



The Project: The New York Wine & Grape Foundation in partnership with WISE offered a free mystery shopping program to 10 wineries – 5 in the Finger Lakes and 5 in Long Island. From these results, NYWGF has been able to gain access to understand the region’s strengths as well as areas of opportunities for wineries. Member wineries were given individualized feedback and recommendations for improvement based on tasting room best practices. A total of 41 mystery shops were completed (20 in Finger Lakes, 21 in Long Island).

Why WISE: Over the past few years, we have conducted more than 5,000 mystery shops and have been tracking industry trends, which gives us a unique perspective. Our mystery shoppers are unbiased third-party, industry professionals who understand WISE standards regarding guest experience, sales skills and industry best practices (see below for more on this). Shoppers use our WISE Mystery Shopping Scorecard, which ensures consistency of feedback over time, shoppers, regions, etc., and consists of over 80 questions.

Our Process: WISE standards regarding guest experience, sales skills, and industry best practices are as follows. Of the 80+ questions, the questions are either binary (yes or no) or shoppers are asked to rate on a 5-point scale (1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good, 4 = Very Good and 5 = Excellent). Shoppers add additional comments as appropriate.

There are two important scores. First, after visiting a winery, shoppers are asked to rate the overall guest experience, regardless of business goals. This is called the **Overall Customer Satisfaction** score which measures how the shopper would recommend the guest experience to a friend (irrespective of whether the winery met its business objectives or not).

Second, from a business perspective, shoppers are asked to rate the WISE Triple Score which measures if the host: (1) Asked for the order, (2) Effectively presented the wine club and (3) Attempted to capture contact data (beyond any reservations or club sign ups).

The goal for successful DTC (Direct to Consumer) wineries is to have both high customer satisfaction scores as well as 3 out of 3 on the WISE Triple Score on every visit.

We also measure how the winery is doing against the following core WISE concepts.

1. **On Stage vs. Backstage.** Don’t let your backstage show – Backstage issues are usually physical (i.e., smudged glasses, bathroom that needs servicing) but they can also be verbal (inappropriate attitude or comments in front of the guests).
2. **Silent Selling Tools.** Leverage non-verbal sales tools to facilitate more sales and support brand standards. Key selling tools include a tasting menu, order form, price list, writing utensil, and club brochure.
3. **Great Greeting (and Farewell).** You only have one chance to make a great first impression – make eye contact (at least) and a smile within 15 seconds.
4. **Referral Source.** The best ice breakers build rapport by finding out what brought them to the winery & how they heard about it.
5. **Service Heart.** Does the host really want to be “of service?” Is service in his / her DNA?
6. **Surprise & Delight.** What did host do to exceed guest expectations? Was it relevant to shopper’s interest & unique to them?
7. **Delivery of Wine / Winery Information.** Was their knowledge as well as passion/enthusiasm showing?
8. **Use of Analogies & Great Storytelling.** These skills help educate, entertain, and entice guests all at once.
9. **Sell the Brand First, Wine Second.** Brand needs to be compelling, unique, and brought to life with great stories that will help the guest remember your wines down the road.
10. **Build Rapport.** Use relevant open-ended questions and then adjust the conversation accordingly (positive profiling) based on responses to tailor the interaction towards the guests’ interests.
11. **Professional Sales Skills** including

- ✓ **Features & Benefits Selling** – a feature is what something is, a factual statement about a product or service. Benefits appeal to the customer’s emotions, which makes the sale.
- ✓ **Planting Sales Seeds** – best practice is to make multiple suggestions to buy wine, sign up for a wine club membership, or join the mailing list throughout the experience and based on the guests’ interests.
- ✓ **Buying Signals** – 70% of buying signals are non-verbal. Noticing buying signals is the first step to increasing sales.

