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Library, Teaching
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Viticulture and Oenology Careers



What are Viticulture and Oenology?

People who study viticulture and oenology generally have a career area in mind: wine. Many graduates aspire to make wine, or simply have a career in which they can connect with the land.

Viticulture refers to the practice and study of vine growing and grape cultivation and is a branch of horticultural science. It encompasses grape production (including biology, chemistry and soils), technical aspects of grape production and processing, and vineyard management and systems. Oenology is the general study of wine and winemaking.

Understanding the processes involved from the vineyard, through the production process to sales and commercial aspects, equips practitioners with a broad perspective and a range of practical and technical skills that are highly valued on both the domestic and international market.



Viticulture and oenology in New Zealand and the world

New Zealand has a thriving wine industry. The diverse soil types and relatively cool New Zealand climate produces a range of wine styles lauded for both taste and technically proficient production¹. Consequently, New Zealand wines are sought after both domestically and internationally. The most popular export markets for New Zealand wines are the U.S., Canada, Britain and China, with continued growth projected.²

Viticulturists and other specialist positions are currently on the skill shortage list for New Zealand (in the Canterbury, upper South Island and Otago/Southland regions).³ Graduates who wish to work in specialist positions often require experience, which can be gained by working in one of the many wine-related industries in New Zealand and around the world. Associated industries include brewing, distilling, and the production of niche products, such as organic wines, all of which are growth industries in New Zealand. Wine tourism is another growth industry where graduates can make their mark.

¹ www.stuff.co.nz/business/industries/76344291/new-zealand-wine-exports-hit-15-billion-as-us-becomes-largest-market

² www.nzte.govt.nz/en/buy/our-sectors/food-and-beverage/wine/

³ <http://skillshortages.immigration.govt.nz>

Skills and knowledge developed by studying viticulture and oenology

The types of skills gained by doing a degree in viticulture and oenology are highly valued by employers. The applied nature of the coursework at Lincoln University gives graduates a range of practical skills. Lincoln University degrees in viticulture and oenology integrate the technical aspects of grape growing and winemaking so that graduates have a working knowledge of the process from grape to the bottle and beyond. So, wherever graduates end up in the wine industry, their scientific knowledge across the spectrum of grape growing to the end product- wine, is what differentiates them. This, coupled with the experience that graduates gain from working in a commercial situation as part of course work, places Lincoln graduates in a good position to make their mark in the industry.

Although many of the skills gained during study are specific to wine and the wine production industry, they are applicable in other sectors. For example, the technical aspects of grape growing and vine management may be of use in other areas of horticulture such as forestry.

Employers generally require employees to have a professional attitude to work. This includes good communication (including the ability to communicate to groups as well as effective interpersonal and written communication), honesty, responsibility, self-motivation, initiative, time management and flexibility. The importance of using these skills cannot be underestimated, even in voluntary roles, as future job opportunities often arise from a good reputation and a varied network of contacts.

Skills and knowledge valued in viticulture and oenology roles:

Data collection, analysis and communication

Use of biometric techniques

Practical aspects of pest and disease management

Good grasp of basic sciences and research

Scientific assessment of crops and conditions (including soil testing)

Collaborative approaches to problem solving

Systematic thinking/ decision making

Critical/analytical thinking skills

Knowledge of vine propagation

Principles of wine science (including all steps in grape-to-wine processing)

Knowledge of grape varieties and properties

Knowledge of cellar techniques

Wine processing/making/storing

Industry-specific certification (e.g., Growsafe, first aid certificate, chemical handler certificate, forklift license, or Heavy Trade License as required)

As a graduate promoting yourself to potential employers, it is worth noting and expanding on the skills you have that your degree at Lincoln University has enhanced. For example, highlight how the practical experience you gained throughout your degree will help you to be an effective employee from the get-go. If your degree had a technical focus, outline the ways in which this sets you apart from other job applicants.

Where can viticulture and oenology graduates find work?

Small wineries make up 80% of New Zealand's total wine production. The remaining production comes from large, well-established vineyards, over half of which are located in Marlborough, Hawke's Bay, and Otago⁴. With a total of 2,040⁵ vineyards in New Zealand, the pool of available employers is large, diverse, and spread New Zealand-wide. Internationally, New Zealand winemakers are highly sought after.

The wine industry works closely with allied industries (e.g., tech industries, rural support, mechanical and engineering firms, transport, bottling, commercial and business support) that support and enable growth in this sector. Allied industries offer positions where viticulture and oenology skills can be used alongside other skills such as commerce or management, research and development, or as entry level positions for exposure to the industry. Finding work in these allied industries can be the gateway to a long term career in wine. Graduates who consider starting roles in allied industries as part of career development are often well placed for their dream job further down the line.



Potential places of employment include:

- Vineyards/wineries (e.g., Pegasus Bay, Black Estate)
- Cellar door retail and hospitality (e.g., Wither Hills, Kim Crawford)
- Industry organisations (e.g., Horticulture New Zealand)
- Government departments (e.g., Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), NZ Trade and Enterprise (NZTE))
- Research organisations (e.g., Plant and Food Research)
- Tertiary education sector (e.g., Lincoln University)
- Vineyard consultancies (e.g., Vine Managers)
- Vineyard contracting (e.g., Irrigation Services)
- Vineyard management (e.g., Berakah Vineyard Management)
- Wine tourism (e.g., New Zealand Wine Tours)
- HR consultancies and recruitment (e.g., Wine Jobs Online)
- Wine publications/ wine writing (e.g., WineNZ, NZ Winegrower, or columnist for a regional newspaper)

Viticulture and oenology job titles

People who have studied viticulture and oenology at Lincoln University can go on to a range of wine related jobs.

