



Winegrape Commission Hosts VIP Vineyard Tour

A vineyard tour hosted by the Lake County Winegrape Commission led VIP guests including County Supervisors, city managers, chamber directors, and media representatives for a question and answer session, as well as a lunch and wine tasting.

Attendees were sent winegrape vines with an invitation attached, asking them to meet at the County courthouse where they boarded a bus that took them to two high elevation vineyards.

The first stop was Beckstoffer Vineyards, where general manager Frank Anderson conveyed that Lake County is one of the fastest growing wine regions in the state and that its wines are gaining notoriety while the culture of the area remains true to its rural heritage.

John Adriance, COO of Snows Lake Vineyards and Commission board member said, "There is no disputing the fast-paced growth that the Lake County wine region has experienced since the grape glut of the late 1990s. Six years ago, there were just four wineries.

Today there are 22 wineries and 8800 acres of winegrapes translating into a 75 million dollar industry for Lake County." Next, the busses traveled to Obsidian Ridge Vineyard also located in the Red Hills AVA at 2600 feet. Here, visitors got the opportunity to see breathtakingly beautiful views of Obsidian Ridge and the surrounding Mayacamas mountains.

Owned by the Molnar family, Peter



To attract attention, invitations were tied to baby grapevines and were delivered by hand. Lake County Grapevine Nursery generously donated the vines.

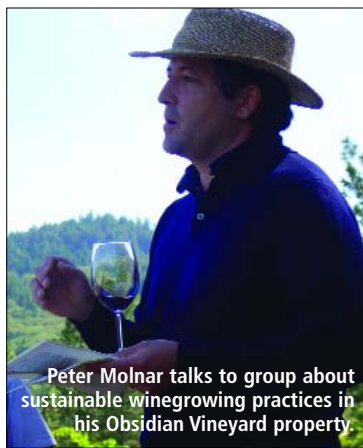
Happy Retirement, Frank

Frank Anderson, general manager for Beckstoffer Red Hills vineyard, Board Member and Education chair for six years, retired on December 29, 2007. His decision was based mainly on the desire to spend more time with his family in Snelling, CA.

Frank will be missed by all of his friends in Lake County. When Beckstoffer Vineyards hired Frank, he immediately set out to get involved with the Lake County winegrape community by becoming a Commission board member. Frank's extensive winegrowing experience combined with his easy-going attitude made him a popular board member and mentor for newer and less experienced growers.

Frank was selected to be the Chair of the Education committee where he oversaw the many education activities including numerous workshops and

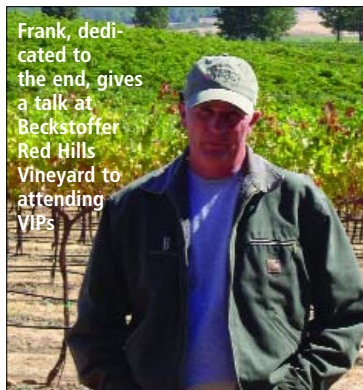
Molnar talked about his family's passion for their Lake County vineyard and poured the group a taste of their award-winning Obsidian Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon. He stressed how growers work hard to continually improve their sustainable winegrowing practices to ensure a healthy environment, strong local community, and a continued successful winegrape business in Lake County.



Peter Molnar talks to group about sustainable winegrowing practices in his Obsidian Vineyard property.

District Two Supervisor Jeff Smith was in attendance and said he spoke on behalf of the County Supervisors when he extended his appreciation to the winegrape industry. "For me it's changing the perception of Lake County. There have been so many negatives in past years and now the winegrape industry is changing that and bringing a lot of enthusiasm with it. I think that a lot of people think that the wine industry is exclusive in the money it generates, but people need to realize they do give back."

The VIP vineyard tour was approved by the Commission Board as a community relations tool, to ensure that County leaders are reminded of the positive economic impact that the winegrape and wine industry have in Lake County. Annual outreach programs like this tour are paying off. This past year the County Board of Supervisors contributed \$33,000 to help fund Commission activities. ■



Frank, dedicated to the end, gives a talk at Beckstoffer Red Hills Vineyard to attending VIPs.

meetings that benefited many Lake County growers.

