on a 100-point scale.

Bronze: Wines that are solid and well-made lacking technical flaws. This wine possesses distinct, positive flavors and characteristics that make it pleasant to drink, scoring between 70-79 on a 100-point scale.

Special Awards- Professional Divisions

Best of Class: Selected from all Double Gold and Gold Award winners in each class.

Southern Sun & Soil Award: This award celebrates wines that capture the true essence of Southern California. **This award honors vintners who craft their wines using grapes grown in San Diego, Riverside, or Imperial Counties.** Recognizing the unique blend of sun-drenched climate and diverse soils that define our region's terroir, this distinction showcases the authentic taste of our Southern California roots. To qualify for this award, please note the specific county of sourced or grown grapes at registration.

Toast of San Diego: The top wine from all Best of Class and Double Gold wines that are produced by wineries located within San Diego County.



Toast of Riverside: The top wine from all Best of Class and Double Gold wines that are produced by wineries located within Riverside County.

Toast of Imperial: The top wine from all Best of Class and Double Gold wines that are produced by wineries located within Imperial County.

Best in Show: A celebratory award that recognizes the competition's top wine of all Best of Class Award Winners.

The Best in Show Winner of the San Diego County Fair Wine Competition will be contacted for the opportunity to be exclusively chosen as the **Featured Winery** at a San Diego County Fair venue for the following year. Select Double Gold and Gold Award-winning wines may be contacted and offered the opportunity to have their wines purchased by the San Diego County Fair to be featured at the fair's Wine Experience Bar.

Special Awards- Amateur Divisions

Best of Class: Selected from all Double Gold and Gold Award winners in each class.

Best in Show: A celebratory award that recognizes the competition's top wine of all Best of Class Award Winners.

Results & Awards

Results will be posted on the San Diego County Fair's website in May. Only Double Gold, Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Special- Award-winning wines will be published and invited to the awards ceremony.

Medals and awards must be picked up in person at the awards ceremony on Friday, June 12th, at 7:00 p.m. If you cannot attend the awards, please contact the entry office to arrange pick up. Awards will not be mailed.

Departments & Divisions

All wines will be entered in a Department and Division by the entrant and prior to judging, will be assigned to appropriate panels as needed based on information provided during registration, such as varietal, ABV, residual sugar, etc. to create an adequate judging pool of similarly structured wines. In the event that a varietal does not have enough bottles to complete a panel, it will be placed with wines of similar structure.

Professional Department

Divisions

Dessert/ Fortified Wines

DIVISION 1510 Dessert – All

Fruit Wines

DIVISION 1520 Fruit Wines – All

Sparkling Wines

DIVISION 1530 Sparkling Wines - All

Red Wines

DIVISION 1540 Red Wines - All

Rosé Wines

DIVISION 1550 Rosé Wines - All

White Wines

DIVISION 1560 White Wines - All



Amateur Department

Divisions

Dessert/ Fortified Wines

DIVISION 1410 Dessert Wines– All

Fruit Wines

DIVISION 1420 Fruit Wines – All

Sparkling Wines

DIVISION 1430 Sparkling Wines - All

Red Wines

DIVISION 1440 Red Wines - All

Rosé Wines

DIVISION 1450 Rosé Wines - All

White Wines

DIVISION 1460 White Wines – All