

Objectives

- To promote healthy competition among noted Northeastern wineries to drive continuing improvement in the quality of all wines, and in particular, wines and vineyards of New England and New York;
- To raise awareness of New England/New York wines in the United States and internationally;
- To introduce The Big E patrons to the outstanding quality and phenomenal values available in today's wines from around the Northeast;
- To introduce regional wine aficionados and professionals to the educational and charitable aspects of The Big E;
- To use a system of judging wines that is reliable, simple, fair and accurate;
- To become the largest and most successful wine competition in New England;
- To provide a show window to present agricultural resources of the Northeast.

Please direct inquiries and correspondence to:

aqinfo@thebige.com

Eastern States Exposition Agriculture & Education Department
(413) 205-5015

General Information

The 2026 Big E Northeast Gold Wine Competition wines will be studied thoroughly and separately and are considered on an individual basis on the day of the judging.

Additional Information: Should you have a question not covered in this competition handbook, please send an email to aqinfo@thebige.com.

Revisions: The current version of the competition handbook is available on The Big E's Website at <https://www.thebige.com/p/competitions/pre-fair-contests> and may be subject to revisions prior to actual publication and printing. Please check back frequently.

Notification of the Competition: Although every effort is made to reach the roughly 200 wineries throughout the Northeast, Eastern States Exposition (ESE) is not responsible for failure to notify or contact any one winery. The entry deadline is May 15, 2026.

Integrity of the Competition and of the Results

The integrity, validity and reliability of this competition are paramount for Eastern States Exposition.

- The competition follows generally accepted judging criteria that produce world-class standards of excellence.
- Great care has been taken to select qualified judges who have proven the high caliber of their palates in personal and professional pursuits.
- All judges will be trained in medal standards generally accepted by most major wine competitions.
- Conflicts of interest have been scrupulously avoided in every aspect of this competition.

All aspects of this wine judging have been, and will be, conducted to ensure that the results have the highest degree of integrity and are fully worthy of Eastern States Exposition.

Eligibility Requirements

- Any wine currently produced in New England and New York is eligible for entry. Type of products include but not limited to: vinifera, hybrid and native grape wines, fortified wines, sparkling wine, port, sherry, low-alcohol wine, dealcoholized wine, fruit wines, or vermouth.
- An official entry shall consist of two (750ml) bottles of wine or the equivalent in other formats.
- All entrants must be commercially licensed. Pending commercial licenses are accepted.

Judging

Any placement in or removal from a class will be at the discretion of show management.

The judges will use a modified 20-point UCLA-Davis Scoring System and are instructed to grant no points when, in their opinion, wine is unworthy. If the judges are faced with an obviously flawed bottle of wine, the second bottle of the same entry will be opened and tasted. The judges may move wines into another class or disqualify a wine, if it has been entered in the wrong class, or the class is unworkable because of class size.

- Wines are categorized by
 - Red - Vinefera/Hybrid,
 - White – Vinefera/Hybrid,
 - Rosé/Blush
 - Sparkling,
 - Fortified,
 - Fruit,
 - Dessert,
 - Other/Flavored

Sub-categories are determined based on classifications.

- This is a double-blind judging.
- Each wine will be studied thoroughly and separately and are considered on an individual basis on the day of the judging.
- A minimum of three qualified judges will evaluate each wine.

Fees and Deadlines

- **Entries close** on May 15, 2026 at 5 p.m. EST.
- **Wine Deliveries** will be accepted until May 22, 2026 at 5 p.m. EST.
- **Judging:** June 6, 2026.
- **Entry Fee:** Entry Fee is \$40 per wine. Entry fees must accompany the entry form(s). Entries are not official until full payment for each entry has been received.
- Entry fees are non-refundable.
- **Payment Methods:**
 - Check made payable to: Eastern States Exposition
 - Cards: Visa, MasterCard and Discover
- A penalty of \$50 per entry will be assessed if a check is returned by the bank.

Entry Limitations

- There is no limit on the number of wines or classes an entrant may submit.
- The wines should be examples of products currently available to consumers through normal distribution channels throughout the Northeast.

Competition Rules

- ESE is not responsible for correcting errors on entry forms or incorrect information, or wines supplied and/or created by winery staff or their designated representatives.
- ESE is not responsible if a wine is later disqualified for being tasted in the wrong class, or for any other reason.
- No exhibitor shall be entitled to an award which has been disallowed because of their own error.
- Show management shall withhold awards for entries found to be ineligible and may recover awards made for ineligible entries revealed during audits of competition records.
- Wineries with disallowed wines may petition for reinstatement in writing within 30 days of their wine's disallowance.

