

Tonnellerie de Mercurey NZ Young Winemaker of the Year Preparation and Study Guide

The aim of the Young Winemaker is to support the New Zealand wine industry's emerging winemakers by helping them increase their networks as well as stretch themselves and upskill. Therefore, preparing and studying for the actual competition day itself is an important part of the programme.

Obviously we are not going to tell you exactly what you will be tested on during the day, but the aim is to help you increase your knowledge and skills, rather than trick you, so this guide is to help you know where to focus your studies, give you some tips on how to go about it and some resources which you can use to find out more about certain topics.

Young Winemaker Skills and Knowledge you should know

Below are the areas of focus for the regional and national competitions. Not all may be tested on the day and some may be full modules and some built into a module. However, these are important skills and knowledge required to be a successful winemaker.

Regional Competitions

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fault Finding • Wine Knowledge • Cellar Skills • Indevin Wine Judging • Blending • Marketing • Constellation Brands Laboratory tests & skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • Forklift challenge (not for North Island competition) • Fruitfed Supplies Speech • Health & Safety • Sustainability |
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National Final

Questions in the National Final will go into far more depth, test a much wider range of skills and knowledge at a far higher level than the regional competition. There is a huge leap up to this level and you will need to work hard for it. But it's worth it!

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constellation Brands Laboratory section • Indevin Wine Judging • Capex Exam • Wine Knowledge Exam • Cellar/Winery Practical Skill | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal Interview • Presentation to a panel • Health & Safety • Sustainability • Fruitfed Supplies Speech |
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A closer look

1. Fault Finding

Nobody enjoys a faulty wine, so the winemaker's job is to avoid them or know how to rectify them.

Learn what faults exist; how you identify them by smell and taste; practise tasting wine to look for faults, learn what could have happened to cause a fault and what can be done to rectify it. Consider microbial, storage, operational, packaging and vintage implications.

2. Wine Knowledge

This section is about wine in general and covers a broad range of topics you need to know. For example:

- Characteristics of certain varieties
- International wines
- Winemaking processes
- Viticultural knowledge
- Wine laws – eg. labelling, export, blends, additions
- General NZ wine industry initiatives, news, sustainability

New Zealand Winegrowers website www.nzwine.com is a very good resource for this, along with other suggested sites at the end of the guide.

Members Login

You'll find a lot of extra information on the members page, **so if you haven't got a login, please contact jess.rutledge@nzwine.com**. All Young Winemaker contestants are eligible for this and it is highly recommended you keep up to date with lots of the information on here which relates to the above.

3. Cellar/Winery Practical Skills

This could be a practical or theory challenge about skills used in the cellar, eg. racking, filtering, setting up pumps, stabilising, etc

4. Wine Tasting

Practice tasting different wine, identifying aromas, textures, balance, quality, etc as well as being able to write notes quickly and clearly

5. Blending

For this section you will be given a style of wine which you need to make from several different wine components. You will need to write technical notes for these and think about what they bring to your blend. Make sure you reach the brief taking into consideration flavour profile, price points, market and adhere to laws around blending.

6. In Market

This follows on from the blending where you will need to pitch your wine to your customers ie judges. This is a role play scenario but the judges will be testing your wine knowledge, market knowledge and presentation skills.

A few tips:

- Introduce yourself at the beginning of the presentation as if you are meeting strangers. ie give them your name, winery and tell them what you are going to present to them.

- Familiarise yourself with different international markets: which other countries are competing in that market? Where are most wines bought? On premise or off premise? Are they after a high volume, cheap wine or a more expensive wine with a story?
- Familiarise yourself with price points in New Zealand and our key markets. ie what does an entry level, mid range, premium wine sell for?
- Familiarise yourself with current market trends – eg packaging, wine styles
- Ask your boss, export manager or marketing manager for more information on this
- See if you can work a shift in the Cellar Door. This is a great way to practise talking about wine to different people and think on the spot as you adapt to different customers.
- There is lots of useful information on this on [nzwine.com](https://www.nzwine.com/members/marketing/market-intel/)
<https://www.nzwine.com/members/marketing/market-intel/>

7. Laboratory tests & skills

Practice running basic lab tests, eg PH/TA, sulphurs as well as other regularly used tests.

8. Forklift challenge

Practise at work if you can and familiarise yourself with H&S and protocols around using a forklift.

9. Health & Safety

Familiarise yourself with H&S policies and guidelines for working in a winery.

<https://www.nzwine.com/members/advocacy/health-safety/>

10. Sustainability

Familiarise yourself with SWNZ and the sustainability pillars.