WISE concepts/metrics based on tasting room standards and best practices:

WISE Triple Score:	
1. Ask for the Order	Business objectives - need all three for healthy DTC revenue
2. Effectively Sell Club	
3. Contact Data Capture	
WISE Key Themes:	
Backstage Not Showing - Physical	Reflect Winery Preparedness - is the winery and the staff ready to receive guests?
Backstage Not Showing - Staff	
Silent Selling Tools	
Great Greeting	These metrics reflect the 'hire' - has the winery hired the right person for this job? Are they showing good hospitality? / Happy to be there? We can't teach 'friendly' but we can teach sales or wine knowledge.
Service Heart	
Surprise & Delight	
Great Farewell	
Passion & Enthusiasm	
Knowledge of Wines & Winery	
Referral Source	These metrics reflect the staff's ability to build rapport with guests. More rapport / more engagement = higher guest satisfaction and more sales.
Use of Analogies	
Great Story Telling	
Compelling, Unique Brand	
Open Ended Questions	
Positive Profiling	These metrics reflect sales skills - these work best when staff builds rapport / gets to know guests and adjusts the experience accordingly.
Features & Benefits Selling	
Planting Sales Seeds	
Notice Buying Signals	

they received time and interest from staff). A large factor of this overall guest satisfaction can be address with the next point – staff-to-guest ratio.

Staff-To-Guest Ratio.

Overall areas of opportunity, the ‘red’ shows there are some ways that wineries can focus on ensuring there is enough staff to cover the guests to provide an experience that represents the winery brand, and bringing their unique brand stories to life. There is an opportunity for NY wineries to make more revenue with fewer guests – it sounds counterintuitive, but we know it works. Having a high level of service and hospitality leads to more sales and overall guest satisfaction – so people will not only come back, but they’ll join clubs or mailing lists too. If we try to accommodate everyone, we’re doing a mediocre job for more people instead of a fantastic job with fewer. Consider whether tasting fees are more important to the business or bottle sales and brand knowledge– the latter will help you grow your revenue, your strong brand promise, and loyal customers. Tasting fees alone will only get you a good estimate of known income and not much beyond that.

Sales Collateral.

Another pattern we noticed across all shops is the collateral. Most wineries did not include an order form, and many were missing pens, club brochures, etc. Best practice is to make the following available to every guest: Tasting menu, price list, order form, club brochure, and a pen/pencil. Collateral such as these important pieces can help do some of the heavy lifting of sales for the hosts/servers. They are subconscious ways to encourage guests to buy or join. Ensuring that all those materials are available to each guest will do a lot of the heavy lifting for the staff by planting sales seeds and make asking for the sale more natural.

Effective silent selling covers the many different ways your brand is reflected, which your guests can be subconsciously sold on – but has nothing to do with anyone on your team actually saying something. It’s everything within the tasting room including design, merchandising, printed collateral materials, signage, and other items that encourage guests to purchase products. It’s more than pretty displays; it’s subconscious emotional triggers to buy.

Your success checklist should include having effective collateral (including pens – customers appreciate a place to write notes, plus, the server can use them as buying signals) readily available for every guest. Go beyond the club brochure; there are other club mentions such as signs, VIP areas, price list with club pricing, photos, etc. about the club that should be obvious and numerous as well as your visual merchandising, which serves as your brand mirror. Consider the materials you might put in with each purchase – tailor it to each guest’s unique preferences and interests.

Sales Focus.

Over 5,000 mystery shops – from coast to coast, north to south – we’ve gathered an industry average of many of our mystery shopping metrics, specifically on the WISE Triple Score – those metrics that keep and build the DTC channels:

- (1) Asked for the **sale** = **59%** (Industry Average: 73%)
Finger Lakes = 65%, Long Island = 52%
- (2) Effectively presented the **wine club** = **0%** (Industry Average: 38%)
Finger Lakes = 0%, Long Island = 0%
- (3) Attempted to capture the **contact data** (beyond wine club sign ups or reservations) = **11%** (Industry Average: 18%)
Finger Lakes = 23%, Long Island = 0%

While most of our shops found the staff to be friendly (when they had time to engage with them), there is an opportunity for more of a sales focus through rapport building – an extension of great hospitality. When staff have the time to engage with guests, ask them questions and get to know them, they are able to build rapport, which ensures trust, and trust makes sales. Without the engagement, guests may as well taste our wines at a local tasting bar or restaurant. There is little motivation for guests to come to the winery if they aren’t learning about

