



The Grapevine

Newsletter of the
Santa Cruz Mountain Viticulture Association
October, 2004

VINE TALK

Harvest!

Labor Day brought in the grapes this year. After yet another weather phenomenon, this time 3 days of 100+ degrees F temperatures, the grapes rushed to finish.

Pinot Noir started off the picking this year, well ahead of the Chardonnay. Early numbers looked good. This was definitely a year to monitor the water in the vineyard. Interestingly, two vineyards that I am aware of that are completely non-irrigated came through the heat with little damage. For the irrigated vineyards the only defense was to turn that water on. Many grapes have come in with superb numbers, excellent seed maturity, and happy winemakers. Some growers had issues with dehydration, high brix, and immature flavors. In some cases, these problems can be addressed with proper water management late in the season. Look to next year for a meeting focusing on this vital topic. As much work as it is to get the grapes in, it sure feels good to be looking at the end of September with this much of the harvest behind us.

Of course there are still many varieties left to go, and overall quality is looking absolutely superb. Bon appetit!

Besides a fabulous harvest, Santa Cruz Mountain winegrape growers have a lot to be proud of this season. The first ever

Next Meetings

October 14: Pete Christensen, U.C. Cooperative Extension and U.C. Davis and ASEV Merit Award Winner and grapevine nutrition expert on "Post-Harvest Nutrition" 3:00pm, Cinnabar Winery, Saratoga (see directions inside)

November 18: Workshop on Integrated Pest Management, conducted by Joe Browde, the Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance (the same folks who brought us the Sustainability Workshop earlier this year). **FREE! 9:00-12:00noon** (including lunch) **Cooper-Garrod Winery, Saratoga**

*This workshop continues from February's Sustainability Workshop to focus on IPM and control of specific pests, weed management, etc. **More information to come!***

Stay tuned for our meeting schedule early 2005.

... And Events

November 10: CAWG Meeting in Los Gatos
Local growers are invited to dinner with the Board of the California Assn. of Winegrape Growers; invitations to be mailed.

December 5: Holiday Party (date still tentative; more information forthcoming)

Note: Meetings/workshops to be held every two months. Each meeting to include a 'vine talk' summary of timely vineyard tasks.

display by the Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains went up this year at the Santa Cruz County Fair.

Special thanks to Mary Lindsay, Judy and Jim Schultze, Barbara and Peter Woodruff, and Ted Remde for their time and creativity in actually creating and putting up the display and taking it down again.

Thank you also to the volunteers who staffed the booth off and on throughout the Fair. I heard many positive comments from fairgoers, many of whom have little understanding of our appellation. If you have any suggestions or want to be part of the exhibit planning next year, please let us know. We also got a beautiful, permanent vineyard photo display board that we can use in many public events to let people know about our unique and marvelous appellation. Special thanks to Patty Hinz Imagery for her devotion and attention to detail in producing these stunning pieces.

Another major accomplishment is the establishment of the VASCM winegrape Exchange – a simple and effective way to advertise your grapes or your need for grapes to the people who want to know. Thanks to Mary Lindsay and Ed Muns for their innovation on this one! Be sure and check out our new website as well, at www.vascm.org. Maybe the Viticulture Association has arrived in the new millennium after all.

We have also enjoyed bi-monthly meetings all year that are designed to relate to the season and the work at hand. Our next meeting will focus on post-harvest vine nutrition. The speaker will be Pete Christensen, retired UC researcher, educator and well known and respected expert in this field. Please come prepared with your vine nutrition and field sampling questions. Ted Remde arranged for this

very special presentation and we are grateful for his efforts.



Speaking of post harvest, remember our work is not quite finished.

Picking those pesky grapes is just a part of the miraculous cycle of the vine and it's fruit formation. Don't miss this important opportunity to replenish depleted nutrients in the vine and supply much needed water before the vines go dormant. Just as some people need a good snack before a long sleep, so the vines need to get their fill before settling down for a long, well deserved winter's nap. During the weeks following harvest the roots of the vine are poised to uptake nutrients and assimilate them into storage in preparation for next spring. This is an incredible opportunity to feed your vines and ensure a healthy start next year. Don't miss it. Review your spring petiole samples or soil samples to determine what your vines need. Most vines need the major supplements, Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium, as well as a dose of micronutrients to get them off to a good start next year. Of course you don't want to overdo the Nitrogen, or any of the nutrients, but in most cases it is vital to replenish reserves depleted during this year's fruit production.

