



vineroutes

RESTAURANT AWARDS

INFORMATION DECK

about **v i n e r o u t e s**

Since launching in early 2020, VineRoutes offers an approach to wine culture that is both accessible and unpretentious, while highlighting world-class producers, innovative culinary talent and wine-related lifestyle and travel. Presented in a fun and contemporary format, VineRoutes is a resource for connoisseurs and novices alike in search of excellent food and drink.

key statistics



v i n e r o u t e s
**RESTAURANT
AWARDS**

#1

2025 Restaurant
Award Winners was
the most-read feature
on **vineroutes.com**
in 2025.

42%

users who have
clicked on a page
regarding Food
and Wine content
on **vineroutes.com**

25%

of all page views on
the **vineroutes.com**
website are for Food
and Wine content

30%

of all Google search
queries that lead
to a user visit on
vineroutes.com
are restaurant related

24%

increase in user
traffic year over year
on **vineroutes.com**
(2024 vs 2023)

47%

increase in page
views year over year
on **vineroutes.com**
(2024 vs 2023)

73%

of **vineroutes.com**
users are Canadian

vineroutes' restaurant awards

VineRoutes' Restaurant Awards recognize dining destinations across Canada for their standout and memorable food and wine experiences, distinguishing themselves through thoughtful wine selections, service quality, and alignment with their cuisine.

Three award levels help guide readers on quality and dining expectations, with biennial or triennial re-evaluation to ensure ongoing excellence.



Focused on restaurants prioritizing Canadian wines, requiring at least 50% of their wine list to be local/Canadian. Lists must be carefully curated to match the menu's theme, both in variety and price.

KEY CRITERIA

Diverse and quality driven Canadian wine selection, and a knowledgeable manager or sommelier to assist guests.

Note: Private clubs and winery-owned restaurants exclusively serving their own wines are not eligible at this time.)



This award level recognizes restaurants with thoughtfully built wine programs that demonstrate depth, range, and a clear commitment to the dining experience. These lists showcase multiple regions and grape varieties, offering guests both breadth of choice and a sense of discovery at the table.

KEY CRITERIA

Wine programs typically feature 100 or more selections. Consideration may also be given to smaller lists that demonstrate a focus on Canadian producers, provided the overall program reflects depth and intent. An in-house sommelier or wine director is expected to oversee the wine program during dinner service.



This is the top honour for restaurants with a premier food and wine service, typically offering a minimum of 300 wine labels, breadth in vintages, and at least 5% Canadian VQA wines in their selection.

KEY CRITERIA

Comprehensive and presentable wine list, flawless customer service, full-time sommelier and wine director displaying comprehensive wine knowledge. Restaurants require a set minimum seating capacity and an overall atmosphere worthy of such an experience.

Note: Winners of this award currently maintain their standing for three years before re-evaluation.

FAQ

Q. How do I apply for VineRoutes' Restaurant Awards program as a new applicant?

- A.** All applications will be submitted through our online platform, which will be open between Feb. 15 to May 31, 2026.

Winners are announced early fall and featured on our website, newsletter and social media platforms.

Q. What is required to apply for an award?

- A.** All applicants—whether new entrants or applying for an upgrade, or renewing for a previously earned award—are required to complete an online application, for which you will need the following:

- Digital copies of your wine list and dinner menus
- Digital photos of the restaurant (interior and exterior if available)
- A digital headshot of the restaurant's wine director or sommelier
- A digital headshot of the restaurant's head chef

Photos may be used on the website and will be used to enhance your listing on our Restaurant Awards index.

Q. What is the entry fee?

- A.** There is a discounted early bird application fee and a regular application fee. Those applying between February 15 and March 31, 2026 will receive an early bird discounted application rate of \$350. Those submitting from April 1 to May 31, 2026, will pay the standard application rate of \$425.

Q. Are private clubs and winery restaurants eligible?

- A.** Entries from private clubs are not eligible. Winery restaurants serving only their own winery's wines are not eligible.

Q. My restaurant is located outside of Canada. Can I apply?

- A.** No, we are currently not awarding restaurants from outside Canada.

Q. How can I find out if my application has been received and how do I pay?

- A.** You should receive a confirmation email upon completing your online application. Upon confirmation, you will receive an email with an invoice to pay your application fee (we will be emailing the designated contact you provide us). You will have 30 days to pay your fee in order to qualify as an award winner.

Q. My wine list is presented on an iPad. How should I submit it for review?

- A.** Please upload a PDF of your wine selections, if it is not formatted in a way that properly displays all information (vintage, producer, appellation, wine name, price, etc.) you may submit screen shots of how it is displayed to the customers.

Q. I have more than one restaurant. Do I need to enter them separately?

- A.** Yes, each restaurant must have a completed online application including digital uploads of required materials. Each restaurant also carries its own application fee.

Q. Should I include copies of my lunch menu, press clippings or anything else?

- A.** No, only your wine list, dinner menu, information form and entry fee are required. Other materials are not reviewed by our judging panel.

