

2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition

Competition Participant Guide



North Carolina
Fine Wines Competition

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2026

Competition Entries

- Wines must be made from grapes that are 100% North Carolina grown and vinified.
- Grapes must be Vinifera, Hybrid, or a blend of Vinifera/Hybrid, with a minimum production of 25 cases.
- Spirits added to fortified wine must be neutral.
- Entrant agrees to release any wine that wins an award for sale to the public [Retail or Wholesale].

Key Date: March 24, 2026

- Wines entered at online [[EnofileOnline.com](https://enofileonline.com)] & entry fee for each wine received.
- Two (2) bottles of each entry must be received.

Competition Results & Opportunities after the Competition

- Competition results will be announced at the **NC Fine Wines Awards on Friday, April 24, 2026**. The event is open to the public. Information about the Awards evening will be emailed to all Entrants, and we hope you can join us.
- Opportunities may be available throughout 2026 for Entrants whose wines are included in the NC Fine Wines Case to represent and pour winning wines. Additional opportunities may be available to all entrants with award winning wines. These will be shared via email as opportunities are identified.

2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition Competition Participant Guide

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2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition

Entry Requirements

By entering a wine in the competition, Entrant attests and agrees to the following:

- (1) Wines are made from grapes that are **100% North Carolina grown and vinified**. Winery production records will be provided to the Fine Wines of NC for verification upon request;
- (2) Wines are made only from Vinifera or Hybrid grapes; No other fruit or flavoring may be added.
- (3) Minimum production of 25 cases.
- (4) Agricultural ingredients used in making the wine, such as oak, spirits, and tannins, are not required to be grown/produced in North Carolina.
- (5) Spirits added to fortified wine must be neutral.
- (6) Entrant agrees to release any wine that wins an award for sale to the public [Retail or Wholesale].
- (7) Your entrance into the 2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition constitutes a membership payment to join Fine Wines of NC. \$85 of your first entry will be applied to your initial or renewal membership.
- (8) Fine Wines of NC is permitted to collect and use all data submitted by Entrant in connection with the 2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition. Medal winners will be announced on Enofileonline.com the NC Fine Wines web page, other social media.
- (9) Fine Wines of NC, the 2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition, their respective officers, directors, employees, contractors, volunteers, and any sponsor of the same ["Indemnified Parties"] shall not be responsible for any losses due to the theft or damage of any wines entered into the 2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition by fire, accident, vandalism or other causes. The Entrant expressly waives and releases any claim or demand that it may have against any of the indemnified parties by reason of any damage to, or loss of, any wine entered in the 2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition.

2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition

Entry Process

Entry Fees & Process

- Entry fee of \$95 per entry with submission of two 750ml or equivalent or two 375ml of dessert. Wines entered and later withdrawn will forfeit entry fees. Unopened bottles not used during judging may be auctioned at NC Fine Wines Awards Gala or donated/poured at events in support of organization goals.

Key Dates

- All wines must be entered through [EnofileOnline.com](https://enofile.com) & entry fee for each wine received by **March 24, 2026**.
- Two (2) bottles of each entry must be received by **March 24, 2026**.

Entry Process to enter a wine for the 2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition:

(1) **Go to [EnofileOnline](https://enofile.com)** to register and enter each wine.

(2) **By entering a wine in the Competition, Entrant attests and agrees to all the *Entry Requirements*** [see Page 3 above]

(3) Provide following information for each wine entered:

- Identify the (I) Category Type & (II) Category [Found in Chart Below]. These choices are listed in dropdown boxes on Enofile Online.
- Identify % of each varietal used in blends [list grapes in order of largest % to lowest %].
- List Name of Varietal or Name of Wine [if other than varietal]
- Appellation/AVA: Appalachian High Country AVA, Crest of the Blue Ridge Henderson County AVA, Haw River Valley AVA, Swan Creek AVA, Tryon Foothills AVA, Upper Hiwassee Highlands AVA, Yadkin Valley AVA, or North Carolina
- Residual sugar [%]
- Vintage [NV if none]
- Number of gallons & Cases Produced [Where a Case = 12 bottles]
- Retail Price
- Picture of your label in .jpeg or .tiff format [if available]
- Provide the Vineyard, Grower Name, & location(s) where grapes were grown in the "*Comments*" section of the Enofile Entry Form.

(4) Arrange to deliver wines - two (2) 750ml bottles OR two (2) 375ml bottles of dessert wine:

(a) Wines may be delivered to regional pickup location or shipped

(b) Wines **delivered in person by appointment**. Email info@NCFineWines.com to arrange a time.

Entry Categories

I. CATEGORY TYPE

- White
- Red
- Rosé
- Dessert/Port
- Sparkling

II. CATEGORY : All varietal wines must contain at least 75% of the varietal, or must be entered as a blend.

White

Albariño
Assyrtiko
Chardonnay, unoaked
Chardonnay, oaked
Chardonel
Fiano
Gewürztraminer
Grüner Veltliner
Malvasia Bianca
Marsanne
Moschofilero
Pinot Grigio
Pinot Gris
Petit Manseng
Ribiolla Gialla
Riesling
Rkatsiteli
Roussanne
Sauvignon Blanc
Seyval Blanc
Traminette
Vermentino
Vidal Blanc
Vignoles
Viognier
Other White Hybrid Varietal
Other White Vinifera Varietal