Also consider putting in a fall cover crop. Cover crops will hold the soil, improve organic matter, and help control erosion. Certain seeds, like bell beans, fava beans, or the fancier peas, vetch, and annual clovers, all produce nitrogen in the soil as well as provide other benefits like good homes for beneficial microorganisms. In some cases, growers can meet or nearly meet their nitrogen needs solely through the use of these cover crops. It is important to get your cover crops in before the big rains start or it gets too cold. This will help control potential damage from the later, heavier rains as well as allow for germination. Many cover crops require the warm fall soils in order to come up. If you are late (say late November or December) in getting seed in you can still benefit from a cold germinating seed like barley. Barley

will not produce nitrogen, but it will hold the soil and add organic matter. Bell beans may still come up at this late date, just not as well, and they won't grow as big. There are a million opinions regarding cover crops, but on one thing we can all agree. Cover crops are good for the soil and good for the vines. Plant them.

By the way, if you are enjoying and benefitting from the regular meetings, newsletter, web exchange, etc., please be sure to renew your dues. Some members are way behind and taking a free ride. Staff time is 100% volunteer but there are still expenses like this newsletter that need to be paid. Please support your organization as you reap the benefits of membership. If you've let your dues fall behind please update at the next meeting. Thank you!

So, after you've fed and watered your vines, and covered their soil with a nice warm cover crop blanket, and paid your local Viticulture Association annual dues, it is indeed, time to take a break. That's the great part of being a grower. Now is the time to try some of that wine that comes from all this work. Be sure and have the winery you work with provide you with some samples so that you can try the fruits of your labor as well as work together toward an even finer product next year.

Enjoy and congratulations on a fabulous season! Salud!

- Prudy Foxx
President, Viticulture Association of the
Santa Cruz Mountains

August Meeting Recap: "If You Grow It, Will They Come" Winemaker Panel

"Work closely with us." This was the consistent message from all the winemaker panelists at our August meeting. Most of the winemakers want long-term relationships, and want to work with growers who have a similar perspective. They agree that their wines are grown in the vineyard – essentially, the growers are creating the wine's fundamental flavors. Balanced grape flavors produce balanced wines. That's why a close, cooperative relationship between the grower and winemaker is so important. The following points discussed could be considered a 'winemakers' wish list':

- Ask the winemaker early in the year what kind of wine s/he wants to make from your grapes so you can grow it.
- Thin shoots at the right time, drop fruit and take actions necessary to improve quality. Engage in good, basic viticultural practices.
- Plant the right grapes in the right place.
- Don't overcommit on your delivery and be upfront about your situation if you see you'll have less than anticipated.
- Harvest to the brix and tA levels the winemaker specifies. Don't pick too early and don't pick too late – the winemaker doesn't want green flavors or overripe grapes. Don't deliver rejects!

All this sounds obvious enough, but it doesn't always happen this way, so the reminders continue to be valuable.

(continued)

Check Out Our New Website: www.vascm.org

You'll find here the materials the promotional committee developed for the Fair describing our appellation, grapes and wines; as well as information on upcoming meetings and events, copies of newsletters, etc. Plus, find all the listings for the Buy/Sell Exchange. And, we'd like to post profiles of all of our members' vineyards! If you'd like to be represented on the site, send information on your vineyard, including acreage, varietals, when it was founded and other history and information you'd like to include to mary@lindsaypr.com. Also provide a picture if you have it, or we can arrange to take one. Come back often to see what's new!

(August meeting recap, cont.)

The wide-ranging discussion also addressed additional issues of mutual concern, particularly about the marketability and marketing of our grapes and appellation. One panelist commented that our appellation wines are difficult to market and our grape prices are high, making it more difficult for the winery, which ultimately has to sell the final product. It was acknowledged that grape growing here is more labor intensive and expensive than in some places. Another suggested that we all need to do a better job of marketing our appellation, our grapes and the resulting wines.

One panelist pointed out that we compete against every other region, not just amongst ourselves. Everyone was encouraged to expand their palates, to avoid “house palate”, to tour and taste wines in other appellations. It was recommended that growers get bottles of the wine produced from their grapes, put up a vertical, taste it every year, and taste and compare against wines from other regions.

Ultimately, one winemaker, who recently came to our area from Napa, paid a handsome compliment by saying that “if you want to produce awesome wine cluster by cluster, then this is the place.” The trick is to deliver ‘handcrafted’ grapes so the winemakers can produce “handcrafted” wines.

