



The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas Presents the First Women's Sommelier Symposium

A Mentorship Opportunity for Female Sommeliers Hosted by Santa Barbara Vintners Association

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, Calif. (Oct. 4, 2022) The Court of Master Sommeliers, Americas (CMS-A) has partnered with Santa Barbara Vintners Association, known for its high-end portfolio of wineries and estate vineyards, to present the first Women's Sommelier Symposium in Santa Barbara County, California. The Women's Sommelier Symposium, taking place February 19 – 22, 2023, aims to reinforce a new generation of leaders and a legacy strengthened by female representation in key roles within the wine industry.

The Women's Sommelier Symposium is a two-day mentoring experience for established women in wine to educate, inspire, and build impactful connections with female sommeliers. The Women's Sommelier Symposium is an essential step toward addressing safety and support for female leaders who are studying to become Master Sommeliers. This symposium will set the stage for future partners and initiatives to join in a movement to shape the wine industry.

Featured speakers include Julia Coney, wine writer, educator, and founder of Black Wine Professionals, several female Master Sommeliers, and local Santa Barbara entrepreneurs. Master Sommelier Emily Wines will be the host and moderator of the symposium in addition to other Master Sommeliers, including Kathryn Morgan, Laura DePasquale, and Virginia Phillip, who will be spearheading a conversation about "turning your side hustle into a business." The Master Sommeliers will lead sessions on having a seat at the table in career roles often held by men, as well as mentoring the attendees on preparation for the pursuit of the Master Sommelier Diploma.

"I am thrilled to be launching our inaugural event. Supporting gender diversity in our credentials will in turn further female representation in our industry. I look forward to this opportunity to bring the current and future leaders of our profession together for what will be a meaningful weekend of mentorship," says Emily Wines, Chair of the Court of Master Sommeliers, and featured speaker at the event.

"I joined the organization to make an impact on gender and diversity issues in the hospitality industry," emphasizes Julie Cohen Theobald, CMS-A Executive Director. "The Women's Sommelier Symposium is an important step towards our vision of a more inclusive and accessible path for female sommeliers."

The majority female-owned and led company, Jackson Family Wines, will be the lead presenting sponsor of the event. The family wine business is deeply rooted in female leadership. Chairman and Proprietor Barbara Banke, one of the wine community's most highly regarded executives and innovators, has spent the last four decades leading the company she co-founded. Today, Jackson Family Wines continues to empower and champion women in the industry by giving women equal voices and opportunities to lead and create impact. In fact, nearly 50 percent of the company's winemakers are women compared to the national average sitting around 15 percent.

The Women's Sommelier Symposium is open for those who identify as women to apply if they are accomplished sommeliers through the Court of Master Sommeliers who have passed Certified or Advanced Level and demonstrated significant leadership potential. The application seeks women dedicated to their studies who have barriers to traveling to wine regions to network with other women in the wine industry.

When looking for the location to host the first Women's Sommelier Symposium and celebrate women in wine, Santa Barbara County was the preeminent choice because it has a higher percentage of female winemakers than most of the world's wine regions.

The symposium will last from Sunday, February 19, 2023, to Wednesday, February 22, 2023, across the Santa Barbara Wine Country. [The application is currently active](#) and will be administered by the SommFoundation.

ABOUT COURT OF MASTER SOMMELIERS, AMERICAS

The Court was established in England in 1977 and sets the global standard of excellence for beverage service within the hospitality industry with integrity, exemplary knowledge, and humility. The first Master Sommelier Diploma Exam to be held in the United States was in 1987. The Americas chapter, which serves both North and South America, was established in 1987. Since then, 182 professionals have earned the title of Master Sommelier as part of the Americas chapter. The title Master Sommelier marks the highest recognition of wine and spirits knowledge, beverage service abilities, and professionalism in the hospitality trade. Education was then, and remains today, the Court's charter. For more information, please visit www.mastersommeliers.org.