Frank was instrumental in helping launch the sustainable workbook program, as well as hosting the first ever Erosion education workshop that was attended by local as well as out-of-county growers. Frank could always be counted on to pitch in and host a workshop or meeting.

He will be missed, but we are happy for him. ■

CALENDAR

Upcoming Winegrape Commission events and workshops:

FEBRUARY 2008

Commission Board member elections
20th UC Grape Day

MARCH 2008

5-6th Wineries Unlimited Show, Valley Forge, PA
6th Wine sensory evaluation
20th Organic workshop, Ceago Vinegarden

APRIL 2008

TBA Growers marketing meeting

Lake County Wines well represented at Consumer Tasting in San Francisco

"Tasting 2007" opened its doors to wine trade, media and consumers at Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. It was an opportunity to taste great wines and meet the winemakers and owners behind some of California's finest wineries. Several Lake County wineries were in attendance, including Brassfield



Marianne and Greg Graham from Gregory Graham wines pour at the Family Winemakers tasting.

Estate, Ceago Vinegardens, Cougar's Leap, Fortress Vineyards, Greg Graham Wines, Red Lava, Shannon Ridge, Six Sigma and Wildhurst.

"This is a very popular and well attended event," said Clay Shannon, Commission Chair, who poured his Shannon Ridge wine. "These tastings go a long way to help create demand for Lake County branded wines, and it's great that we are starting to represent our region by having several Lake County wineries participate."

Since its founding in 1991, Family Winemakers of California has presented an Annual Tasting. Originally, the Tasting was developed as a trade-only event; an opportunity for member-wineries and California's wine trade to gather together and talk about the issues foremost in the minds of industry members while tasting great wine. Because FWC represented the smaller wineries the tasting was a unique opportunity to showcase the winemaking craftsmanship of vintners from across the state. Each year more wineries chose to attend and pour wines.

More restaurateurs, retailers, distributors and media converged on the tasting. The Annual Tasting quickly became one of the most anticipated wine events in California.

At this "Tasting 2007" over 400 wineries poured 1,000 wines and upwards of 30 wineries made their debut at the event. ■

Lake County Wineries Vote to Form Association

Local winery owners voted to form a Lake County Winery Association, to promote awareness among consumers of the quality and uniqueness of wines produced from Lake County.

"This has been a long time coming," said Clay Shannon, owner of Shannon Ridge Winery and founding member of the association.

"For many years Lake County has struggled to get recognized for its premium wines and winegrapes and this has been difficult because of the lack of wineries in our region. Now we have a group that can come together and work on projects that benefit our local wine and winegrape industry. We hope our unified voice will show everyone the importance our industry plays in the economic vitality and quality of life of Lake County."

The first step was to form a legal corporation that was facilitated by attorney Peter Windrem as well as elect the Association's first Board of Directors. Matt Hughes, co-owner of Zoom Wines, was elected Chair with Greg Graham, Gregory Graham Wines; Sandy Tucker, Langtry Farms; Clay Shannon, Shannon Ridge Winery; and Nicole Johnson, Cougar's Leap, as the acting Board of Directors. The Board will have the responsibility to oversee the activities of the Association.

Some of the activities the Association will be working on will include The Lake County Wine Adventure, Lake County East Coast Wine Tasting, Lake County Winery Map Brochures, and Lake County Winery Signs. In addition, the LCWA will partner with the Lake County Winegrape Commission on cooperative marketing projects such as point of purchase materials for local restaurants and winery retailers.

The first steps for the group however, will be to meet regularly, collect dues, develop a marketing plan and prioritize a list of promotional activities.

"Like any new group, we have to crawl, before we walk," said Chairman Matt Hughes, "But we are excited about the possibilities that working together will create for our individual wineries as well as our County. You can expect to hear more from us in the near future." ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION

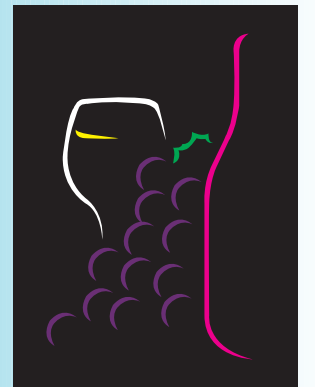
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The Lake County Winegrape Commission newsletter will be published and mailed to all growers quarterly. If you wish to receive yours via email, please contact our office.

