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Avignon Will Host More Than 40 Teams at the 2026 World Blind Tasting Championship

The two-day contest will bring more than 200 tasters to Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the Palais des Papes.

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More than 40 teams from five continents are expected to gather in Avignon and Châteauneuf-du-Pape for the 2026 World Blind Tasting Championship, a two-day competition that has become one of the most closely watched events in the wine world.

The championship will bring together more than 200 tasters, according to organizers, who will compete for what is widely regarded as the leading international title in blind tasting. The event will take place between the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the Palais des Papes in Avignon, linking one of France’s best-known wine regions with one of its most important historic sites.

The format is simple but demanding. Each team must taste 12 wines blind and identify, as accurately as possible, the grape variety, the geographic origin, the appellation and the vintage of each bottle. The challenge tests sensory memory, wine knowledge and analytical skill at the same time. Small differences in aroma, structure, acidity, tannin and finish can decide the final standings.

Organizers describe the championship as a competition that requires preparation throughout the year. Teams train regularly to refine their tasting references, expand their aroma memory and improve the methods they use to move from sensory clues to a final answer. That preparation has helped turn the event into a specialized contest followed by wine professionals, collectors and serious enthusiasts well beyond France.

The 2026 edition is also designed as a broader showcase for Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Alongside the competition itself, the program is expected to include meetings with winemakers, guided tastings, visits to leading estates, master classes and exchanges with international tasters. The host region is one of the most recognized names in French wine, and organizers are using the event to place its vineyards and producers at the center of the weekend.

Part of the event will unfold at the Palais des Papes in Avignon, the 14th-century former papal residence that is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The monument, one of Europe’s best-known medieval landmarks, will also host the gala dinner that closes the championship. By dividing the program between the vineyards and the palace, the organizers are tying the competition to both wine culture and local history.

France is expected to draw particular attention as the defending champion. After reclaiming the trophy last year, the French team has chosen to field an all-female lineup for the first time in the competition’s history. The decision gives added interest to the host nation’s attempt to defend its title on home soil.

The French team will include Candy Sangare, Pauline Monclus and Camille Guilbaud. Sangare, a former flight attendant who moved into the wine sector, is already known in French tasting circles after winning the French blind tasting championship. The source material for the event notes that she built her career in wine through formal training, including WSET and EVS certifications. She will compete alongside Monclus and Guilbaud, both sommeliers.

The championship has grown beyond a simple contest of identifying bottles. It now serves as a meeting point for different parts of the wine industry, from producers and merchants to collectors and educated consumers. That wider role helps explain why the event continues to attract teams from across the world and why host regions view it as an opportunity to promote their wines and image at the same time.

For the competitors, however, the central task remains narrow and unforgiving. Twelve glasses, no labels and limited time leave little room for error. A correct call on grape or region can separate the winners from the rest of the field, while a missed vintage or an inaccurate appellation can cost valuable points. In a competition built on precision, even highly trained palates are tested from the first pour to the last.

With the 2026 edition set for Avignon and Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the championship will place one of France’s most famous wine territories at the center of an event that combines competition, tourism and international attention. The result will be a gathering that is as much about elite tasting performance as it is about the global culture surrounding wine.