White Blends

Hybrid Blend [75% or more Hybrid]
White Blend Vinifera and/or Hybrid [less than 75% Hybrid]

Rosé

Dry Rosé Hybrid [75% or more Hybrid]
Dry Rosé Vinifera and/or Hybrid [less than 75% Hybrid]
Blush Hybrid, not dry [75% or more Hybrid]
Blush, not dry Vinifera and/or Hybrid [less than 75% Hybrid]

Red

Aglianico
Barbera
Cabernet Franc
Cabernet Sauvignon
Corot Noir
Chambourcin
Cynthiana [Norton]
Lemberger
Malbec
Marechal Foch
Merlot
Montepulciano
Mourvèdre
Nebbiolo
Nero Amaro
Nero D'Avola

Norton [Cynthiana]
Petit Verdot
Pinot Noir
Regent
Sagrantino
Sangiovese
Syrah/Shiraz
Tannat
Tempranillo
Touriga Nacional
Zinfandel
Other Red Hybrid Varietal
Other Red Vinifera Varietal

Red Blends

Hybrid blend [75% or more Hybrid grapes]
Meritage style blend [*a blend of any of the following: Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot or Malbec*]
Other Red Blend [not Meritage style/ Less than 75% hybrid]

Sparkling

Carbonation Method
Traditional Method
Tank Method
Pétillant Naturel [Pét-Nat]

Dessert/Port

Port-style [red]
Port-style [white]
Dessert wine [red]
Dessert wine [white]

2026 North Carolina Fine Wines Competition

Judging, Back Room Procedures & Awards

Judging

- Judges will all hold an active certification as either Master or Advanced Sommelier, or equivalent. Names of judges will be announced prior to the competition.
- No discussion about the wines will be permitted during the judging.
- Judges' Tasting Notes will be made available to the Entrant.
- Judges will use the following Wine Spectator 100 point scale when rating wines:
 - 95-100 Classic: a great wine
 - 90-94 Outstanding: a wine of superior character and style
 - 85-89 Very good: a wine with special qualities
 - 80-84 Good: a solid, well-made wine
 - 75-79 Mediocre: a drinkable wine that may have minor flaws
 - 50-74 Not recommended

Note: Any wine below 50 will not receive a score.

- **Scoring Methodology:** Each wine will be evaluated by all judges, in a single-blind tasting. Judges will know the vintage, grape(s) or category of a wine, % of each varietal, and residual sugar; no other information about the wine will be provided to the judges. The lowest two scores will be dropped; the remaining scores are used to determine Awards, and will be averaged to determine the Final Score.

Back Room Procedures & Oversight

- A back room manager will be responsible for ensuring integrity of pouring, delivery and coding of the wines.
- An independent party will be on-site to monitor the integrity of the scoring tabulation as well as ensuring integrity of pouring, delivery and coding of the wines.
- Results will be kept confidential until announcement at the Awards Gala.

Awards

Medals

Double Gold medal: All judges assign a score of 90 or higher.

Gold medal: Final Score is 90 or higher

Silver medal: Final Score is 85-89

Bronze medal: Final Score is 80-84

Best in Show

Highest scored wine

Best in Categories [Minimum score 85]

Best Red

Best White

Best Rosé

Best Dessert/Port

Best Hybrid [must contain at least 75%]

Best Sparkling

NC Fine Wines Case

Composed of the highest scoring wine in each category plus the next six highest scoring wines. In the event a wine is the highest scoring wine in more than one category [i.e. red, white, rosé, hybrid] it will be recognized as such; and the Case will be composed of the five unique "Best in" wines plus the next seven highest scoring wines.

Additional Recognition

Best of Varietals and Best of Blends will be identified.

Highlights of Changes from Prior Years

2026 CHANGES

- The lowest two scores will be dropped; the remaining scores are used to determine Awards, and will be averaged to determine the Final Score.

EARLIER CHANGES

- Clarification on Category to use when entering Blends of Red, Rose & White
- Clarification: Wines are made only from Vinifera or Hybrid Grapes; No other fruit or flavoring may be added.
- Awards - NC Fine Wines Case: In the event a wine is the highest scoring wine in more than one category, it will be recognized as such; and the NC Fine Wines Case will be composed of the five unique "Best in" wines plus the next seven highest scoring wines.
- The *Red* Category is open to Vinifera, Hybrid or Blends of both.
- The *Rosé* Category is open to Vinifera, Hybrid or Blends of both.
- The *White* Category is open to Vinifera, Hybrid or Blends of both.
- To be Eligible for The *Best Hybrid Award*, a wine must contain at least 75% Hybrid grapes.
- A minimum score of 85 is required for Awards for Best in Categories
- Best of Varietals and of Blends [with minimum score of 80] will be identified.
- Minimum production of 25 cases.
- The *Dessert/Port* Category is open to Vinifera, Hybrid or Blends of both.
- Entry submission lowered to two 750ml or equivalent or two 375ml of dessert [from 3 bottles per entry].
- Eliminated requirement for # cases available at time of competition.
- The *Sparkling* Category is open to Vinifera, Hybrid or Blends of both.
- Wines made from Norton / Cynthiana are eligible in the Hybrid Category
- Judge's tasting notes, which are provided only to the Entrant, will now also include the individual score from each judge.
- Winery production records will be provided to the Competition for verification.
- Agricultural ingredients that are used in making the wine, such as oak, spirits, tannins, etc., are not required to be grown/produced in North Carolina.
- Spirits added to fortified wine must be neutral.