

Wine and Beverage News

Trust Me, I'm A Specialist.



Wine is an indispensable part of everyday occasions, and among the more affluent and discerning consumers (young and old), it is no longer just a celebratory drink — wine becomes a symbol of their status, prestige and taste. A wine professional's role has thus become more crucial; he therefore no longer just sells a product — to earn the trust of the customer is becoming an increasingly important criteria; the wine professional must assist consumers in making an informed decision based on considerations such as personal taste, preference, and even budget. This presupposes that the wine professional is familiar with the key winemaking regions, wine styles, nuances and trends from around the world. One of the ways to ensure his professional development is through obtaining certification in the Certified Specialist of Wine programme (CSW). Lim Hwee Peng CSW takes time to share with us how the programme he offers assists in the upgrading of wine professionals' know-how, and how he achieves his aspiration of "professionalising the professionals."

Q. What is the Certified Specialist of Wine (CSW) programme?

Lim: The Certified Specialist of Wine is the first level of certification offered by the Society of Wine Educators (SWE), an established US-based non-profit organisation that is dedicated to increasing wine education through professional development and certification. The syllabus covers a thorough in-depth study of subjects such as viticulture, grape varieties, wine production, wine regions and wine appreciation. Some like to compare this programme to the Wines and Spirits Education Trust (WSET) offered by London, but the CSW and WSET are completely dissimilar and should not be compared with each other. The WSET includes syllabus on spirits, while the CSW is purely focused on the subject of wine, thus, allowing more breadth and depth for those who want to pursue the knowledge on wines.

Q. Who is eligible for it, and who benefits most from the CSW?

Lim: The CSW is an inclusive programme, not an exclusive one (i.e. not a wine certification program that caters only to the food-and-beverage professionals in a restaurant environment). So people eligible for the programme and who will benefit from it are wine sales professionals, wine marketing professionals, and also food-&-beverage and hospitality professionals. It is open to people of all age groups so long as they possess keenness in gaining wine knowledge. CSW is also a confidence-building programme, which can also enable higher productivity among the wine and F&B professionals.

Q. Is it a very heavy commitment? What does the course include?

Lim: The CSW is a year-long programme, but it does allow flexibility in study and preparation, whereby candidates can arrange their own study time. When candidates enrol with my institution, they are entitled to membership of Society of Wine Educators (and the entailing benefits), online access to SWE Wine Academy, the CSW Study Guide, scheduled half-day wine tutorials, mock test and mock exam, preparation and sharing of experience by CSW graduates, revision tutorial (prior to examination), and a common online communication platform.

Q. What other benefits will candidates enjoy in enrolling in your wine program?

Lim: From time to time, I will organise Study Trips to selected wine regions for candidates in all my wine programmes (including CSW programme). The most recent Study Trip was a visit to Bordeaux, hosted by Chateau Magnol, with visits to Chateau Latour and Chateau Pape-Clement, as well as a day tour to the city of Bordeaux and Libourne in St Emilion. Such Study Trips ensure that what is being learnt in a classroom environment or studying in wine text will become relevant when one visit a wine region and stand face-to-face with the winemaker, the vineyards, the bundle of grapes, touching the soil, etc. Through this interaction, I am assured that each participant will walk away with a better understanding and

a deepening of his/ her wine knowledge.

Q. Is it very difficult to pass the exam?

Lim: The CSW exam is pitched at an appropriate difficulty level, with a 65 percent passing rate on the first attempt. Candidates taking the programme with my institution are provided with guided tutorial sessions, aided by online quiz and tests, so candidates are well-equipped to attempt the examination. Upon successful graduation, candidates are presented with a certificate and a CSW badge by the Society of Wine Educators. For professionalism, this certification also allows the 'CSW' designation to be placed after the successful graduant's name. This certification enhances one's resumé, and will ensure graduates enjoy an edge over others in the wine and/or related industries, especially in an era, when increasingly, a professional certification is expected from a professional field.

To enquire and/or register for the CSW programme with the Lim Hwee Peng School of Wine, email Lim Hwee Peng, CSW at hweepeng@winecraftmktg.com