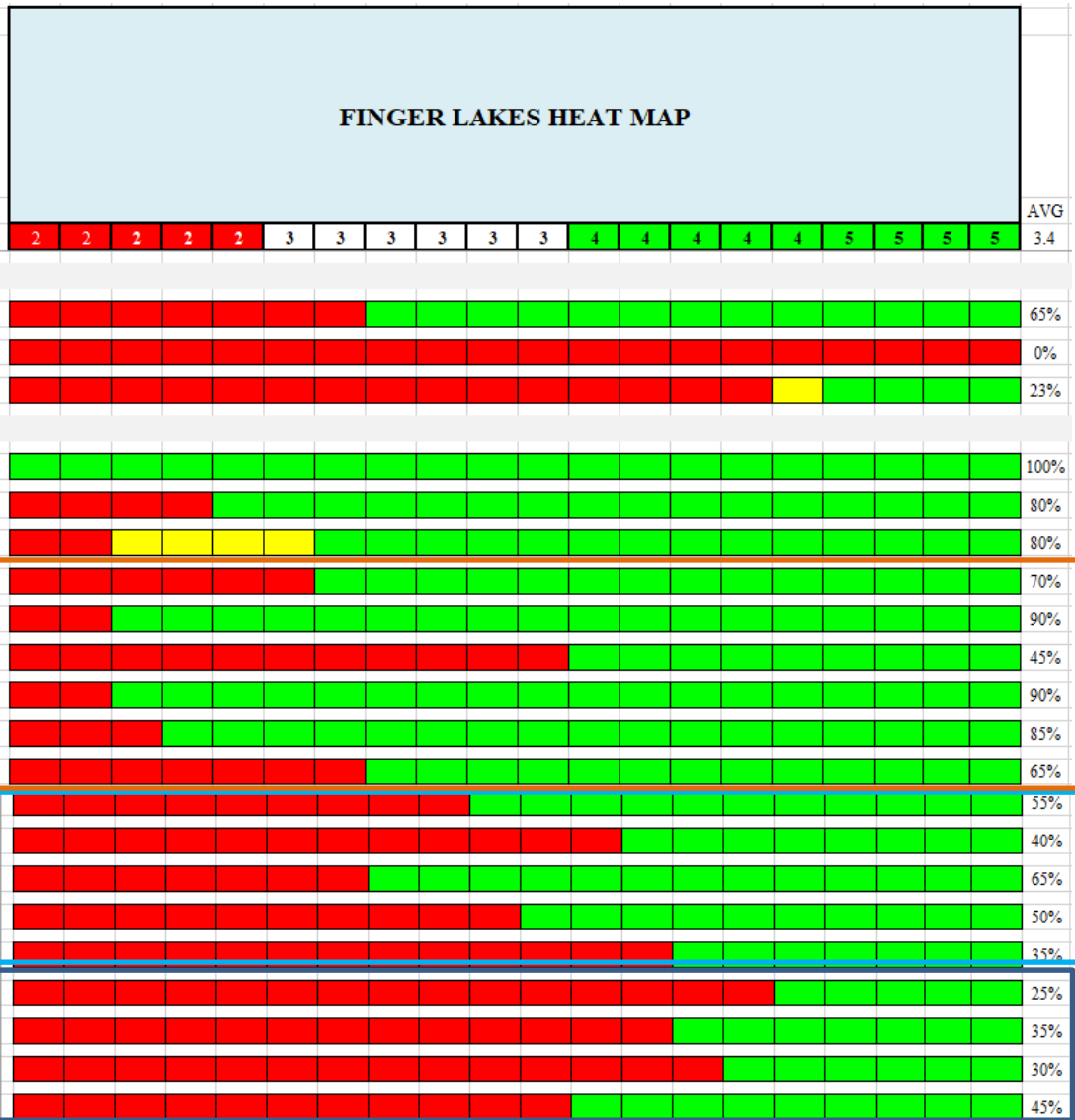
the wine, learning about the brand, and getting to know the people who work there. Emotionally engaging experiences will have your customers coming back for more!

