

NMVW History of NM State Fair Wine Judging
5/1/23

We are fast approaching our annual NM State Fair Wine Judging event to be held on June 24, 2023. This event has been taking place and evolving since about 1976. I have visited with longtime members of the NM Vine and Wine Society to try to piece together the beginnings of this event, I need to acknowledge Carl Popp, Gary Miller, Carol Heald, Jeremiah Baumgartel, Ron Howes and Barbara Jaramillo. Ron and I became members of the Middle Rio Grande Vine and Wine Society in 2005, after Ron decided he wanted to try his hand at raising grapes!

Carl Popp remembers becoming part of the NM Vine and Wine Society in about 1976 and enjoyed the company of Tom and Rosalie Connelly, Rex Franklin and Henry Street. He remembers the 1st wine judging event was organized by Rick Spielman and had 8 entries. Every year since, the event has gotten bigger and was moved to a house in Placitas, with about 100 entries. Later it was moved to the NM State Fairgrounds where we encountered barnyard smells and flies. The competition and judging were then moved to an event center where we needed to rent a trailer to keep the wines cold and later bought our own refrigerated trailer to store and keep wines the proper temperature. We moved to the Best Western Rio Grande in 2015.

NOTE: these dates are estimates, if anyone has more exact dates, please let me know!

The judging starts soon as we will be contacting winemakers to send their entries to be sorted. About 250 individual wines are brought and sorted into wine categories and numbered for blind judging. This has been done by Jeremiah Baumgartel and Ron Howes. After sorting and compiling the lists the cases are put into the trailer to be taken to the event. The 30 or so judges assemble in one room, usually 5 to a table. This year we will be having a wine judge training on June 3 from 9-12p in Albuquerque and are privileged to have Dr. Andrea Botezatu, from Texas A&M, Professor and Enology Specialist, to lead the class.

The backroom staff of about 20-30 people, sort, pour and serve the wines in flights as instructed. All volunteers who place the wine in front of a judge have NM server certifications. The job of keeping the flow of the wine competition is done

with the help of backroom staff, lead by Barbara Jaramillo. They clean, dry glasses, clear tables and do whatever is needed to make sure the competition is fair, fun and runs smoothly.

After the event, the scores are tallied, medals are assigned, and winners are notified. Plaques and ribbons are ordered and sent or delivered to the winners throughout the state. The best job is setting up the NM Vine and Wine display at the NM State Fair. It is fun to see the NM State Fair while it is being set up.

This event is hosted by the NM Vine and Wine Society and the Middle Rio Grande Chapter of the NM Vine and Wine Society. We are honored to continue this important competition and this year will be working with the NM Winegrowers to make this event a success!

If you are a member of the Middle Rio Grande chapter of the NM Vine and Wine and would like to get your servers license, MRG will pay for this training. If you are interested please contact mrgvinewine.2022@gmail.com

If you need more information or would like to volunteer to help with these events please text your name and phone number to 505-217-4251 or 505-916-9576 or email mrgvinewine.2022@gmail.com.

Thank you,
Melinda Howes
VP NMVW