Enforcement of Rules

The entry requirements, as printed in this catalog, will be enforced.

Fundamental Ethics

Any entry found to have submitted deliberately misleading information may result in the winery being disqualified from all awards and, at the sole discretion of the ESE Wine Competition management, may bar the winery from entering the judging in succeeding years.

Awards

1. **Best of State** is given to one wine from each of the seven competing states that has the highest ranking. The wine must have been made in the state from which it was entered. Special individual medals and certificates will be provided to the winners.
2. **Best Grown and Made in State** is given to the highest-ranking wine from each of the seven competing states. The wine must have been produced from produce grown within the state from which it is entered and made within the state from which it is entered. This is to be denoted in the appellation area on the entry form.
3. **Best Fruit Wine and Best Grape Wine** is awarded to the highest-ranking fruit wine and highest-ranking grape wine respectively. All gold and double gold winners will be presented for best fruit wine or best grape wine. In the event of a tie, a runoff will be held.

4. **Premier Exhibitor** is awarded to the exhibitor who accumulates the highest total points on wine rankings. Not to exceed 5 wines. Exhibitors with more than 5 wines will be judged on the 5 wines with highest rankings.

Notification of Awards Procedures

1. Once a winery receives notification of awards, they may publicly promote this information. If there are specific publications in your area that you would like notified, please send their names and addresses (or email addresses) to aqinfo@thebige.com.
2. Double Gold, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Winners will be notified via email that they achieved this status prior to August 1, 2026. A double gold will be awarded when a judged wine receives a unanimous consensus gold from the panel of judges.
3. ESE reserves the right to print winery names, addresses, phone numbers, and winery personnel in this or any other publication, press release, or correspondence.
4. Medals will be sent as soon as they are available to the winning wineries along with Judges' Comments and Certificates of Award.
5. ESE may contact individual winning wineries to purchase wines for use at events during The Big E or throughout the year.

Promotional Opportunities

1. Winning wines will be on display for the duration of The Big E. Brochures or information regarding their winery is strongly encouraged to be included with their entry. Other opportunities may be made available to wineries based on interest throughout ESE and its event, The Big E. However, they are not solely controlled by the management of this competition.
2. Due to space limitations, winning wineries may be limited in the number of medals on display. Every effort will be made to include all wines; however, management reserves the right to limit the number of medal-winning wines on display.
3. Wineries may be invited to submit and/or participate in various events during The Big E. Every effort will be made to communicate and allow ample time prior to the event to allow for planning and delivery.
4. Every effort will be made to notify wineries when their wines are used in promotional events throughout the year.
5. Wineries participating in the wine competition by entering a minimum of 2 wines per winery will be eligible to participate in The Big E Farmers Market. More information and winery sign up information will be sent upon receipt of entries.

Advertising

Each winery also consents to abide by the following rules that govern the use of results of The Big E Wine Competition in advertising by wineries:

- a. The winery agrees to refrain from any misleading advertising or labeling with reference to any award which may be granted for this wine.
- b. The winery agrees that it will not represent any wine as being identical to the award-winning wine unless this is the case.
- c. In the event of misleading advertising by an award-winning entrant relative to a particular award or awards, The Big E, at its discretion, reserves the right to disqualify both the offending wine and the responsible winery from this and future competitions. Furthermore, such a disqualification will be publicized widely, since it affects the good name of The Big E and its myriad benefactors, volunteers, and beneficiaries.

Entry Procedures

1. Identify the wine(s) you want to submit for judging.
2. Entrants are allowed to enter via mail, fax, email or online using online entry. Please do not send credit card information via email. Requests for entry forms should be sent by email to aqinfo@thebige.com or via phone at (413) 205-5015. Online entry link: <https://thebigewc.fairwire.com>
3. Review all the information in this handbook, carefully noting all entry deadlines, delivery dates, directions, and rules.
4. The handbook is available for preview and downloading at <https://www.thebige.com/p/competitions/pre-fair-contests> and may be subject to revision prior to the date of printing. It is the entrants' responsibility to stay abreast of changes that may affect their entries if they decide to enter based on the preview manual.
5. Become thoroughly familiar with the delivery and shipping requirements.
6. Ship or deliver your entry as instructed in the Delivery and Shipping Requirements section of this handbook. **NOTE: Eastern States Exposition claims no responsibility for damaged or lost shipments.**
7. Pay entry fees. Delivered wines are not entries until all fees have been paid in full.
8. Questions about rules or entry procedures should be addressed to aqinfo@thebige.com or via phone at (413) 205-5015.

