



CCW Annual Symposium Dec. 9

Industry recovery and 2005 outlook highlight day-long event

Central California Winegrowers (CCW), California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG) and the Wine Industry Symposium Group are joint sponsors of the annual symposium, "What's Ahead for the Central California Grower." The informative event is Thursday, Dec. 9, at Grand Occasions, 4584 W. Jacquelyn Ave., in Fresno. Breakfast and registration start at 7:15 a.m. Thursday's program gets underway at 8 a.m. The symposium is open to the public and reservations are required.

Rich Cartiere, editor of the Wine Market Report, will provide a welcome address, as well Carson Smith, president of CCW, and Karen Ross, president of CAWG. Informational panel discussions will follow, focusing on the global grape markets for wine grapes and other grape product use, and land use issues addressing housing development or agriculture. In addition, consumer trends, environmental issues and updates on CCW-sponsored research projects will be provided.

Jose Fernandez, president and CEO of Constellation Wines, will provide a global perspective of the wine industry, and Peter Byck, president



Jose Fernandez,
Constellation
Wines

of the Winery Exchange, will provide a Central California perspective on challenges and opportunities facing growers and vintners.

Other scheduled speakers at the day-long symposium include: Dr. Robert Wample, California State University, Fresno, Department of Viticulture and Enology; Dr. Mechel S. Paggi, director of Fresno State's Center for Agricultural Business; Nat DiBuduo, president of Allied Grape Growers; Glen Goto, CEO of the Raisin Bargaining Association; Greg McGill, broker with Joseph W. Ciatti and Company; John Gillespie, president of Wine Market Council; Manuel Cunha, Jr., president of Nisei Farmers League; David Freed, chairman of UCC Group; Tony Correia, president of Correia-Xavier Associates; Tim Leach, senior vice president with Fresno-Madera Farm



Rich Cartiere,
Wine Market
Report

Credit; and Curt Covington, vice president with Rabo Agrifinance.

Event sponsors as of press time include: Allied Grape Growers; Baker, Peterson & Franklin, CPA LLP; Bank of America; Bank of the West; Bayer Crop Science; Correia-Xavier, Inc.; E&J Gallo Winery; Fresno-Madera Farm Credit; Helena Chemical Co.; Monterey AgResources; Pearson Realty; Pioneer Equipment Co.; RaboAgriFinance & Rabobank International; and Vintage Nurseries.

Registration costs for the symposium are \$75 per person for CCW/CAWG members and \$100 per person for non-members. Registration includes a continental breakfast and a working luncheon featuring Central California wines.

For reservation information, contact CCW Executive Director Ron Metzler at (559) 618-1856.

CCW dinner event precedes symposium

On Wednesday, Dec. 8, Central California Winegrowers will hold a brief association meeting and recognize symposium speakers and sponsors at a dinner event at Grand Occasions, 4584 W. Jacquelyn Ave., in Fresno. A social hour begins at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30. Reservations are required.

Matteo Watkins owner of Acequia on Main restaurant in Visalia, will deliver the keynote address. Watkins, who features only Central California-produced wines in his restaurant, will discuss the wine industry from a retail and consumer perspective. Central California wines will be served.

The cost is \$50 per person for CCW/CAWG members and non-members. To make a reservation, contact CCW Executive Director Ron Metzler at (559) 618-1856.

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From my side of the vine

Welcome to our inaugural issue of the CCW Grower & Vintner Bulletin. Thanks for taking the time to read about what's happening in the Central California wine-growing region.

Central California Winegrowers (CCW) was formed two years ago to provide educational and marketing support to the Central California wine industry and to enhance the quality, reputation and marketability of Central California wine products, including concentrate.

While we've begun generating more name recognition for locally-produced wines, this past year proved that we're an organization destined to be a key voice and player for our industry on behalf of the growers and vintners. Let me share with you some of our accomplishments:

An effort to change California's vintage dating requirements – an idea that has been discussed for several years – remains a divisive issue for the state's wineries and wine grape growers.

The Wine Institute remains split on whether the association should ask federal regulators to change the current vintage dating requirement that 95 percent of the contents of a given bottle of wine be from a specific vintage (year) to carry a vintage date.

The Technical Committee of the Wine Institute proposed to change the California vintage-dating requirement to 85 percent. By and large, most of the smaller wineries oppose the reduction in the required percentage, while most of the larger wineries favor it.