A vast number of enthusiastic tasting room staff tends to be so happy to share their wealth of knowledge about the winery, wines, and other information that they often treat each guest as a potential audience to present to. While much better than ‘pour and ignore,’ merely regurgitating facts and giving a presentation without any input from the guest tends to be too one-sided and lacks the much-needed interaction. Guests pick up on “scripted” presentations. In a presentation, you talk at a person, and it becomes a monologue. No matter how professional, educational, and entertaining it is, it’s just a one-way street. And, unfortunately, monologues don’t build relationships, get club members, or sell wine. Dialogues do.

The Results – Heat Map of Regional Results

Finger Lakes – Across all 5 wineries:

Updated: 10/26/22 JLW



Rapport Building

Sales skills

Hospitable Team?

Finger Lakes – 5 individual wineries:

Updated: 10/26/22 JLLW	FINGER LAKES REGION																												
	Keuka Lake Winery HEAT MAP						Cayuga Lake Winery #1 HEAT MAP						Seneca Lake Winery #1 HEAT MAP						Seneca Lake Winery #2 HEAT MAP						Seneca Lake Winery #3 HEAT MAP				
	25%	50%	75%	100%	AVG	25%	50%	75%	100%	AVG	25%	50%	75%	100%	AVG	25%	50%	75%	100%	AVG	25%	50%	75%	100%	AVG				
Overall Guest Satisfaction	2	2	5	5	3.5	2	3	4	4	3.3	3	3	4	5	3.8	2	3	4	5	3.5	2	3	3	4	3.0				
WISE Triple Score:																													
1. Ask for the Order					75%					50%					100%					50%					50%				
2. Effectively Sell Club					0%					0%					0%					0%					0%				
3. Contact Data Capture					25%					0%					25%					25%					25%				
WISE Key Themes:																													
Backstage Not Showing - Physical					100%					100%					100%					100%					100%				
Backstage Not Showing - Staff					100%					75%					25%					50%					100%				
Silent Selling Tools					100%					75%					100%					75%					100%				
Great Greeting					75%					75%					100%					75%					25%				
Service Heart					100%					100%					75%					100%					75%				
Surprise & Delight					75%					50%					25%					50%					25%				
Great Farewell					100%					100%					100%					50%					100%				
Passion & Enthusiasm					75%					100%					75%					100%					75%				
Knowledge of Wines & Winery					100%					100%					25%					25%					75%				
Referral Source					50%					0%					100%					100%					25%				
Use of Analogies					25%					25%					50%					75%					25%				
Great Story Telling					50%					75%					75%					75%					50%				
Compelling, Unique Brand					100%					75%					50%					25%					0%				
Open Ended Questions					75%					0%					25%					50%					25%				
Positive Profiling					50%					0%					25%					25%					25%				
Features & Benefits Selling					50%					25%					25%					50%					25%				
Planting Sales Seeds					50%					25%					0%					50%					25%				
Notice Buying Signals					75%					25%					75%					25%					25%				

Note – not many huge differences from winery to winery in the Finger Lakes or even across the different regions within.

High-Level Regional Results:

By separating the shops into the two regions, we can see what regions are excelling more than others or if there are areas of opportunity across all the state. This separation tells a more interesting story.

Finger Lakes

On average, the overall guest satisfaction in the Finger Lakes was 3.4 out of 5, or *Good*. The score was brought down by 5 shops rated 2 out of 5 or *Fair* – but 15 out of 20 shops were rated 3 or higher. Lower scores can be directly linked to all the rapport building skills – open-ended questions, stories and analogies, as well as positive profiling (adjusting the conversation based on the answers from guests and their interests).

The take-away here is for the wineries to assess what their objectives are. Perhaps mass visitors and tasting fees shouldn't be the focus when less visitors (with more staff engagement) will equate to more bottle sales. Most customers are aware that the industry has moved towards reservations, and actually, once they've experienced a sit-down tasting by reservation, they enjoy them much more than a walk-in experience. This is supported by higher Overall Satisfaction scores.

