

Professional Sommelier Education

Accredited by:



ASSOCIATION SUISSE
DES SOMMELIERS PROFESSIONNELS

Developed by:



WINE
EDUCATION
SWITZERLAND
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1. Course Overview

The **ASSP Sommelier Program** is a structured VET (vocational education and training) program designed to develop the theoretical knowledge, sensory ability, and practical service skills required in the modern hospitality and wine industry. The course combines classroom learning, guided tastings, practical exercises and vineyard/cellar visits.

The program provides a comprehensive foundation in:

- viticulture and winemaking
- global wine regions
- professional wine tasting
- food and wine pairing
- beverage knowledge
- wine service and hospitality
- wine business fundamentals
- storage and inventory basics

Total Learning Hours

120 hours

20 Sessions; 6 hours

Assessment

End of module tests (2);

Final written and practical exam.

Course Structure

3 modules

Intakes

Spring semester

Fall Semester



2. Course Structure

I. Theoretical learning structure:

Module	Title	Hours
Module 1	From Vine to Bottle & Beverages Basics	34
Module 2	Wine Regions of the World	56
Module 3	The Sommelier Profession & Service	24
Exam	Written Exam; Practical session	6
		120

Hours

MODUL 1 - 5 Sessions

- 6 Cellar Visit – Rotation at Nearby Wineries (*non-classroom*)
- 2 Introduction, Course Structure & Viticulture
- 2 Winemaking, Climate, Terroir & Fundamentals of Oenology
- 2 Systematic Tasting Method & Sensory Analysis
- 6 Sparkling Wines + Tasting (6 wines)
- 6 Spirits, Aperitifs & Digestifs
- 2 Sweet Wines & Non-Alcoholic Alternatives
- 2 Fortified Wines & Dessert Wines
- 2 Beer, Apple Wine & Cider
- 2 Service, Wine Pairing, Storage & Wine Lists
- 2 Sales Skills, Understanding Labels & Social Responsibility
- 2 Hot Beverages: Tea, Coffee & Introduction to Cheese Styles

Hours

MODUL II - 7 Sessions

- 4 Introduction to Swiss Wines
- 4 Switzerland
- 8 France I
- 8 France II + Comparative Tasting
- 8 Italy I
- 8 Italy II + Comparative Tasting
- 4 Spain & Portugal
- 4 Germany & Austria
- 4 Americas – USA & South America
- 4 Australia, New Zealand & South Africa & Rest of World

Hours

MODUL III - 3 Sessions

- 3 Food & Wine Pairing (*online session*)
- 7 Service I – Wine List Development & F&B & Calculations & P&L
- 7 Service II – Wine Service Practice / Practical Training
- 7 Service III – Cellar Management / Theory + Visit

II. Practical learning elements included:

- A vineyard visit; Tasting with the winemaker
- Professional tastings throughout the course

MODULE 1 - From Vine to Bottle

Total Hours: 34 hours

Objective

Participants acquire a solid understanding of grape growing, winemaking and the fundamentals of tasting and basic beverage knowledge.

1.1 Viticulture

Learning Objectives

Students understand the key factors influencing grape growing and wine quality.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify the main grape varieties of the world
- describe vine anatomy and vine lifecycle
- understand the influence of climate and soil

Understanding

- explain the concept of terroir
- explain vineyard management practices
- explain the impact of climate on grape quality

Application

- interpret how viticultural conditions influence wine style

1.2 Winemaking

Learning Objectives

Students understand the production processes used in different wine styles.

Competencies

Knowledge

- describe the stages of winemaking from harvest to bottling
- identify fermentation processes

Understanding

- explain the impact of fermentation techniques
- explain aging methods including oak maturation

Application

- analyse how winemaking choices affect wine style and quality

1.3 Wine Styles

Learning Objectives

Students identify and describe major wine styles.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify still wines, sparkling wines, sweet wines and fortified wines

Understanding

- explain how production methods create different wine styles

Application

- distinguish different styles during tasting

1.4 Sensory Analysis

Learning Objectives

Students develop professional tasting ability.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify sensory components of wine

Understanding

- explain structural elements including acidity, tannin, alcohol and sweetness

Application

- describe wines using systematic tasting methodology
- identify aroma families and flavour characteristics

1.5 Other Beverages

Learning Objectives

Students acquire a basic understanding of other beverages served in hospitality.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify major spirit categories
- understand the production of beer and cider
- understand coffee and tea

Understanding

- explain distillation processes
- explain brewing processes

Application

- recommend beverages appropriately in a restaurant context

MODULE 2 - Wine Regions of the World

Total Hours: 56 hours

Objective

Students develop knowledge of the major wine regions of the world and the wines they produce.

