



FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions for OCWS / OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition

The OC Fair commercial wine competition which is co-hosted by the Orange County Wine Society is held the first weekend in June each year. To run this event, we need lots of volunteers from the OCWS membership. Below are descriptions of the roles and common questions. For this event, we collect thousands of bottles of Commercial wine (California only) and serve the wines to judges that are either commercial winemakers, winery owners, or wine consultants. Typically, we serve in the range of 3,000 bottles of wine over a two-day period. The wines from this competition are then served (for a fee) at the OC Fair.

Roles:

Bagging – The week before the competition we place the wine bottles in brown paper bags so that the competition is “double blind” meaning that neither the stewards serving the wine or the judges will know what brand of wine is in the bag. Bagging is held for 2 nights and is typically from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the OC Fairgrounds in building 15 (just behind the OCWS office).

Stewarding – Stewards are the people who will serve the wine to the judges. This is done in teams of about 3-4 people. Responsibilities may include opening wine bottles, collecting trays of clean glasses, pouring wine into glasses, and carrying flights of glasses to the judges. When a round of judging is completed, the team will go to the judges table, remove the glasses, and walk them to the cleaning stations. This process repeats throughout the 2 days of the competition. Keeping the Judges table is a must, dumping buckets throughout the day, refilling water, bread and olives as Judges request.

Move wine to hotel – exactly as it sounds – volunteers will arrive at the OC Fairgrounds on Friday morning before the competition and help load trucks with cases of wine. The volunteers will also help load the wine glasses, and other necessary items to run the competition.

Setup Hotel Ballroom – On Friday before the competition we need help to setup the tables, make sure trays of clean glasses are at each table, wine pouring discs are placed at each table, pencils at each table along with other items like dump buckets, etc. Some of the team will also help to setup the judge’s tables with name cards, place settings, etc. Wine will also be moved from the loading areas to the center room. Volunteers will also dry the washed glasses.

Glass drying – after the glasses are steam -washed they come out in racks. The glass drying team removes the glasses from the racks, dries them, and places them onto trays for pickup by the stewarding teams.

Move wine to Fairgrounds – Involves moving the remaining wine back to the OC Fairgrounds. A couple of trips are usually required to put the wine and glasses etc. into storage and the cellar.

Kitchen Help or Traffic Control – These categories are typically **NAME MANAGED** and only have a limited number of positions. Kitchen help is in the back, and they collect all the used glasses into racks and stack the glasses for steam cleaning. Traffic control keeps traffic walking in one direction only (during the competition) and also advises the stewarding panels when they need to go pick up empty glasses or when the judges are ready for another flight etc.

Judges Scoring – This is a **NAME MANAGED** category only. In this role, people collect the judges’ scoring sheets, do validation and then deliver the scoring sheets to the computer room for input.

Computer room – This is a **NAME MANAGED** category, In a separate room we have data entry and score verification. The judges scoring sheets are input into the computer system, printed, then verified.

Sorting – after the competition is over and the wine is back at the OC Fairgrounds, it is necessary to reorganize the wines in the cellar in preparation for the OC Fair and other events.

Questions:

- [Do I need training to volunteer?](#)

No! We will place new volunteers with tenured members to show you how to do everything needed.

- [Who can volunteer?](#)

Any and all OCWS members are encouraged to volunteer.

- [Is food provided?](#)

For most activities like stewarding, glass drying, etc. OCWS will provide lunch at the hotel. Information about this will be included with your confirmation emails as appropriate.

- [Do I have to stay at the hotel?](#)

No. We do encourage people working both days of the event to consider staying at the hotel. We have a discount code that we provide to the membership each year. This code allows the hotel to know that our members are staying at the hotel. If you book a room without using this code the hotel does not give OCWS room credit. As part of our contract with the hotel we are required to try and fill a specific number of rooms by our members. If you need more information please reach out to the OCWS office for more information or look for the “Hotel reservations for Commercial Wine Competition” article in the April Wine Press. By booking a room using the proper OCWS booking process you will receive a FREE bottle of wine and breakfast!

- [What if I cannot walk or stand throughout the day?](#)

Please let us know if you have physical limitations and we will do our best to find a role for you. Please put this information in the COMMENTS section.

- [What do I get for volunteering?](#)

At the end of each competition day we will have many open bottles of wine which the, volunteers will be given a portion of the partly served bottles. They will be distributed to each volunteer. [On the signup volunteer website, it says if I steward, I have to work a task from both Task list #1 and Task list #2 –](#)

WHY?

Stewarding is a very popular activity, but there are other roles that need to be filled as well. As such we request your help to fill all the roles needed. This year the website will require you to select both of these activities to submit your entry. If there is an issue that prevents you from volunteering for one of the tasks, please advise us of this in the COMMENTS section at the bottom of the sign up.

- [What if I have a special request?](#)

On the volunteer page at the bottom please enter your request in the COMMENTS section. We will do our best to accommodate requests when we can.

- [What other items can I put into the Comments section?](#)

Sometimes people tell us they can work maybe one night of bagging, but they are FLEXIBLE which one. We would ask for example that you select your “Preferred” bagging night and then tell us you are “FLEXIBLE” which night in case we need to fill another night. This way we assign you what you ask for and if we run short on another evening, we will review the comments and then ask for your approval to move you to another night.

- [Can I update or change my volunteer activities?](#)

Yes. You can return to the website up until the time that we close volunteer submissions and update your activities. We request that you *try not to make too many changes as it impacts how many people we allow to sign up for certain roles*. Any changes you make will trigger an updated email to you.

- [What if I sign up and then cannot attend?](#)

We hope that you are able to make it, but if you cannot, PLEASE CONTACT US DIRECTLY at strompharms@earthlink.net or 562 822-3382. PLEASE give us as much advanced notice as possible so we can fill your position. **DO NOT** just ask someone else to ‘cover’ for you and take your spot. We manage ALL the positions and cannot allow substitutions.

- [I am having problems signing up on the website – what can I do?](#)

Call Robyn at 562 822-3382

- [Why are some fields grayed out on the sign-up list?](#)

When a role is filled, we will automatically turn off new entries for that role. Please review other roles that you can fill or reach out to us using the comments section or send us an email directly.

- [When will I know what I am really doing at the competition?](#)

The sign-up process tells us what you would like to volunteer for. We do our best to fill the roles as you request. In some instances, we may reach out to you and ask you to change to another role to balance the activities. We will send a final confirmation email out to all volunteers about a week or two before the first activity (typically bagging).

- [Why are accurate email addresses so important?](#)

We will send all our correspondence via email. When you sign up we send an email of your submission and what you requested. We will use your email to send the final confirmation as well. If we need to reply to your comments, we will do so via email.

- [Doesn't everyone have an email in the system?](#)

No. Almost all primary members have an email address in our system. However, in 2018, 42% of the Co-members have an EMPTY email address in our database. If your co-member does not have an email address, please copy the Members email address into the Co-members email address field. This way no emails will be missed in our correspondence.

- [What do the Commercial Competition Volunteer Coordinators do?](#)

We collect all the volunteer sign ups, build the stewarding panels, coordinate all the resources to ensure we have people for the activities. We also communicate to the members to remind you of what you have signed up for and provide directions to the location you need to be at for each activity. We act as the glue that helps to pull all the activities together. This is very time consuming, and we work hard to make it all happen. We appreciate your support and understanding. We will strive to respond quickly if you reach out to us. *Whenever possible we request you use email first (as we have day jobs).*

strompharms@earthlink.net or call Robyn at 562 822-3382