



Joseph Spellman
Master Sommelier

Joseph Spellman, MS is Winery Sommelier for JUSTIN Vineyards and Winery. He has worked with wine since 1979, principally as a sommelier, in Chicago's top restaurant cellars, including Tango, Maxim's, The Pump Room, The Park Hyatt Hotel, and Charlie Trotter's. He has also had stints in wine retail, wholesale, and importing companies, as well as the Napa Valley producer Joseph Phelps. He has been a leading wine educator, writer, and consultant, and has led wine seminars in the US, UK, Japan, and Australia.

Joseph earned the prestigious Master Sommelier Diploma in 1996, held now by 85 Americans, and 140 individuals worldwide. He is a frequent instructor and examiner in the Court of Master Sommeliers, and in 2005 was elected Chairman of the American Chapter of the Court. He has also passed the difficult Certified Wine Educator Examination, in 2003, and has studied for the Master of Wine Diploma with its top instructors.

Another rare achievement was winning the 1997 French Sommelier Competition in Paris sponsored by SOPEXA, and the title "Best Sommelier in the World in French Wines and Spirits." He is only the second American to have done so. In the following year (1998) he was named the *Bon Appetit* Wine & Spirits Professional of the Year.

Joseph is a major supporter of the arts, serving as an active member in the Lyric Opera Wine Auction Advisory Board. He has led seminars for the Chicago Humanities Festival, various educational and health-oriented charities, and numerous student groups. His donations of tastings for arts, education, and medical charities have consistently fetched high bids for these deserving organizations. A theatre lover, he consulted in 2003 on an original script by Sharon Evans, "Blind Tasting," at Live Bait Theatre in Chicago.

Among his professional written works, he is most proud of his critically praised wine notes featured in the landmark series of recipe and photography books by Chef Charlie Trotter. He was the principal wine writer of the 2003 Lyric Opera Auction Catalogue, and will again contribute to the 2006 edition. He also has written grape descriptions for the Wine Grapes posters produced by Ten Speed Press; and over the years he has contributed to the magazines *Wine & Spirits*, *Wine Enthusiast*, *Santé*, *Decanter*, and *Appellation*.

As a professional palate, he has tasted for Beverage Testing Institute, United Airlines, the Grand Jury Européen, the Oregon State Fair, StarWine, the Jefferson Cup, and the Detroit Wine Competition. He has coordinated several wine dinners for the James Beard Foundation and many of its chef-contributors, as well as promotional and charity wine dinners around the US. He has spoken at wine festivals in Aspen, Cincinnati, Napa Valley, Sonoma County, Santa Fe, Taos, Telluride, San Diego, Carmel, Nashville, New Orleans, New York, Pinehurst, the Mohegan Sun, Disney properties, and Chicago.

Other interests include film, fiction, photography, baseball, and beer.