Thank you to our panelists:

- David Gates, Ridge
- John Schumacher, Hallcrest
- Steve Storrs, Storrs Winery
- Stephen Tebbs, Clos la Chance
- George Troquato, Cinnabar
- Michael Walters,
Roudon-Smith



VASCM at the SC County Fair

If you were there, you saw the debut of the VASCM exhibit at the Santa Cruz County Fair. If not, we'll bring some of the display to the October meeting and you can view it then – two beautiful photo boards, and two text displays describing the appellation and the grapes and wines we produce.

One of the photo displays is a collage of numerous vineyards in the appellation. You may be represented already, but if not, we intend to expand on this idea and gather as many additional vineyard photos as we can for the future. We're still working on it, but soon you'll be able to see the messages we created on our website at www.vascm.org (click on 'About the Appellation' and on 'The Wines'). The goal is to convey, through photos and text, what is special and unique about our mountain appellation, including its proximity to the ocean, with its views of the Bay and the maritime influence as the fog rolls in, the mountain terrain with its hills, sweeping views and pine trees. And, we discuss how these influences result in grapes that produce our excellent wines.

Many of the photos were taken by Patty Hinz, who also created the displays. Patty is a professional photographer with a particular focus in viticulture. She is the official photographer of the SCMWA, and is available to photograph your vineyard. Her images have caught the special qualities of our unique appellation at different times of the year. You can see more of Patty's photos and contact her through her website at www.pattyhinzimagery.com.

Heard around the crush pad: Bonny Doon took Zayante's chardonnay crop this year. Still TBD is whether the wine will bear the SCM appellation distinction. That would be excellent! A small, but significant step in the right direction...

The Buy/Sell Exchange

Implemented about a month before the first harvests this year, the Buy/Sell Exchange is an email-based mechanism that allows growers and wineries to connect for the purpose of buying and selling appellation grapes. It has already been successfully used by numerous people to advertise and request fruit, as well as other wine industry related services and products.

The Exchange is ongoing, so you are encouraged to continue to use it! If you are not on our email list and would like to post to it or be notified of Exchange listings, send an email message to the list mailman at VASCM-owner@kkn.net. You can also view the Exchange listings on our website at www.VASCM.org.

Membership Rewards & Renewals

Bi-monthly meetings, specialized workshops, bi-monthly newsletter, a new website with vineyard profiles, the Buy/Sell Exchange, a new public exhibit that debuted at the County Fair – and we're only getting started! All for Santa Cruz Mountain winegrape growers. If you like what VASCM is doing, please pay your dues. All this costs \$\$\$, and even though we operate on a shoestring, we're spending it. It's still only \$25! If you get a membership form with this newsletter that means your membership dues are due.

Ratings Kudos

Note the high ratings gained by SCM appellation wines in the July 31 Wine Spectator Tasting Report on Chard:

- Byington, 88 pts.
- Clos laChance, 91 pts. (Vanumanutagi)
- Mount Eden, 90 pts.
- Ridge, 90 pts. (Monte Bello 2001)
- Thunder Mountain, 87 pts. (Beauregard Ranch 2000)



October Meeting: Post-Harvest Nutrition

We are privileged to have as our October speaker Pete Christensen, considered by many in viticulture to be the premier expert on grapevine mineral nutrition.

Christensen's career has spanned four decades with U.C. Cooperative Extension. He has been President of ASEV, recipient of ASEV's Merit Award earlier this year, and previously U.C. Davis' Distinguished Achievement Award. The timely topic, post-harvest nutrition, will provide expert advice on boosting vine health for a great start on growth next year.

Thursday, Oct. 14, 3:00pm

Cinnabar Winery

23000 Congress Springs Rd.
Saratoga

Directions to Cinnabar Winery:

From Hwy. 85, take the Saratoga Ave. exit and go south. (Saratoga becomes Big Basin Way and then Congress Springs.) Go 4 miles, through the town of Saratoga. (Cinnabar is 2.3 miles from downtown Saratoga.) Pass Pierce Rd; cross bridge. Cinnabar is on the left side, just past the 19 mile an hour sign at the lefthand curve and immediately to the left of the Saratoga Springs Campground sign. If you get to the campground or to Sanborn Road you've gone too far.

About the Newsletter

The goal of the SCMVA newsletter is to be a helpful resource and means of communication for our members. We welcome your suggestions and contributions for articles and content. Please contact Prudy Foxx or the newsletter editor, Mary Lindsay, per the contact information in the newsletter.

If you prefer to receive the newsletter via email (right now as a Word attachment) instead of by postal mail, please send a note to mary@lindsaypr.com.

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Newsletter

Next Meeting October 14: Post-Harvest Vine Nutrition

