Careers in viticulture and wine

How to ‘do a vintage’ in the wine sector

Doing a vintage, also known as harvest, in the wine sector can be a great way to gain hands-on experience and make connections.

It’s important to do your research, be prepared for the physical demands of the job, and approach the opportunity with a willingness to learn and work hard.

Vintage occurs anywhere from January to May in Australia and from August to October in the northern hemisphere. Depending on the seasonal conditions, the size of the winery and the job you are assigned to, vintage employment can last a few weeks to a few months.

Here are some steps you can take.

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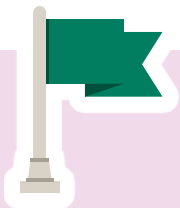


Research vineyards and wineries

Several months before vintage is due to commence, start by researching vineyards and wineries. Look for information on their websites, social media, or via regional grape and wine associations and wine industry employment sites. In Australia vintage positions may be listed on two websites: winejobs.com.au and wineindustryjobs.com.au.

Think about the type of experience you want out of a vintage.

Some questions you might ask yourself include:



- What region or location do I want to do a vintage in – somewhere close or in a different state?
- Do I have a preferred size of winery that I would like to experience?

  Wineries in Australia can range anywhere from small to large. In a smaller winery you’ll have an opportunity to work across the whole process. In a bigger winery there is greater opportunity to meet lots of people.
- What are my values, and do I want to work with like-minded businesses and people?
- What are some of the key things that I want to learn from this experience?

  Are there specific grape varieties, environmental practices, or other techniques that I would like to work with?

2 Prepare your resume and cover letter



Even if the vineyard or winery doesn't have a formal application process, it's a good idea to have a resume and cover letter prepared to introduce yourself and your interest in the sector.

If you've taken the time to research the business, then personalise your letter and explain why you want to work there. Include contact details of people that can be contacted for a reference.

Don't forget to spell and grammar check your CV and letter.

3 Reach out to potential employers



The Australian grape and wine sector is a supportive community where everyone is happy to help point you in the right direction.

Contact the vineyards and wineries you are interested in and enquire about their vintage programs. They may have specific requirements or application processes to follow.

When seeking out opportunities in a region near you, don't underestimate the power of elevating connections through phone calls and/or personal visits.

Some tips to get you started:

- Do you know anyone working in the wine sector? If so, contact them and ask if they can put you in touch with others across the sector.
- You are more likely to get a better response if you've done your research and ask specific questions like 'I would like to work in region x, can you recommend any producers/ businesses?' or 'I'm specifically looking to gain experience in a lab/cellar hand/winemaking role'.
- If you don't have any contacts send an email to some of the businesses you have researched to see if they have vintage positions coming up that you could apply for, or if they have any other suggestions for you to explore.
- If you really want to work in a specific region or with a specific variety then get in early and apply directly to producers in the region.



Wine industry job sites will be your friend here, and remember vintage opportunities typically start appearing at least 3 months prior to the start of vintage (around October).

If you already have some basic experience, consider joining the *travelling winemakers* Facebook page – *living the dream!*

4 Learn as much as you can



Once you are on the job, be curious and eager to learn.

Ask questions and observe the process as much as possible.

Take advantage of any training or education opportunities provided by the vineyard or winery.

Wine Australia