



## HOW TO START A CHAPTER AND CHAPTER ACTIVITIES



# TO START AN AWS CHAPTER IN YOUR AREA

*The American Wine Society (AWS) was organized in 1967 as a non-profit, educational, consumer-oriented organization for those interested in learning more about all aspects of wine. Membership is open to all adults who enjoy wine and are interested in promoting wine appreciation through education. For more information about AWS, please visit our website, [www.americanwinesociety.org](http://www.americanwinesociety.org), or contact the National Office at [executivedirector@americanwinesociety.org](mailto:executivedirector@americanwinesociety.org) or at 888-AWS-9070.*

**The American Wine Society has chapters in many cities but if there isn't one in your area, starting one is as easy as 1-2-3. Here's how to start an AWS Chapter...**

**1) The starting point is the AWS National Office. You can reach the Executive Director at [executivedirector@americanwinesociety.org](mailto:executivedirector@americanwinesociety.org) or 1-888-AWS-9070.**

**The Executive Director can;**

- Let you know if there is a chapter in your area
- Put you in touch with other members in your area
- Contact the Regional Vice-President and the Director of Membership Services who can help you start a chapter
- Provide membership applications and other materials to help you start a chapter

**2) Next: In your neighborhood...**

**You want to find other wine lovers in your area. The people you know are a starting point.**

- Share your plans with proprietors of wine shops, winemakers' supply stores, wineries and culinary groups.

**In your neighborhood...cont.**

- Create a flier about the start-up chapter and ask to post it at wine-related businesses, health food stores, gyms, or community bulletin boards.

**On the Web...**

- Create an e-mail account to compile contacts for your chapter and stay in touch with prospective members. Gmail.com and yahoo.com are good choices and offer free accounts.
- A Facebook page that contains the name of your city or region and American Wine Society is an easy option to attract people interested in wine and offers another way of keeping in touch.
- Meetup.com is another good option.

**3) Meet, organize, and taste**

- Pick a date for your chapter's first meeting and let the Regional Vice-President know, so he or she could attend and perhaps even conduct the first tasting. The first meeting could be at a private home; but if you expect a larger crowd, you may want to check with community halls, churches, restaurants, and social clubs who are okay with having a wine tasting event.



**3) Meet, organize, and taste cont.**

- Pick a theme for your first tasting. There are no rules, so pick whatever type of wine you enjoy... California Cabernet, Italian wines, German Riesling, whatever you want. Based on the cost of the wine, determine the fee to charge each attendee.

- Hold the tasting/meeting. The information you receive from the National Office provides guidelines on conducting a tasting and how to make it informative, interesting and fun. It's your tasting, so make it as formal or informal as you wish.

- Collect contact information for all attendees, tell everyone how to join the American Wine Society on-line and hand out membership applications. Agree on a meeting schedule, discuss tasting themes, and enlist volunteers to host future tasting. Meetings can be as informative and fun as the group likes. Most chapters meet between six and twelve times a year. They also conduct wine dinners and other special events.

- Select a name for your chapter and a Chapter Chairperson, who will be the main contact to the National Office. Other chapter officers – Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-President – can also be elected. Have the Chapter Chairperson contact the National Office to let them know about your chapter.

- Congratulations! You are now a chapter of the American Wine Society ready to share the joys of wine and fellowship.

# SUGGESTED CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

## **Scheduling:**

There is great flexibility for each chapter to set up its own program. The frequency, timing, and nature of these meetings can be arranged to fit the local membership interests. Many chapters choose to have a monthly meeting, but you can have more or less depending on the interests of your members.

## **Chapter Tastings/Meetings:**

In most cases, holding your chapter's meeting in a member's home or a community clubhouse works best. Check with the membership for leads to other appropriate facilities. If you plan to use a public meeting place and serve wines, be sure to inform the management that you plan to serve wine and have a firm understanding about matters such as corkage fees and liability policy.

It's important to know who the members are and who the guests are. AWS provides a \$1,000,000 liability policy to protect hosts and attendees at AWS events. Guests are included for up to three events. After that, a guest must become a member to continue attending AWS events.

Limit the amount of wine provided since members will probably have to drive home. Make sure you provide dump buckets and encourage attendees to use them after tasting the wines. AWS encourages responsible consumption of wine

Enjoy your tasting but make sure to talk a little business at some point. Talk about the next chapter event, AWS National Conference update, encourage guests to join AWS, etc.

## **Suggested Types of Meetings:**

### **Wine Tastings.**

Choose a theme for each tasting centered around some aspect of wine. The possibilities are endless and the best way to learn about wine is to volunteer to conduct a tasting. Some suggestions are:

- Wines from a specific region such as Bordeaux, Napa, etc.
- Wines of a specific varietal such as Sauvignon Blanc from several countries
- Wines from a specific winery such as Banfi, Mondavi or Penfolds
- Wines made from Native American grape varietals
- Wines from a specific vintage such as 2008 Washington state Merlot's
- Wines from local wineries

### **Dinner meetings.**

These can be informal... in a home where everyone brings food and a wine to share. Or formal... in a restaurant with a set wine and food pairing menu. Put your imagination and palate to work; the results will astound you.

### **Vineyard and Winery Tours:**

Many professionals who own wineries are AWS members and they will be delighted to welcome you. If they are not AWS members, what an opportunity for you to invite them to join! Try to plan some type of winery trip each year, you will be surprised how much you can learn and what it will mean to your membership.

### **Chapter News Items:**

You are proud of what your chapter is doing; your members are happy participants. Share that information with our AWS National Office and the Editor of the AWS News. In each issue of the AWS News, we highlight tastings from several chapters around the country. Let others know about the great events happening in your chapter