

# Overwhelmed in the Wine Aisle?

## Go For The Gold!

(NAPSA)—A helpful hint when shopping for a bottle of wine is to look for a medal on the label. Throughout the year, dozens of wine competitions are held worldwide, and when a wine wins a medal, the winery may be granted the right to display it on the bottle. While the criteria for a gold-medal wine varies slightly from competition to competition, chances are if it won gold, it will be a good bottle of wine.

### How A Wine Is Judged.

When a wine is submitted to a competition, the bottle is initially judged against other wines made from the same grape type, so Chardonnays are tasted with other Chardonnays and Merlots with other Merlots. Other considerations used in determining categories can be price, vintage and country of origin. Labels are concealed during the competition to prevent any bias, and a panel of judges taste and determine if a wine is of gold, silver or bronze quality (a vast majority of wines fail to win any medal).

### Who Does The Judging?

Judges are generally selected from the local, regional, national and international wine trade. This can include wine writers, retail and restaurant wine buyers and sellers, wine aficionados and, occasionally, winery owners and employees. A judge must be able to demonstrate an exceptional understanding of wine and a well-educated palate. Those who are selected usually taste hundreds if not thousands of different wines every year.

**Better Than Gold.** Unlike the Olympics, a gold medal is not always the highest award that can be won. At some competitions, wines can earn double-gold medals (if each judge gives the wine a “gold” rating) and Sweepstakes Awards (for the best red, white and sparkling wine of the competition), and in many competitions the winery that wins the most and best medals is awarded Best Winery.



**Dr. Lucio Caputo, U.S. Representative of the Fairs of Verona, presents Gallo of Sonoma's Winemaker, Gina Gallo, with her second Premio Gran Vintaly award.**

### Medals Around The World.

While some competitions are strictly regional and do not allow wines from other states or countries to enter, others are held with an eye towards determining the best wines in the world. More often than not, when American wineries are allowed to compete against the world's best producers on an international stage, they come out on top. In the last two years alone, Gallo of Sonoma Winery has been awarded the Prize of Excellence at VinExpo in France; Best Chardonnay Worldwide at the London-based International Wine & Spirits Competition; and International Winery of the Year at VinItaly in Verona, Italy.

**How Good Is Great?** It is not easy to make an award-winning wine. At the 2001 VinItaly, less than four percent of the wines entered received medals. At the 2001 San Francisco International Wine Competition, America's largest wine competition, Gallo of Sonoma's 1997 Barrelli Creek Cabernet Sauvignon prevailed over 1,727 other red wines to win Best Red Wine.

So the next time you are selecting a bottle of wine to complement your meal, you may care to choose an award-winner—it has been through the rigors of competition and came out on top.