

My Sommelier Journey

Maria Reyes-Smith

ChemE, WSET L3, SWS, Albariño Ambassador

Chemical Engineer degree from University of Puerto Rico



Moved to upstate NY near Hudson Valley 2001



Moved to Arizona 2006



Wine Certifications 2016-2019

**The more I learn, the more I realize I
don't know much**



Wine regions visited



Countries (6)

- Italy
- Greece
- Spain
- Portugal
- Chile
- USA

States (11)

- Washington/Oregon/California
- Arizona/NM/Texas
- Missouri/NC/NY/FL/Virginia

Regions (30)

- Temecula/Napa/Sonoma/Petaluma
- Long Island/Hudson Valley
- Asheville
- Sonoita/Verde Valley/Willcox

My sommelier journey began 7 years ago.

I remember when my husband said to me: "why don't you get certified?" My response was that I couldn't because I had a full time job, 3 children and him! Another part of me was thinking that I was too old to learn something new, specially something as intense as a wine certification.

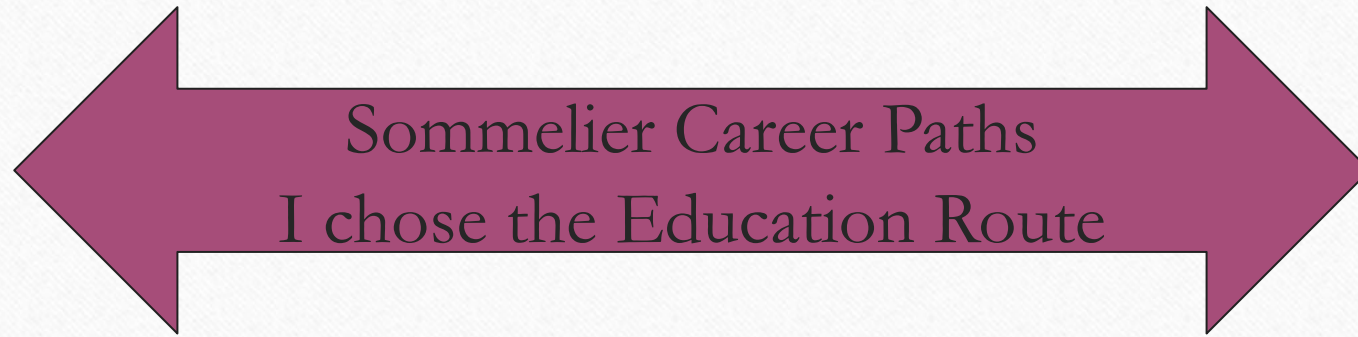
Without my knowledge my husband had enrolled me on the WSET level 1 class and a test date was already set. Challenge accepted!

Once I passed level 1, then it became an addiction, not to the wine (trust me, when you are studying wine you barely drink) to learning. To realize that your brain can continue to absorb information it's a great feeling.

The rest as they say is history. I went on to obtain my level 2 and level 3 certification, I was part of the first Spanish Wine Scholar graduating class and became an Albariño wine ambassador.

Now I own a wine education business, where I tutor others, teach fun classes and help businesses and customers make educated wine purchasing decisions.

I started by saying this is a journey because the more I think I know a lot, I realize I don't know enough.



Education

- Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) L1-Diploma
- Society of Wine Educators (SWE)
- Wine Scholar Guild (WSG)

Hospitality

- Court of Master Sommelier (CMS)
- Institute of Masters of Wine (IMW)
- International Sommelier Guild



WSET

Wine and Spirits Education Trust

Between 2016 - 2019 received qualifications in tiers, L1, L2 and L3

Took all my exams at the Napa Valley Wine Academy in Napa, California

My final exams for Level 3 certification required tasting evaluations, using the WSET Systematic Approach to Tasting (SAT) and essay style questions.



Wine Scholar Guild

Likewise, received my Spanish Wine Scholar certification from the Wine Scholar Guild via the Napa Valley Wine Academy in Napa, California.

I was part of the very first graduating class in 2019.

Marivinera Wine Experiences

- Incorporated in 2019 and offered at home wine tasting classes exclusively
- Due to pandemic in 2020, I began offering virtual classes and was able to reach a bigger and broader audience. Clients from 6 different states and Puerto Rico joined my online classes
- Guest instructor at Rutgers University where I taught a highly technical “Chemistry In Wine” class to Chemistry PhD students
- I’ve been the Beverage Director for Light Up Ahwatukee Association since 2021 and in 2023 became the President of the Board as well

Classes offered

- Becoming a sommelier - for those interested in starting a sommelier career
- Wine from Vineyard to Table - explanation of what goes into making wine
- Wines around the world - different wines from different regions
- Tour de España - class on all wines of Spain
- Aromatic wines - class on wines with intense aromas
- Sparkling wines - class on the different styles of sparkling wine
- Rose wines - different rose wines and the different styles
- Noble grapes wines - wines made from the 6 noble grapes
- Chemistry of Wine - technical review of the science around wine