



BEST-OF-APPELLATION

Regional Evaluation Program

About the Best-of-Appellation™ Evaluation Program

The "Best-of-Appellation™" (BOA) evaluation tastings are designed to facilitate the building of place-identity for the hundreds of winegrowing regions of North America. The BOA Program is not, per se, a competition, though the wines that best express the character and quality of their region of origin are rewarded with medals and placement on Appellation America's *Best-of-Appellation™ Lists* for that region.

The BOA process rigorously follows this familiar proposition:

*The best wines are defined by place,
and the character of each appellation
is defined by its best wines.*

In the BOA process, the "best" wines are defined by their own place of origin; NOT by the personal taste preferences of our esteemed and expert Evaluators. Nor are the wines of one place judged implicitly against the taste profile of wines from another place.

BOA Program Details:

The Evaluators

The BOA assessments are done by panels of professional sensory evaluators moderated by the BOA Program Director and in-house oenologist, Clark Smith, and, whenever possible, assisted by a Regional Advocate Evaluator*. Since the methodology of these evaluations is more forensic than critical in nature, Appellation America's Senior Editors and Regional Correspondents, as well as Guest Wine Writers, may be in attendance pursuant to journalistic, rather than evaluating roles.

The **Regional Advocate Evaluator must be an industry professional from the region with an intimate knowledge of the appellation, its history, terroir and production practices. The role of the Regional Advocate Evaluator is to bring that knowledge to the assessment process, in the interest of better informing the panel at large about the themes of character and place-identity as expressed in the wines being assessed.*

Evaluation Process

1. The tastings are directed by the Moderator, and all wines are handled/poured by a professional service staff out of sight of the Evaluators.
2. Tasting is done blind in flight categories composed of wines of the same variety from the same appellation, or in cross-appellation groupings carefully designed by the Moderator to highlight the different characteristics of the respective appellations. The focus is on identifying distinct *regional signatures*, not competing the wines or appellations against each other. A *regional signature* is deemed to be a pattern of taste and character identifiable in the wine, and traceable to the terroir of the region and/or the locally applied technologies in viticulture and oenology...practical professional choices, if you will, about how to manage mother nature in a given region. In most appellations there are multiple signatures (often for the same variety), identifiable on a spectrum running from *traditional*, to *dominant*, to *innovative*. The BOA Evaluation Program is designed to isolate and equitably accommodate the full spectrum of wine character where appropriate.
3. Each wine submitted for evaluation in the BOA Program is accompanied by a detailed Product Information Form, eliciting information about a wide range of questions regarding the terroir

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and applied technologies background on the wine being evaluated. Prior to the tasting, the Moderator collates this information to inform the key questions he wants to explore about the appellation in the actual tasting process.

4. Each tasting begins with a discussion of what is already known and/or expected in the development of the regional character and styles of wines from the subject appellation. The descriptive content of this preliminary discussion will be THE *qualitative benchmark* for the evaluation to follow, super-ceding personal taste preferences, which the Evaluators may or may not be bringing to the table. This preliminary discussion may be accompanied by tasting wines previously judged to typify the best, or developing, characteristics of the region/variety.
5. The Evaluators individually analyze all the wines in the flight, searching for the patterns of typicity, making notes, and assessing each wine objectively against the afore-mentioned, regionally-informed *qualitative benchmark* on four separate dimensions (color, nose, flavor, balance). As with the first three parameters, the locus of "balance" in the BOA process is to be sought in the signature characteristics of the region, itself, not in the individual taste preferences of the Evaluators. In the final analysis, it matters not whether the Evaluator even "likes" the style of the wine, but rather whether the wine effectively expresses the character of the region.
6. Pursuant to individual assessment, the Moderator quickly polls the panel to determine which wines deserve further discussion in order to define and refine the character/style/quality profile(s) of that variety in the given appellation.
7. Discussion is concluded with an apportionment of the BEST-OF-APPELLATION™ Awards:
Gold = 90-100, *signifying exceptional expression of regional character/quality*
Silver = 80-89, *signifying good & clear expression of regional character/quality*
8. Notes from all the Evaluators are amalgamated and put into the database, and the award winning wines are promptly advanced to the "Best-of-Appellation™" list for that variety and region.

