

Q&A

Q: Why is this combination of members of the **Tasters Guild** and the **American Wine Society** happening?

A: Principals of the **Tasters Guild** wanted a reliable, long-term home for its members and chapters. They found that with the **AWS**, the oldest and largest organization of wine consumers in the U.S., committed to serving its members and promoting wine appreciation.

Q: Why is this a good idea?

A: We think there are many reasons. Together, both membership groups will have more leverage and cache in the industry. Our higher profile and greater prominence will allow us to do more together and create more value.

Q: How long has this been in the works?

A: The ties between the **TG** and **AWS** go back many years. Many people are members of both organizations and some areas host chapters of both the **AWS** and the **TG**, operating as parallel groups. Through the years, **TG** members would inquire about the possibility of a more formal arrangement between the two groups. Since 2014, leaders of both organization were in talks. Since late 2016, both sides moved forward in earnest.

Q: What will happen to the **Tasters Guild**?

A: The **Tasters Guild** will continue with certain activities, including its wine competition and travel activities, after this agreement goes into effect. You will likely continue to hear from the **TG** from time to time. But the **TG** will cease to operate as a dues-collecting membership organization.

Q: How is the **AWS** organized?

A: The **AWS** is an educational non-profit, 501(c)3, headed by a national, volunteer board of directors. The **AWS** was incorporated in Michigan and maintains its charitable status in several states. The national office, with a full-time staff of two, is based in Scranton, Pa.

Q: How did the **AWS** begin?

A: Wine pioneer Dr. Konstantin Frank founded the **AWS** to promote wine education and consumption in the United States. In 2017, the **AWS** is celebrating 50 Years of Wine Discovery and we expect to celebrate many more.

Q: Will **TG** Chapters have to change anything?

A: Not at all. Many **AWS** chapters operate similarly to **TG** Chapters. **AWS** chapter standards are broad, requiring at least six meetings annually that include wine and an educational component, which could be as basic as “try this unusual wine from Portugal.” We don’t allow individuals or other entities to profit directly from chapter operations. Non-member guests are welcome to three **AWS** chapter events to check things out before being required to join.

Q: Will **TG** chapters have to change their names?

A: No. They will not. We respect the heritage, work and time that has gone into building the **Tasters Guild** and its network of thriving chapters. The **Tasters Guild** principals generously agreed to allow its legacy chapters to continue to use the “**Tasters Guild**” name if they wish. Chapters can be known as a “**Tasters Guild** Chapter of the **American Wine Society**.”

Q: Will **TG** Chapters have to open events to **AWS** members or new members?

A: They will not have to. The **AWS** gives chapters that have space or membership limitations the option of being a “closed chapter” that cannot accept new members without the chapter chair’s prior approval. Other **AWS** chapters welcome visiting **AWS** members and new members who drop in to events or join and affiliate on-line.

Q: As an **AWS** member, can I be active in another **AWS** Chapter?

A: Absolutely. As a member of the **AWS**, you may be able to visit or affiliate with other chapters around the country or near your home. **AWS** members may affiliate with up to two **AWS** Chapters. Most **AWS** chapters heartily welcome all members who present themselves. That said, a handful of the **AWS**’s 160 chapters are “closed,” so it depends on the chapter policy.

Q: How will we become members of the **AWS**?

A: Just about all **TG** members will receive a complimentary membership in the **AWS** for a period of time. Because the **AWS**'s one and three-year membership options run on a calendar year, the simplest way to on-board **TG** members is to offer all **TG** members 2017 half-year memberships in June and July. Those with renewal dates in 2018 and beyond will have extended complementary membership, and depending upon their **TG** renewal date, be offered **AWS** half-year membership or full-year membership.

Q: How much does **AWS** membership cost?

A: **TG** members will be offered an incentive **AWS** membership rate of \$49 per household for 2018 and 2019. Currently, **AWS** one-year household membership for any two people at the same address is \$62. Individuals may join the **AWS** for \$49 per year. We have three-year memberships at a 15-percent savings—\$158 for a two-person household and \$124 for individuals.

Q: How will the **AWS** handle our personal information?

A: The **AWS** has a strict data and privacy policy and DOES NOT sell or share any of our members' data to outside entities.

Q: I'm very serious about learning about wine, beyond the scope of chapter events. What can the **AWS** do for me?

A: The **AWS** is the one of the only organizations in the country that certifies wine judges. The Wine Judge Certification Program is usually three years, and those who complete it successfully get the CWJ initials after their names. Enrollees can participate in free monthly virtual training and tastings.

Q: Who are **AWS** members?

A: **AWS** member are predominantly consumers who love wine and want to learn more about it. About a fourth of our members are amateur wine-makers. (Through the years, more than two dozen of them have opened commercial wineries.) Many chapters have wine and culinary professionals in their ranks. We have a professional membership category for wineries, wine supply shops and other businesses who want deeper engagement with the **AWS**.

Q: As an **AWS** Chapter, how will our **TG** chapter benefit?

A: If your chapter would like programming options, we have educational presentation tools available through our chapter resource database. Every year we have a National Tasting Project in which chapters may taste and evaluate wines. From time to time, the **AWS** teams up with importers or producers to develop a live or steaming wine presentation. In the past, we've done this with Wines of Franciacorta, Wines of South Africa, Banfi, and Dr. Frank. Check out at americanwinesociety.org for more information.

Q: How does the insurance work?

A: While our chapters are separate legal entities, the **AWS** has a \$1 million liability insurance policy to protect members, chapters, meeting venues and the national organization. In the industry, this is often referred to as liquor liability or "dram shop" coverage. This protection will be in place for your chapter after the agreement goes into effect for qualified **AWS** Chapter events. If a chapter requires a certificate of insurance, COI, for a particular meeting venue which wishes to be added as a named insured party, one can be obtained by filling out of a questionnaire two weeks prior. In fact, the **AWS** plans to purchase what is known as a prior claims rider to its policy covering any claims that may arise from **TG** chapters prior to the enactment of this agreement.

Q: How does the **AWS** interact with chapters?

A: The national office regularly sends chapter chairs a roster of current members for their records. When a new member affiliates with a chapter, the chair is notified within a few days. Some parts of the country may be served by an **AWS** Regional Vice President, whose job it is to help start chapters and interface existing **AWS** chapters.

Q: What happens now?

A: The **AWS** will do its best to have our regional vice presidents and ambassadors call on **TG** chapter directors and request a meeting with chapters over the next few months. We hope this visit will constitute a hearty welcome and more in-depth introduction to the **American Wine Society** as we embark on this historic move.