



Standards for all levels of Court of Master Sommeliers examinations have been established in an effort to test a sommelier's ability to display:

1. Theoretical comprehension of the vital aspects influencing the overall taste experience and formal service of all alcoholic beverages served in the marketplace.
2. Practical acumen in: food pairing, business management skills and sales ability in the service of beverages on the floor of any level of restaurant up to and including formal fine dining.
3. The ability to accurately describe the overall taste experience and recognize established and developing archetypes of the world's quality alcoholic beverages.
4. Recognition of value at all levels of the alcoholic beverage spectrum, often in conjunction with a specific market and/or business model.
5. Professional and humble comportment in all situations.

Overall, theoretical facts are learned in order to put them in context in a way the guest will understand and appreciate to better enjoy their beverage. Recognizing styles of wine in a deductive tasting situation is the first step in understanding the value of that wine to the guest. Mastering beverage service mechanics and sound business practices are the foundation upon which the true value of salesmanship and exceeding guest expectations is based.

Candidates: when creating your study schedule/curriculum, pose the following questions:

1. What are the archetypal alcoholic beverages in the world?
2. What are the vital causes of the way they taste?
3. Are there any aspects of this beverage which will dictate how it should be served to show it in its best light on a restaurant floor?
4. For a wine region, investigate in a systematic regimen the geography, grape varieties, climate, soil, viticultural practices, vinification methods, aging, label terms, wine laws, vintages, and style types of regions, sub-regions and producers. Given that many share basic standards, what makes each different?

To learn sales and service, determine what aspects of a beverage must be considered to be sold to and poured at its optimal level – and how to sell versus describe. Begin with the CMS published proper beverage service standards. Safety comes first, then theoretical comprehension, mechanics, temperature, food pairing ability, etc. Practice makes mechanics perfect, but don't lose sight of the endgame. Standards exist to allow for better salesmanship and hospitality. Learning how to frame and communicate one's vast knowledge of beverages in a gracious and inviting manner for the guest is the goal.

When tasting beverages, pose:

1. What are the world's archetypal alcoholic beverages?
2. What do they taste like? What language is necessary to describe them amongst sommeliers vs. guests?
3. Why does it taste the way it does? Given theoretical knowledge of the beverage world, what must it be? Is it a "classic" example in the market? What level of quality is it given the complexity, balance and finish?
4. Given the general descriptors, overall quality and demand/market conditions, what is a fair price for that wine in a restaurant?

Look at all three parts in conjunction with one another, and place everything through the screen of the guest's experience. The CMS is a service oriented organization. Recognize and focus on reinforcing each discipline with the others; they support each other with the restaurant floor as the final goal.