Anomalous Wines

Because the BOA process is purposely focused on defining regionality and patterns of commonality, certain wines may be of exceptional quality by standards other than the regional benchmark criteria, and thus be underrated in the focused BOA evaluation process. Such wines may be accommodated by the following alternatives.

1. An Evaluator may position him/herself as an advocate for the more or less anomalous wine during the discussion and advance the premise that the wine deserves "Best-Of" recognition as either a quality example of the character/style of wines from the region in the past, or a potential beacon of where the region may be headed as it develops its identity for that variety in the future. If the other panelists concur, the wine will be medaled and the "Best-of-Appellation™" notes will indicate the nature of its variance.
2. Once a wine has gone through the BOA evaluation process, an Editor or Regional Correspondent may use Appellation America's "Wine Recommendation" editorial option to applaud a wine that hits the spot with their personal taste preferences. Indeed, this reward is not limited to regionally anomalous wines; even wines which are being advanced to *BEST-OF-APPELLATION™* standing may be treated simultaneously to a separate recommendation using this personal-preference format.

Announcement of Results

Results of the BOA evaluations will be communicated to the participating wineries within two days following the assessment. Dispatch of medals and certificates will follow shortly thereafter.

Only the identity of wines advancing to the *Best-of-Appellation™ Lists* ever becomes known to the Evaluators or anyone else, for that matter, other than the BOA Coordinator and Moderators. From time to time, notice of editorial coverage or Appellation America press releases related to the BOA evaluations will be circularized to all wineries in the relevant appellations.



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How to Submit Wines for Evaluation

1. **Open Call:** Appellation America welcomes submissions from wineries at any time. Though individual wines will not be tasted in isolation, the regional inventories generally build up quickly enough to assemble appropriate tasting flights in a reasonable amount of time.
2. **Regional Call:** From time to time, Appellation America's BOA Coordinator will call for submissions from all the wineries producing wines (or specified varieties) from a particular appellation or regional grouping of appellations.

In addition, Appellation America will work with regional industry organizations to schedule more or less comprehensive Best-of-Appellation evaluations for particular areas. In that process, the call for submissions will come jointly from the named industry organization and Appellation America. The industry organization will be expected to nominate Regional Advocates to work with the BOA Evaluators, and the whole process will be coordinated with the editorial department for Spotlight on the Region type coverage.

The following BOA related forms can be downloaded online at:
<http://wine.appellationamerica.com/about-the-best-of-appellation.aspx>

1. **Submission Form:** This form identifies the products which the winery plans to submit for BOA evaluation. The completed form, together with fees (\$40/per product), should be posted to the appropriate Appellation America office separately from the shipment of the actual wines.
2. **Product Information Form:** This form serves two purposes. The wine will be categorized and coded into the BOA database according to the basic product information supplied by the producer here.

In addition, the information provided in the Product Background Questionnaire portion of the form will be aggregated in the database to provide a broader profile of the terroir parameters and applied technologies common to the region. This in turn, will be used by the Program Moderators to structure and inform the evaluation process along lines that are specifically relevant to the expression of excellence in the wines from the appellation.

Where to Ship

Two 750 mL samples (or 4 x 375 mL) are required for each product being submitted. The wines and Product Information Forms should be shipped (or hand delivered) to:

- For US Wineries: **Appellation America (US) Inc.**
1835 First Street,
Napa, California 94559
Ph: (707) 320-2453
- For Canadian Wineries: **Appellation America Inc.**
148 Lincoln Street, PO Box 249
Lunenburg, Nova Scotia B0J 2C0
Ph: 877-273-3005



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