



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2026

Orange County, California

50th Annual OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition Celebrates Major Milestone with Record Participation

More than 2,600 California wine entries to be evaluated next weekend by some of the industry's most respected winemakers

COSTA MESA, Calif. — The Orange County Wine Society (OCWS), in partnership with the OC Fair, is preparing to host the **50th Annual OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition** on May 30–31, 2026, marking a major milestone for one of California's most respected and enduring wine competitions. The competition coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the Orange County Wine Society, which has been hosting the event since 1977.

This year's competition has surpassed **2,600 entries**, continuing a trend of strong growth and participation from wineries across California at a time when many wine competitions nationwide have experienced declining entries, downsizing, or cancellation.

Dedicated exclusively to California wines, the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition brings together wineries of all sizes—from internationally recognized producers to emerging boutique and limited-production wineries—showcasing the diversity, quality, and innovation of California winemaking.

“This milestone year is not only a celebration of our history, but also a reflection of the strength of California wineries and the continued value they see in this competition,” said Carolyn Christian, OCWS Marketing Chair / Past President. “While many competitions are seeing reduced participation or disappearing altogether, wineries continue to support and grow with us because this competition delivers meaningful visibility, credibility, and consumer exposure.”

The competition is known for its rigorous **double-blind judging process**, with wines evaluated exclusively by commercial winemakers and winery owners. Some of the most notable and respected winemakers in the industry will participate as judges during this year's competition weekend.



Wines are judged by varietal, price point, and sugar level to ensure fair and relevant comparisons across categories. Awards include Bronze, Silver, Gold, Double Gold, and Best of Class honors spanning more than 20 categories, including red, white, rosé, sparkling, dessert, infused, low-alcohol, and non-alcohol wines.

The competition also remains unique in its commitment to accessibility and winery exposure:

- No entry fees for participating wineries
- Limited-production wineries under 1,000 cases may submit only three bottles per entry
- Complimentary participation in the Label & Bottle Design Competition
- Results published on [WineCompetition.com](https://www.winecompetition.com) with direct winery links and searchable consumer access

Winners will be announced in June, and the winning wines will also be featured during the **2026 OC Fair** (July 17–August 16, 2026) in the Wine Courtyard, where hundreds of thousands of fairgoers will have the opportunity to discover and taste award-winning California wines.

“There is tremendous value in connecting wineries directly with consumers,” said Fran Gitsham, OCWS Vice President / Past President and Competition Chair. “For 50 years, this competition has helped wineries gain recognition while introducing wine lovers to outstanding California wines from every region of the state.”

About the Orange County Wine Society

The Orange County Wine Society (OCWS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with more than 1,000 members dedicated to wine education and appreciation. OCWS hosts both the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition and Home Wine Competition—among the largest competitions in California dedicated exclusively to California wines.

Since 1981, OCWS has donated more than **\$1,008,795** in scholarships to students pursuing wine-related programs and culinary arts studies at eight California colleges and universities.

Media Contact:

Carolyn Christian - Marketing Chair, Orange County Wine Society [✉ carolyn@ocws.org](mailto:carolyn@ocws.org)