Ron Metzler
Executive Director

- The Board of Directors established a vision, goals and objectives for Central California Winegrowers to ensure our efforts continue to benefit growers and vintners in our area.

- Member communication has been enhanced with an informative website and newsletter to provide members with current, up to date information about the activities and projects of CCW. Currently we are updating our website, www.ccwinegrowers.org.

- Several collaborative projects have been launched to research sustainable growing practices with encouraging results for growers' profitability. Follow-up tailgates and workshops were held to disseminate information to growers.

- CCW sponsored Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance workshops.

- Outreach efforts are underway to share our message and issues with consumers, associated industries, media and elected representatives.

- Our annual symposium is slated for Dec. 8 and 9, in Fresno, featuring industry speakers who will discuss current events and issues.

While we are proud of this year's efforts, there is more to be done to bring recognition to Central Valley wine grape growers and vintners.

That's why you're being asked to join CCW. By joining now, your membership will extend through fiscal year 2005 plus you'll become part of the leading organization dedicated to Central California wine grape growers and vintners. Please contact me personally for more information at (559) 618-1856, or email me at info@ccwinegrowers.org. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Vintage date change remains unresolved

"Most foreign countries are at 85 percent or less," said Nat DiBuduo, a CCW board member and president of Allied Grape Growers. "Many of the wineries here want to be on the same numerical percentage as the foreign competition."

Chile currently requires 75 percent of the wine to be from a certain vintage; Australia, Southern France and many other countries require 85 percent. Even though imported wine must comply with the California requirement of 95 percent vintage dating, no enforcement provisions currently are in place.

The issue is not without controversy among both growers and wineries. Some growers are concerned the issue could be used as a tool to buy more or

less wine in a given year, depending on grape prices for that particular year. Some of the smaller wineries are concerned that the change could reflect on the integrity and quality of California wine.

Steve Shafer, a Madera wine grape grower who sits on the boards of the Central California Winegrowers and California Association of Winegrape Growers (CAWG), is concerned the proposed change in vintage dating could have an impact on prices to growers.

"It could tend to minimize the fluctuation between negotiated prices in short years and long years," said Shafer. He expressed his concern that farmers may see reduced prices even in a light crop year when

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Like many who live in Madera County, John Lasgoity has farmed his entire life. His family grew wine grapes on the vineyard property his great-grandparents bought in 1903.

While the family's fruit was sold to wineries, some of it also was crushed into wine by Lasgoity's great-grandfather and grandfather. Lasgoity revived this legacy when he moved into his grandfather's house and discovered his grandfather's wine-making equipment in the basement.

Lasgoity began home wine-making in 1988 by taking classes through the Cooperative Extension Service at UC, Davis. When a friend opened a winery in Madera County, Lasgoity and his sister Michelle were convinced they could run one, too.

This year Chateau Lasgoity celebrates its fifth vintage and is home to several award-winning wines.

"This year we did very well in the competitions we entered and that's helping people take



John Lasgoity of Chateau Lasgoity

notice of the wines in our region," Lasgoity said. "I think people are starting to recognize that we do grow good fruit here and that you can taste the fruit in our wines. We're offering wines of a higher quality that are reasonably priced."

Chateau Lasgoity is a member of the Madera Vintners Association as well as Central California Winegrowers, which, Lasgoity believes, plays a large role in increasing the awareness of Central Valley wines.

"There's no question that

people are becoming more and more aware of the Central Valley and that will spill over into the wine industry, as well," Lasgoity said. "An organization like Central California Winegrowers is helpful to us because it promotes the region, yet its efforts tie in nicely with what local wine groups are doing."

Chateau Lasgoity is located at 11219 Road 26 in Madera. Its tasting room is open weekends from 1 to 5 p.m. Visit the web site at www.chateaulasgoity.com or call the winery at (559) 674-8291.

Chateau Lasgoity Award-Winning Wines (partial list)

2002 Merlot

- Gold Medal, San Francisco Wine Competition 2004
- Bronze Medal, Riverside International Wine Competition 2004

2002 Rouge de Val – a Rhone-style blend of syrah (40%), Grenache (40%) and alicante-bouschet (20%)

- Silver Medal, Riverside International Wine Competition 2004
- Bronze Medal, West Coast Wine Competition, Santa Rosa, 2004
- Bronze Medal, Monterey Wine Competition, 2004

2002 Blanc du Val – French Columbard based

- Gold Medal, "Best of Class," California State Fair, 2004
- Silver Medal, Riverside International Wine Competition, 2004
- Bronze Medal, Monterey Wine Competition, 2004

A life-long background in agriculture and a desire to see an industry succeed were two motivators for Carson Smith's involvement in Central California Winegrowers.