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Masthead photo, this issue: the vineyards at Shannon Ridge

The 2007 Harvest in Lake County

A look at what went on around the County

By Glenn McGourty, Farm Advisor
UCCE Lake and Mendocino Counties.

Winter of 2007 was down right cold. During the second week of January, temperatures plunged into the low teens in many parts of our region. Pumps froze and pipes burst. Everyone going outside dressed with an extra layer. It was also a dry winter. Rainfall totaled less than 23 inches in much of the Clear Lake Basin. Late March and early April started to warm, which brought about early bud break. And then it cooled down again in mid-April, bringing on frosty nights. Many growers of early varieties frost protected between 5–10 nights as spring advanced. Fortunately, most of the frost events were radiant frosts, and only vineyards in low areas were affected. Low humidity and clear nights made the beginning of the growing season a bit dicey, since water supplies for sprinkler frost protection were down in some grower's ponds.

Being a drought year, water supplies were tight for many growers, and some wells went dry late in the season. The low humidity throughout the growing season meant very little powdery mildew and bunch rot pressure. Bloom occurred almost a week ahead of normal (nearly a month ahead of the previous season) near the third week of May. Crop set was average in most vineyards. Except for a warm spell around July 4th, the growing season had very moderate temperatures. Vines did not become stressed, and there was little sun burn on fruit or shrivel. Insect and mite pests were not a problem in most vineyards. The end result was one of the cleanest crops in recent memory when fruit arrived at the crush pad. Winemakers were pleased with fruit quality. Vines had balanced canopies. Grape clusters typically had small berries and good color.

At first it looked like there would be an accelerated harvest. Many Sauvignon Blanc vineyards had lighter than normal crops (20% less fruit) and began to ripen in some vineyards mid-August. By the first week of September, most wineries were open and doing considerable crushing. By mid-September, most of the Sauvignon Blanc and other white grapes were harvested. Red grape vineyards in eastern Lake County in Long Valley and High Valley ripened well, and many growers had their harvests completed by the third week of September. Then the weather got cloudy and cool. Temperatures dropped from the 90s to the low 70s. Wineries were actually happy to get a break from the very



2007 harvest at Mike Thompson's Adobe Creek

rapid pace of white fruit harvest. Things slowed down to gradually make room for the red fruit which was taking its time to ripen. Significant rain fell on October 9th and 10th, making conditions seem very much like a European harvest. Many of the vines began turning color early, and fruit ripened at lower sugar levels with mature brown stems and seeds. Winemakers were very happy with flavors. Most growers easily made sugars and rot was minimal. It seemed that harvest progressed at a relatively easy pace, and most wineries and their staff had a low stress crush.

By the time it was over, Sauvignon Blanc harvest levels were close to normal. Quality was judged very good. Fermentations went uninterrupted, and the wines have a very well developed character to them in which everything seems very balanced—good pH, acidity, alcohol and great structure and fragrance. The even pace of the harvest allowed winemakers time to track fermentations well, and to not get rushed to move wines or finish them before they were ready.

Chardonnay came in about average in tonnage and was considered to be of moderate quality, free of rot and mold. Viognier was judged exceptional, as the fruit was very ripe with outstanding fragrance. Roussanne, being later and picked after significant rainfall, was compromised in quality somewhat, and required some careful selection to remove damaged fruit. By the time that it was fermented in the tank, the resulting wines were good.

In the reds, Cabernet Sauvignon was

a normal harvest in volume, with very good quality. Fruit was highly colored, with small berries. Very little sun burn or harsh tannins were noted in the new wines. Merlot was perhaps the best in a decade, with very good color and flavor, moderate pH (around 3.6) and acids. Color could be easily seen during prefermentation soak up.