Entry Form

1. Please complete a separate entry for each wine entered.
2. **Please send a high-resolution .pdf or .jpeg or .tif (via email, cd, or thumb drive) of the actual label for each wine that you enter along with Entry Payment. You can submit your labels via the online entry system.** This is so that, if your wine is selected Gold, Double Gold, Best of Show or Best of State, we may include the label in promotional opportunities.
3. Please provide the telephone number and email address of the person designated to serve as the winery contact in case of questions and/or in case of an award notification.
4. **An entry form for each wine submitted must be enclosed with the wines being sent.**
5. Entry forms, wine, and payment can be sent to:

Mallary Complex, Eastern States Exposition
1305 Memorial Ave
West Springfield, MA 01089

6. Incomplete entry forms may be disqualified, and the entry fee forfeited at the sole discretion of ESE Wine Competition management.

Delivery and Shipping Requirements

1. Be sure you have filled out the entry form completely. **Remember:**
 - Please keep copies of the completed entry forms.
 - Enclose a copy of the entry form in each shipment to match the specific wine(s) in each box. Make sure that the wines on the entry match those you are shipping.
 - If you have not included a .pdf or .jpeg or .tif of each label, be sure you submit an exact label with each entry (even if it is done on a copier).
 - The entry fee is \$40 per entry.
 - Entries shipped in error will not be returned.
 - Be sure a copy of the entry forms along with payment has been sent to
Mallary Complex, Eastern States Exposition
1305 Memorial Avenue
West Springfield, MA 01089

This can be sent in the same packaging as your wine shipment.
2. Deliveries are to arrive through May 30, and must be delivered or shipped FREIGHT PREPAID (Fed Ex is eligible to send wine to Massachusetts) to:
Eastern States Exposition
Mallary Complex
1305 Memorial Avenue
West Springfield, MA 01089
3. All bills of lading should clearly state: **“Free Domicile”** and **“Samples, Not For Resale”** to ensure they arrive fully paid.
Please mark multiple box shipments with box numbers and total boxes shipped (i.e., “Box 1 of 4 boxes,” “Box 2 of 4 boxes,” etc.) **Make certain to enclose a copy of the entry form for each box!**

WHAT IS THE BIG E?



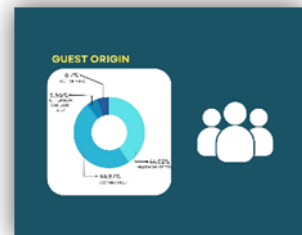
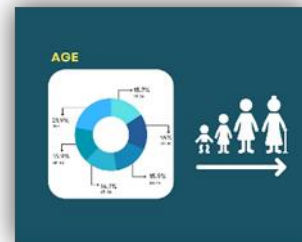
The Big E is the largest Fair in the Northeast produced by Eastern States Exposition. Eastern States Exposition is a not-for-profit corporation committed to excellence in providing year-round opportunities for the development and promotion of agriculture, education, industry, and family entertainment while preserving our New England heritage. Over 4,000 entries and 8,000 agriculture participants come to the Fair each September. Drawing a crowd of more than one million fairgoers each year, The Big E has an economic impact of \$479 million to Hampden County during its 17-day run.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF OUR VISITORS

AGE:	18 – 24	15.7 %
	25 – 34	16.0 %
	35 – 44	15.9 %
	45 – 54	14.7 %
	55 – 64	15.9 %
	65+	21.9 %

INCOME:	Under \$25,000	21.6 %
	\$25,000 - \$49,999	20.7 %
	\$50,000 - \$99,999	29.8 %
	\$100,000 +	27.9 %

GUEST ORIGIN:	Connecticut	44.87 %
	Massachusetts	44.02 %
	Other New England & NY	6.96 %
	Out of Area	6.70 %



Learn more at: [The Big E \(adobe.com\)](https://www.thebige.com)

Gillette Stadium has 2 million visitors in 7 months. The 2023 Big E's 17-day attendance is 70% of Gillette Stadium's 7-month total attendance.

OUR SOCIAL MEDIA REACH IS FAR AND WIDE!

- 254,600 LIKES
- 61,800 FOLLOWERS
- 25,400 FOLLOWERS
- 12,500 FOLLOWERS
- 215,600 SUBSCRIBERS