Q. When do I submit a headshot or photos of my restaurant?

- A.** You will be contacted by email for high resolution images of the restaurant, chef and sommelier/wine director at a later date.

FAQ Continued

Q. If my restaurant wins an award, how will I be notified?

- A.** All award winners will be notified by e-mail during the summer and then listed on our website in early fall. Award certificates are mailed in October.

Q. If my restaurant wins an award, how long is the award good for?

- A.** Restaurants winning either the Regional Excellence Award or Award of Distinction will be exempt from needing to re-apply for a period of two years (as long as they remain open and in good standing). Restaurants winning the Vine Award – for Best in Distinction currently carry a three year exemption, maintaining their status as top-level winners before needing to re-apply. (VineRoutes does reserve the right to remove a restaurant award winner after one year.)

Q. If my restaurant won a Regional Excellence Award or Award of Distinction last year, can I apply to have it be upgraded to the Vine Award level if I think my restaurant qualifies?

- A.** Yes. If you feel your restaurant qualifies by way of any of the qualifying criteria (ie: number of Canadian wines, or an increase in overall wine selections), you are eligible to be upgraded. However, you must re-apply via the application portal, and you will be charged an application fee again (please note: there are no guarantees of earning a Vine Award solely based on your wine list). If you decide to wait until next year to apply for the upgrade, your restaurant will maintain its current award standing through our automatic two-year exemption policy.

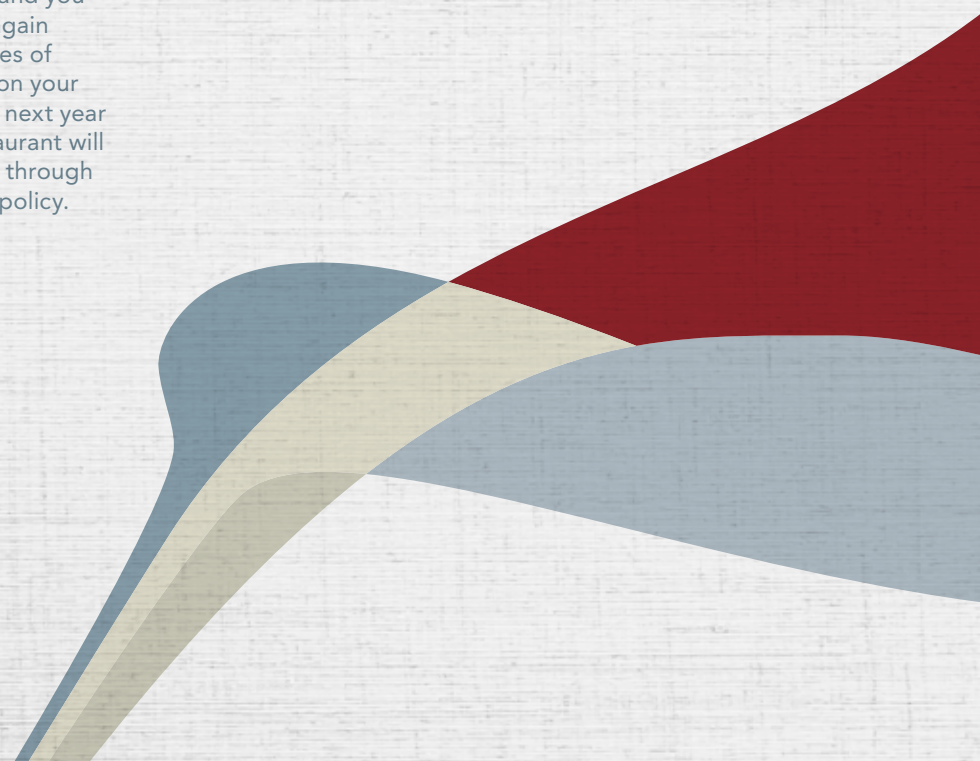
Q. Why apply for a VineRoutes Restaurant Award?

- A.**
- 1. Boost your visibility:** All winners are listed on VineRoutes' website (within our awards sections and announcements pages) and frequently feature on our dining-focused Newsletter and Social Media platforms.
 - 2. Get featured:** Winners are regularly written about on our website, in our website's Restaurants/ Food & Wine, and Lifestyle sections and in our dining-focused newsletters, reaching an ever-expanding audience.
 - 3. Showcase your excellence:** Receive an official certificate and digital assets to promote your achievement.

Still have questions?

E-mail restaurants@vineroutes.com.

Follow @vineroutes on Instagram for the latest news and updates.



important dates

The submission window this year is from
February 15th – May 31, 2026.

Restaurants will be notified as to which award they have won towards the end of the summer, and awards will be announced on our website in early fall.

application fee

Early Bird Discount Rate: \$350

(Applications must be submitted and payment received by March 31, 2026).

Standard Fee: \$425

(Applies to any applications processed between April 1 and May 31, 2026. Payment must be received by June 1st, 2026).

Payment:

We accept credit cards and e-transfer payments upon being invoiced.

contact us



vineroutes.com



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