2.1 European Wine Regions (OW)

Learning Objectives

Students understand the key wine regions of Europe and their characteristics.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify major wine producing countries
- identify principal wine regions

Understanding

- explain climate, soils and grape varieties of key regions
- explain appellation systems and wine classification

Application

- identify typical wines from these regions during tastings

2.2 Swiss Wine Regions

Learning Objectives

Students develop in-depth knowledge of Swiss vineyards.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify Swiss wine regions
- identify important grape varieties

Understanding

- explain regional wine styles and terroir

Application

- confidently recommend Swiss wines in hospitality settings

2.3 Global Wine Regions (NW)

Learning Objectives

Students gain an overview of wine production outside Europe.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify major New World wine regions

Understanding

- explain differences between Old World and New World production

Application

- analyse wines from international regions during tastings

2.4 Wine Law

Learning Objectives

Students understand legal frameworks governing wine production and labelling.

Competencies

Knowledge

- understand appellation systems
- understand geographical indications

Understanding

- explain the purpose of wine regulations

Application

- interpret wine labels correctly

MODULE 3 - Sommelier Profession

Total Hours: 34 hours

Objective

Students develop the practical skills and professional knowledge required for the role of sommelier.

3.1 Food and Wine Pairing

Learning Objectives

Students understand how wines interact with food.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify flavour components of food and wine

Understanding

- explain the principles of pairing

Application

- recommend wines to accompany menus

3.2 Professional Wine Service

Learning Objectives

Students perform wine service according to professional hospitality standards.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify appropriate glassware
- know service temperatures

Understanding

- explain decanting and aeration

Application

- perform professional wine service

3.3 Cellar Management

Learning Objectives

Students understand the management of wine inventories in restaurants.

Competencies

Knowledge

- understand storage conditions

Understanding

- explain wine aging and inventory control

Application

- manage wine stocks and rotation

3.4 Wine List Creation

Learning Objectives

Students understand the principles of wine list construction.

Competencies

Knowledge

- identify typical wine list structures

Understanding

- explain pricing and profitability

Application

- design a balanced wine list

3.5 Wine Business Fundamentals

Learning Objectives

Students understand commercial aspects of beverage programs.

Competencies

Knowledge

- understand beverage costing
- understand F&B operations

Understanding

- explain purchasing strategies

Application

- evaluate wine selections based on market positioning



4. Assessment Structure

The programme includes:

I. Module Assessments

Module 1 written exam + tasting (test)

Module 2 written exam + tasting (test)

Minimum passing score for both tests and exam: **60%**

II. Final Examination

WRITTEN / TASTING:

Written examination covering all modules

Professional wine tasting

PRACTICAL / SERVICE:

Practical service assessment

Food and wine pairing evaluation

Oral examination

5. Practical Learning Components

The programme includes experiential learning:

- vineyard visit (one compulsory)*
- cellar visit (nearby hotel cellars)
- guided wine tastings
- service practice in a restaurant environment

* Swiss Wine Passport

In partnership with **Swiss Wine Promotions** and **Association Vinea**, all our enrolled students become part of the *Swiss Wine Passport* program: they receive a list of Swiss wineries who participated in the education program and offer their tastings for free of charge with careful explanation and guidance to our students. The passport is a digital booklet where students mark the visited vineyards.

This movement is not part of the national program but developed by WE Wine Education.

6. Certification

Participants who successfully complete the programme receive the:

ASSP Certified Sommelier Diploma

Issued by the
Association Suisse des Sommeliers Professionnels (ASSP)

This course also serves as the preparation course for the Brevet Federal / Eidgenössische Fachausweis. (Additional Info upon Request)