Areas of opportunity for Finger Lakes:

- Overall Guest Satisfaction – 3.4 out of 5. What needs to change to get higher guest satisfaction?
- WISE Triple Score:
 - Ask for the order – 65% (Industry average is 70%)
 - Sell the club – None! (Industry average is 38%)
 - Collect Contact Data – 23% (Industry average is 18%)
- Skills/Knowledge:
 - Knowledge of Wines/Winery
 - Brand Stories (or at least sharing them if they do know them)
- Engagement:
 - Surprise & Delight
 - Use of Analogies & Great Storytelling
 - Asking Open-Ended Questions
- Sales Skills:
 - Positive Profiling
 - Features & Benefits Selling
 - Planting Sales Seeds
 - Noticing Buying Signals

The wineries in the Finger Lakes should be focusing on the full WISE triple score. While some of the servers asked for the sale (65%), few asked beyond 'anything to take home?' Being more specific about what wines guests are enjoying and asking if they would like to take those home will increase average order sizes/revenue and overall guest satisfaction (people like to see that hosts are paying attention to them). None of the staff invited the guests to join the club. Based on this trend across both regions, building wine clubs and maintaining them will be impossible. There were some attempts to collect contact data beyond reservations – great job! As we know from COVID, this is the one thing that will help us grow our business beyond the tasting room sales. Dropping seeds throughout the experience will help staff asking for the sale or the enrollment at the end feel more natural and successful. Train the staff to watch for buying signals and respond to them. Does the staff understand their role in meeting sales goals and understanding the metrics? Or are winery managers not sharing the big picture? It's hard for people to know what success looks like unless we're sharing how it works and how we're doing at any given time.

Are the wineries in the Finger Lakes with higher visitation more focused on seeing as many people as possible or do they want more revenue from bottle sales and club members? Looking at the WISE Triple Score, Guest Satisfaction, Service Heart, Knowledge & Passion, as well as comments from the shoppers, it appears to be

more of a focus on **quantity** than quality. Sales skills are completely missing when the staff is focused on mainly providing service – making sure everyone has wine – not about the experience.

Long Island – Across all 5 wineries (North Fork AVA):

Updated: 10/26/22 JLW

LONG ISLAND HEAT MAP																				AVG		
	5%	10%	14%	19%	24%	29%	33%	38%	43%	48%	52%	57%	62%	67%	71%	76%	81%	86%	90%	95%	100%	
Overall Guest Satisfaction	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	3.5
Overall Food Satisfaction																						4.3
WISE Triple Score:																						
1. Ask for the Order																						52%
2. Effectively Sell Club																						0%
3. Contact Data Capture																						0%
WISE Key Themes:																						
Backstage Not Showing - Physical																						90%
Backstage Not Showing - Staff																						71%
Silent Selling Tools																						38%
Great Greeting																						81%
Service Heart																						71%
Surprise & Delight																						24%
Great Farewell																						90%
Passion & Enthusiasm																						10%
Knowledge of Wines & Winery																						57%
Referral Source																						57%
Use of Analogies																						38%
Great Story Telling																						29%
Compelling, Unique Brand																						24%
Open Ended Questions																						24%
Positive Profiling																						10%
Features & Benefits Selling																						14%
Planting Sales Seeds																						10%
Notice Buying Signals																						43%



Long Island – 5 individual wineries:

Updated: 10/26/22 JLW	LONG ISLAND REGION																									
	WINERY #1				AVG	WINERY #2				AVG	WINERY #3				AVG	WINERY #4				AVG	WINERY #5					AVG
	25%	50%	75%	100%		25%	50%	75%	100%		25%	50%	75%	100%		25%	50%	75%	100%		20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	
Overall Guest Satisfaction	3	4	5	5	4.3	4	4	4	3	3.8	3	4	5	5	4.3	1	1	2	3	1.8	3	3	3	3	5	3.4
Overall Food Satisfaction	3	4	4	5	4.0	4	5	5	4.7																	
WISE Triple Score:																										
1. Ask for the Order	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	20%
2. Effectively Sell Club	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
3. Contact Data Capture	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
WISE Key Themes:																										
Backstage Not Showing - Physical	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	■	100%
Backstage Not Showing - Staff	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	■	80%
Silent Selling Tools	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Great Greeting	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	■	100%
Service Heart	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	■	80%
Surprise & Delight	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	20%
Great Farewell	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	■	100%
Passion & Enthusiasm	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	■	20%
Knowledge of Wines & Winery	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	100%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	■	20%
Referral Source	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Use of Analogies	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Great Story Telling	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Compelling, Unique Brand	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	20%
Open Ended Questions	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	20%
Positive Profiling	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Features & Benefits Selling	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	25%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Planting Sales Seeds	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	0%
Notice Buying Signals	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	75%	■	■	■	■	50%	■	■	■	■	0%	■	■	■	■	■	20%