Zinfandel also showed extremely well this year, especially in Big Valley where growers had one of the nicest harvests in many years. Fruit was clean, berries were small and resulting wines are very fruity and balanced. In the Red Hills area, Zinfandel vines yielded less fruit than usually, as did Petite Sirah. In Clear Oak Highlands, Zinfandel grapes are making very ripe spicy wines from a smaller than average crop.

Mediterranean varieties like Syrah and Tempranillo also performed well this season, with slightly smaller than average crops that have excellent color and ripeness. Finally, even the small patches of Pinot Noir made good wine this year, since the weather overall was fairly mild and not excessively hot.

In summary, wine makers are encouraged by the vintage, as the wines seem to have good acidity, ripeness and color. Market conditions improved for most wine grapes although a few growers had problems selling all of their fruit. There were a few loads that went for very low prices which was unfortunate, given the overall quality of the fruit. 2007 was a good vintage and will be remembered for flavorful well structured wines that show once again that Lake County is in the top tier of quality winegrowing in California. ■

Commission Produces Promotional DVD

The Commission is putting the final touches on a newly produced DVD that promotes the Lake County winegrape growing region. The DVD will give an overview of the Lake County winegrape growing region, the high quality of winegrapes produced here and why they are consistently chosen by wineries that make outstanding wines.

Lake County has the highest concentration of mountain vineyards in California. Even vineyards in Big Valley and at lake level are still higher than many Napa vineyards. At a recent Commission meeting, Balzac Communications, the Commission's PR firm, recommended that 'growing Mountain fruit' be a key message that differentiates Lake County from other California winegrape regions.

The DVD is being produced by Hannah Henry Productions in Napa. Hannah Henry, the owner/producer, came highly recommended from Board Member and Marketing Committee member, Peter Molnar who has used Hannah's company in the past to produce a video for his family's Barrel Company.

It was important to the Commission's marketing committee to find someone who could produce a DVD



Jim Smith, Commission Marketing chair and Hannah Henry, Hannah Henry Productions, get ready to fly over Lake County.

that would stay within the designated budget, yet still convey the high quality image that the Commission wants to project for the Lake County winegrowing region. After the marketing committee reviewed several sample clips of Hannah's work, they agreed that it was obvious — her experience in the wine industry would give Lake County growers a video that they could be proud of.

The CD begins with aerial shots from a helicopter flying up from Napa Valley over the Mayacamas Mountains, and into Lake County.

"When you see Lake County from a helicopter you really notice how much higher and more mountainous we are than Napa and Sonoma," said Jim Smith, Commission Board Member and Marketing Chair, who took the trip with Hannah.

In addition to aerial views of the mountains, vineyards, and the Lake,

interviews with winemakers and growers on why they chose Lake County, will be highlighted.

Production is in its final stages and the DVD could be ready for the Unified Symposium. If not, it will definitely be ready for the March 2008 Wineries Unlimited show in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

The Lake County promotional DVD will be distributed to wine writers, winegrape buyers and other members of the media, and will be made available to growers for their own individual marketing efforts.

Growers will be notified when the DVD is completed. It will also be shown at the Commission's upcoming marketing meeting, to be held in April. ■

Got Grapes?

This first quarter of the new year will find the Lake County Winegrape Commission "on the road" to promote locally grown Lake County winegrapes.

For the 14th year, the Commission will have a booth at the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium (the largest wine industry trade show in the United States) as well as the Wineries Unlimited trade show back east in Valley Forge, PA. At these trade shows, the Commission staff, as well as some Lake County growers, meet and talk to current winery customers and future prospects.

Growers who have grapes for sale for the 2008 harvest are encouraged to list their winegrapes for sale on the Lake County Winegrape Commission web site. Click onto www.lakecountywinegrape.org and go to the button on the left. Click on "grapes for sale." The prompts on that next page will show you how to list your winegrapes.

"Lake County Grapes for sale" lists are taken to trade shows and distributed to prospective buyers, and winemakers at both shows. We also mail, fax and email this list to any prospect calling in to the Commission, asking for winegrapes or juice.

If you have not advertised on the web site you should consider doing so. From February to December 2007, the Commission web site received 28,112 visits and the "Grapes for Sale" page was viewed 27,742 times. ■



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