Assistant Winemaker

Buyer/Exporter

Cellar Door Sales/Management

Educator (from pruning tutor to university lecturer)

Environmental/
Sustainability Consultant

Field Assistant

Horticultural/Winery
Tour Operator

Information Technology (IT)

Laboratory Manager
or Technician

Manager in Wine or Brewing

Marketing Manager

Owner/Operator of
Winery/Vineyard

Quality Control

Research and Development

Sales and Logistics

Sommelier

Vineyard Hand/Leading Hand

Vineyard Manager

Viticultural Contractor

Viticultural Technician/
Technical Officer

Viticulturist (grape grower)

Wine Representative/
Ambassador

Wine Writer/Taster

Winemaker

⁴ www.nzwine.com/assets/sm/upload/zh/by/np/43/2015-2018%20Vineyard%20Register%20Report%20final.pdf

⁵ www.nzwine.com/media-centre-1/statistics-information/vineyard-register-report/

Pay rate indications: full time equivalent (FTE) \$NZ per annum⁶

Most starting salaries for graduates of bachelor degrees fall between 40,000 - 55,000 per annum. Entry level jobs are stepping stones to roles with increased responsibilities and remuneration. Your employability is affected by all of your life experiences, be they employment related, or the transferable skills and competencies gained from community involvement, volunteer work, or previous work or study- all of which can grow competency, expand networks, and demonstrate enthusiasm to future employers.

Starting salaries for graduates are typically at the low end of the scale but can move quickly if employees show commitment and capability in their roles. Seasonal work demands flexibility and sometimes very long hours (up to 100 hours per week during the harvest in some roles⁷), the following pay rates reflect this situation.

Job title	Indicative pay
Cellar Hand	33,000 - 50,000
Cellar Door Sales	37,024 - 45,884
Viticulturist (entry level)	From 40,000
Viticulturist (experienced)	80,000 - 100,000
Vineyard Supervisor/Manager	80,000 - 100,000
Viticultural Maintenance Technician	41,000 - 75,000
Viticulture Technician	From 37,440
Assistant Winemaker	From 59,870
Laboratory Manager	From 60,000
Marketing/Accounts Manager	61,000 - 67,000
Winemaker (entry level)	From 70,000
Chief Winemaker (experienced)	(up to) 150,000
Academic Lecturer/Professor	74,000 - 120,000+



Viticulture and oenology tasks

The following lists outline tasks associated with Viticulture and Winemaking.

Viticulture tasks

- Pest and disease monitoring
- Yield prediction
- Grape maturity sampling
- Tractor/harvester operation
- Fungicide application
- Data collection and reporting
- Harvest logistics
- Canopy management
- Grower/winery liaison
- Pruning/trellising
- Staff management

Winemaking tasks

- Date of harvest
- Grape crushing/pressing
- Monitoring pumps and equipment
- Monitoring ferments
- Cap management
- Barrel topping
- Quality control
- Tasting
- Blending
- Management of staff
- Logistics

Job tasks are role-specific, so the above is an indication only. For more information on roles, registered Lincoln University students can search Lincoln CareerHub (including expired jobs) for job titles similar to those they are interested in. Job descriptions, including tasks and skills required, are often available.

⁶ <http://www.careers.govt.nz>; <http://www.payscale.com>; <http://www.careers.govt.nz/jobsdatabase>; <http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/files/University%20Staff%20Academic%20Salaries%20and%20Remuneration%20-%20Final.pdf>;

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanresources>; <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/hr>

⁷ Hagen, W. (2006). Planning work load. Wine Maker. Retrieved from <https://winemakermag.com/560-planning-work-load-backyard-vineyard>

Graduate Profiles



Dom Maxwell
Bachelor of Commerce and Management, Postgraduate Diploma in Viticulture and Oenology
Winemaker, Greystone Wines



Shane Speakman
Bachelor of Viticulture and Oenology
General Manager Viticulture & Supply, Indevin NZ



Len Ibbotson
Bachelor of Viticulture and Oenology
Viticulturist, Terra Sancta Wines

Industry bodies

Membership of an industry specific body enhances the professional status of students and employees. By joining a professional body, members can research career options, access training and events, and network and collaborate with industry colleagues at all levels.

Examples of viticulture and oenology industry bodies include:

New Zealand Society for Viticulture and Oenology
www.nzsvo.org.nz

Horticulture New Zealand
www.hortnz.org.nz

Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture
www.rnzih.org.nz

New Zealand Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science
www.agscience.org.nz

Irrigation New Zealand
www.irrigationnz.co.nz

New Zealand Society of Soil Sciences

www.nzsss.science.org.nz

New Zealand Winegrowers
www.nzwine.com

Fruit Wine and Cider Makers of New Zealand
www.nzfruitwines.org.nz



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