<https://www.nzwine.com/members/grow/sustainability/>

11. Speech

This is often out of people's comfort zone, yet everyone always does very well. Public speaking is an important leadership skill and winemakers are often asked to speak at dinners, conferences, etc.

You will be given your speech topic one week in advance so you have time to research and practise.

Some tips:

- This is your chance to share your thoughts and ideas with the wine industry. It's not often you get a platform like this, so enjoy it and see it as an opportunity. It's your chance to shine and show your knowledge and talent.
- Ask previous contestants how they prepared their speech. Feel free to contact your regional committee members too.
- Research the topic and focus on a couple of key points
- Have an opinion and back it up with facts and conviction
- Keep it simple – you only have 3 minutes. You can't cover the whole topic in depth like a 20 minute presentation
- State a point of view and back it up with a couple of facts, then move on
- Practise saying it out loud several times to ensure you meet the allowed time-either in the mirror, to your colleagues and friends or even record yourself (the real thing will feel like a walk in the park after this)
- Practise the intonation of your voice to keep people engaged
- Look at the audience – usually best to look above their heads than into someone's eyes
- Including questions is sometimes a good way to get people's attention

- Remember you are in control of what you say. So, if you're worried something isn't PC- don't include it. If you're worried you might stumble over a complicated word – don't include it.
- Also if you jump ahead by mistake and miss a couple of sentences out – don't let it throw you – the audience doesn't know you were going to say that. So to them you haven't made a mistake. Just make sure you still finish in around 3 minutes.
- Do not swear. This is a formal and professional environment.
- Be mindful of sponsors and avoid talking about any of their products in a negative way or conversely as a sales pitch to them. All in all it is safer to talk about types of products rather than brands if you are talking about any.
- Think about how you want your audience to feel at the end of your speech. What are your key points?

12. Wine judging

Practise tasting and assessing the quality of a line up of wines quickly. Familiarise yourself with the 100 Points wine judging scoring system and learn how to justify your score. ie why did you give it a bronze or a gold, etc?

13. CAPEX-Capital Expenditure

This section is to test your business knowledge. Look at various business expenditures which will affect overall business and the overall cost of your wines. Eg. purchasing equipment, labour, grapes, taxes, etc. Learn to assess what will be a good investment and a bad investment.

14. Interview

This will be run as a formal interview with a panel. Think about how you will present yourself and about questions or scenarios you may get asked.

Tips:

- Strong entrance – confident walk, eye contact, firm handshake, smile
- Introduce yourself
- Posture
- Sell yourself (without being arrogant)
- Be yourself – your professional self
- Be engaged, focused
- Polite
- Positive
- Appropriate language
- PREPARE and research

We don't often get the opportunity to talk about ourselves, our achievements and our goals – ENJOY!

Remember – you may not currently have all skills and knowledge but the interviewer is looking for **capability and attitude**.

15. National Final Research Topic and Presentation

As part of the National Final you will be asked to create and present a comprehensive 20-minute slide presentation (PowerPoint or similar) to a panel of judges. Your presentation topic will be given at least 10 days in advance of the National Final so you can research it properly and put together a professional presentation. Be prepared to back your evidence and answer questions. Points will be awarded for depth and quality of information, presentation style and delivery, and the ability to field questions about your presentation.

Other general knowledge

Familiarise yourself with our sponsors. Thanks to their generous support, we are able to run this important competition. They are all key suppliers to or producers in our industry and experts in their field.



Tonnellerie De Mercurey

<https://www.tonnellerie-de-mercurey.com/en>

Tonnellerie de Mercurey our naming rights sponsor from the very first Young Winemaker competition in 2015, is a family owned cooperage based in the village of Mercurey in Burgundy and distributed by Tonnellerie de Mercurey NZ run by Sherwyn Veldhuizen and Marcel Giesen. They craft high quality barrels of various toasts and grains made from oak from the finest forests across France which reflect the different terroirs.

Fruitfed Supplies

Fruitfed Supplies

<https://store.pggwrightson.co.nz/fruitfed-supplies>

Fruitfed Supplies are our naming rights sponsor for the speeches. Fruitfed Supplies, as it's known today, was originally formed in 1916 as a grower-owned organisation formed to advocate and support those within the horticultural industry. As well as viticultural products they also supply a wide range of products for wineries. They are part of PGG Wrightson with branches throughout the country.



Constellation
Brands

Constellation Brands

www.cbrands.com

Constellation Brands are the naming rights sponsor for the Laboratory Section. They have a large range of New Zealand and other international wine brands, as well as beers and spirits. From humble beginnings to redefining how people celebrate life"



Indevin

<https://www.indevin.com/>

Indevin are our naming rights sponsor for the wine judging section. Indevin creates exclusive wine programs for the world's biggest wine retailers.