Currently Smith serves as the organization's president, a position he's held since the group formed two years ago.

"I was part of the original group that started meeting to discuss how, as growers, we were going to address the issues vintners were putting before us, namely an increased focus on quality," Smith said from his Fresno-based office, Carson Smith Farming. "The



Carson Smith

organization has been good for growers and it's been good to be involved in an organization like this one."

Smith's farm family hails from Clovis where the family was

involved in a variety of crops, including grapes. As development encroached his parents' property, Smith completed his degree in agricultural economics at California State University, Fresno. After a brief career selling tractors and farm equipment, Smith began working in farm management for Farrior Farms.

"I knew I wanted to be in

production agriculture, so I made the switch," he said.

A career in managing vineyards, almonds and pistachios. In 1997, he started Carson Smith Farming, providing contract farm management services for grape growers in Kern, Madera and Fresno counties, as well as the Central Coast region.

Despite the vastness of the region represented by Central California Winegrowers, Smith sees the organization's efforts as vital for the wine-grape industry.

"We started with two main objectives: to help drive research for quality improvement in this area and to promote local wineries," Smith said. "With respect to

research, not only do we need the trials but we need a communications conduit to get the existing and new information to growers. CCW can help with that.

"With respect to wineries, the more we can do to promote our local wineries the better," Smith continued. "There is a direct correlation between the prices received by growers and the number of wineries in an area."

Smith also views CCW's goal to be an umbrella organization to smaller groups within the region as important.

"Because we are a larger, broader group, we can focus on bigger issues that can help those that may develop locally," Smith said.

CCW participates in Grape Expo



California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance's Joe Browde discussed the Sustainable Winegrowing Project, which involves self-assessment reports and identified areas for improvement, as outlined in a comprehensive workbook prepared by the Alliance.



From left, Agricultural Advisors Ron Brase, Steve Vasquez and Don Kayatama were on-hand to hear about the latest developments in grape production at this year's Central Valley Grape Expo.



Dr. Robert Wample, of California State University, Fresno's Viticulture and Enology Department, discussed the role irrigation management plays in producing top quality wine grapes.

Sustainability was the word of the day at the Central Valley Grape Expo. Held Nov. 4 in Easton, the Expo was sponsored in part by Central California Winegrowers.

Discussion at the day-long educational forum focused on the long-term sustainability of wine grape production. Sustainability is defined as winegrowing and winemaking practices that are sensitive to the environment, responsive to the needs and interests of society-at-large, and economically feasible to implement and maintain.

Joe Browde, of California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance, provided an update on the Sustainable Winegrowing Project, an educational effort leading to widespread development and execution of sustainability strategies in the California winegrowing community. Browde reviewed the self-assessment reports and identified areas for improvement, as outlined in a comprehensive workbook prepared by the Alliance.

"If you haven't gone through the voluntary self-assessment program, I urge you to do it," Browde told growers. "The key thing is to take the information, make action plans, and to induce

real change. The trick is to really make a change for improvement."

Throughout the day, discussions also centered on "bio-friendly" vertebrate pest management, research and advances in managing vine mealybug, and appropriate management strategies for two invasive vineyard weeds, fleabane and marestail. Valuable information also was presented about developing a successful agriculture-urban interface, which was described as farms co-existing with urban neighbors without conflict.

In addition, Dr. Robert Wample, of California State University, Fresno's Viticulture and Enology Department, monitored a panel discussion about field trials on irrigation management conducted this summer. Wample described an irrigation management plan as "a three-legged stool," having three distinct information needs: examining how the vine is doing through monitoring water stress; monitoring soil moisture content; and checking the evapo-demand.

"In the long-run, it will make us better stewards of the land, it will be better for us economically, and it will produce improved-quality wine grapes," Wample said.



CCW Executive Director Ron Metzler handed out membership information at the event.

Research Trials:

Emphasizing grape quality for value-priced wines

Central California Winegrowers hosted several informal tailgate meetings this past summer to discuss irrigation and canopy management research conducted by California State University, Fresno's Viticulture and Enology Department.