Note – there are a few differences from winery to winery here that tell a story; all 5 wineries are located within the North Fork AVA.

Winery #4 admittedly mentioned leadership issues where management had been in flux for some time. This results in a lack of focus on the guest experience as well as the business objectives. (Without this winery in the mix, overall guest satisfaction would be 4 out of 5, or *Very Good*.)

Wineries #1 and #2 both offer a food pairing component with their experience. This resulted in a higher guest satisfaction for the overall guest experience but even more so for the food experience specifically.

Long Island

On average, the overall guest satisfaction in the Finger Lakes was 3.5 out of 5, or *Good*. The score was brought down by two shops rated 1 out of 5 or *Poor* and one shop 2 out of 5 or *Fair* – but 18 out of 21 shops were rated 3 or higher. One winery (#4) specifically had low overall satisfaction of 1.8 out of 5 across 4 shops and brought the whole Long Island average down. As noted, without this winery in the mix, overall guest satisfaction would be 4 out of 5, or *Very Good*, and in line with industry averages for seated tastings. Lower scores in general across all the wineries can be directly linked to all the rapport building skills – open-ended questions, stories and analogies, as well as positive profiling (adjusting the conversation based on the answers from guests and their interests).

Two of the five Long Island wineries also had food pairing options that had a very high guest satisfaction of 4.3 out of 5 or *Very Good*. Overall guest satisfaction at these two wineries also averaged much higher.

Again, along with the guest satisfaction score, the backstage, service heart, greetings/farewells, and passion/knowledge these metrics tell us that the wineries have hired good caliber of staff overall. Like Finger Lakes, the biggest areas of opportunity are around increasing engagement with guests which will in turn increase overall guest satisfaction and higher conversion rates (more people buying and/or joining).

Areas of opportunity for Long Island:

- Overall Guest Satisfaction – 3.5 out of 5 or *Good*. What needs to change to get higher guest satisfaction?
- WISE Triple Score:
 - Ask for the order – 52% (Industry average is 70%)
 - Sell the club – None! (Industry average is 38%)
 - Collect Contact Data – None! (Industry average is 18%)
- Engagement:
 - Passion & Enthusiasm
 - Surprise & Delight
 - Use of Analogies & Great Storytelling
 - Compelling Brand Story
 - Asking Open-Ended Questions
- Sales Skills:
 - Positive Profiling
 - Features & Benefits Selling
 - Planting Sales Seeds
 - Noticing Buying Signals

The wineries in Long Island should be focusing on the full WISE triple score. Only half of the servers asked for the sale and all of those asks were either non-specific (i.e. “Would you like to take anything home?”) or limiting (“Would you like to buy a bottle or a glass?”). When it comes to asking for the sale, the first step is to drop sales seeds throughout the experience, then close the sale by asking the guest if they’d like to purchase at the end of EVERY tasting. Ideally, the servers will notice what the guests enjoyed so they can ask them about purchasing those wines specifically. Does the staff understand the importance of selling the club and collecting data for meeting sales goals? Do they understand that guests love to be invited to join?

Service heart is showing, but passion and enthusiasm is quite low. Are the staff too stretched thin to provide great experiences to every guest? Offering more time to less tables will give staff time to build rapport with their guests – asking questions, sharing the brand, telling stories, & presenting features as benefit - drop sales seeds throughout the experience, and in the end, sell a lot more wine.