Tira Crown

<https://www.nda.co.nz/crown/>

Crown Sheetmetal, now rebranded as Tira Crown, has been part of the Marlborough wine industry since the first commercial vines were planted in the 1970s. In our three workshops, we can design and supply almost all the equipment your winery needs – tanks up to in excess of 500,000L with optional glycol cooling and insulation, and stainless systems in any combination, such as pipework, tipping bins and catwalks. This gives us plenty of flexibility to work with the unpredictable demands a season can bring.



Laffort

<https://laffort.com/en/>

Researcher and producer of key winemaking products such as yeasts, enzymes and tannins.

A family company founded in the Bordeaux region, LAFFORT® soon opened to the wider world, exporting its know-how on the international market. The company deployed this expertise by following in Pasteur's footsteps and making research a priority in its development. This research was carried out in the laboratory and in the field – in the vineyards and cellars, close to nature and the winemakers – to watch, listen, understand and innovate.



Lab Supply - Merck

<https://www.labsupply.co.nz>

A key supplier of laboratory equipment and products. They are also an authorised distributor of Merck.



New Zealand Winegrowers

www.nzwine.com

The national organisation for New Zealand's grape and wine industry. Established in 2002 and the only unified national wine industry body in the world. New Zealand Winegrowers conducts a wide range of tasks to support our members including advocacy, global marketing, research, promoting biosecurity awareness and leading the development of globally admired sustainability programme.



Visy

[Visy - For a better World](#)

Visy bought O-I Glass in 2020 and were keen to continue supporting the Young Winemaker competition.

Visy offer unique, fully integrated, forward thinking closed loop packaging and recycling solutions that align with customer and industry needs. "Our manufacturing and processing, technology, logistics and design are part of a streamlined system that ensures our packaging solutions are consistently among the best in the world."



NZSVO - New Zealand Society for Viticulture & Oenology

<https://www.nzsvo.org.nz/>

The NZSVO exists for the promotion and dissemination of technical information in viticulture, oenology and related sciences for the benefit of the NZ grape and wine industries. It was initiated by Dr Richard Smart in 1985. They run workshops to share research and encourage conversations about viticulture and wine.

Supporting Sponsors

- [Winejobsonline](#)
- [Pacific Rim Oenology](#)
- EIT
- NMIT
- VinPro

Other Resources

Useful pages on nzwine.com

Young Winemaker Education Hub

<https://www.nzwine.com/en/initiativesevents/youngwinemaker/young-winemaker-education-hub/>

This has more information on various topics you need to revise.

For labelling guides winemaking practices

<https://www.nzwine.com/members/advocacy/>

Marketing

Market Intel | New Zealand Wine (nzwine.com)

<https://www.nzwine.com/members/industry-reports-statistics/kpi-and-vintage-infographics/>

Reports and Statistics

<https://www.nzwine.com/members/industry-reports-statistics/kpi-and-vintage-infographics/>

Research

<https://www.nzwine.com/members/research/>

Other useful websites to find out about international market trends and pricing, as well as international wines

<https://www.wine-searcher.com/>

<http://www.oxfordcompaniontowine.com/>

<https://www.decanter.com/learn/winequiz/>

Newsletters

<https://www.decanter.com/>

<https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com/>

<https://winetitles.com.au/daily-wine-news/>

Relevant Facebook pages and groups

<https://www.facebook.com/NZyoungwinemaker/>

<https://www.facebook.com/nzwinegrowers/>

[NZ Wine Altogether Unique Community](#)

Regional Wine Associations groups and pages

<https://www.facebook.com/BragatoResearch/>

There are many, many more but these are just a few quality sites to look at.

Wine Industry Contacts

Everyone is happy to help and support you upskill and prepare for the competition, so don't be afraid to ask. This includes previous contestants, NZ Winegrowers, regional organisers, regional winegrower associations and of course your own colleagues and boss. Here are a few contacts:

Young Winemaker National Team

Nicky Grandorge | nicky.grandorge@nzwine.com

Emma Lowe | Emma@monowai.co.nz

Gavin Dalton | gdalton@orcon.net.nz

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Emily Gaspard-Clark | wine@spyvalley.co.nz

Margot Best | margot.best@foleywines.co.nz

Ben Leen | cellar@amisfield.co.nz

Speech Judging Form

See new marking schedule from 2025 as a separate attachment.

Good luck with your studies and give it your all!