Current research projects are designed to examine the effects of induced stress on grapes through irrigation management. The quality of the grapes and character of the wine may be affected. Some of the factors being investigated are grape cluster weight, individual berry weight, average berries per cluster, and fruit maturity.

The research is being conducted on behalf of CCW, which secured a grant through the Buy California Initiative. Canopy management research is being investigated in connection with irrigation trials. The field trials are exploring the effects of hand pruning versus mechanical pruning. The pruning trials are tied to the studies through producing a more open canopy and leaving more buds, resulting in more clusters per vine.

"When you open the canopy through early season management, it's possible to leave more buds and have more clusters per vine," said Dr. Robert Wample, professor and department chair for Fresno State's Department of Viticulture and Enology, and a technical advisor for CCW. "More berries and clusters even if the fruit is smaller can be a great thing because the flavor for wine grapes is in the skin, not the pulp."

According to Ron Metzler, CCW executive



A vineyard in the irrigation management trials near Traver.



CCW Board member Eric Shannon discusses canopy management during a tailgate.

director, the irrigation management data will be useful for Central Valley wine grape growers who are in a great position for a niche market.

"When you consider that 60 percent of the grapes crushed for wine in California come from regions with climates like ours, it is in our best interest to investigate and adopt the best vineyard practices to efficiently produce higher quality wine grapes," Metzler said. "Our Central Valley growers are in a great position to enhance their wine grape quality and to produce wine grapes for value-priced wines."

At the Shannon Ranch in Traver, a trial site, Barbera wine grapes are divided into

five replicated sets of four rows each. Rows identified with pink ribbons receive full irrigations. Rows marked with white ribbons receive half the water as the others and only every other row is irrigated.

"We had lower yields last year but everyone's Barbera was down," said Eric Shannon, who serves on the CCW board. "I don't know if it could all be attributed to that reduced irrigation. Clearly there are other factors involved."

Shannon also has noticed that the reduced-irrigated vines host less pests than those that are fully irrigated.

At the C.J. Ritchie ranch north of Visalia, a 57-acre Ruby Cabernet vineyard also is undergoing reduced irrigation management.

"[The demonstration] sure has helped," said Jeff Ritchie. "It has been a good deal for us through better water management and to try to produce a better quality grape through water management."

The irrigation management experiment has completed its first phase of a two-year grant. A final comprehensive report of findings will be published in 2005.

Book discusses the business of wine

The business side of the wine industry from viticulture to distribution and direct sales is featured in a new book, "Wine A Global Business: Success Strategies for New World Wine."

The book is the first of its kind to provide a comprehensive overview of the business of New World wine, containing first-hand accounts from wine business leaders such as Walt Klenz, Michael Mondavi, John Deluca and John Duval.

Edited by Elizabeth "Liz" Thach, Ph.D, of Sonoma State University, and Tim Matz of Jackson Wine Estates International, the book offers chapters written by authorities in the wine industry, offering information and advice on what is necessary to succeed in the wine business. Topics include strategic planning for the wine business, the business of viticulture and enology, global marketing, wine media and public relations, the importance of wine brand, wine distribution, wine accounting and tax, wine supply chain management, the legalities of wine and others subject areas.

The book sells for \$39.95, plus shipping and handling charges of \$5. Discounts apply on five or more copies. Contact CCW Executive Director Ron Metzler at (559) 618-1856 if you are interested in purchasing a copy of the book through a group discount or for direct order information.



CCW

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Save the Date

• **January 5 – San Joaquin Valley Grape Symposium;** CPDES Hall, 172 Jefferson Ave., Easton; 8:30 a.m.; Registration \$22 per person, includes lunch; For details, call (559) 456-7285.

Vintage date change

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higher returns are needed to help offset the reduction in yields.

CAWG Directors have voted not to change the existing vintage dating policy, Shafer said. "But," he adds, "there's room to discuss it." Shafer said there are growers in the Valley that support the change.

Growers and wineries that

favor the change contend that it will be a good tool for blending purposes, providing the flexibility needed to produce wine that will please consumers in an already competitive market. Also many wineries believe they could sell more wine, which in turn would benefit growers.

Despite the issue's importance and the need for discussion, there is concern that pub-

lic debate on the issue could raise unnecessary concerns and unwarranted perceptions about reduced quality among California's wine consumers.

"We certainly don't want this to become a high press issue, but it is an important issue to discuss," Shafer said. "We don't want to confuse our consumers or raise concerns for them."

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