



SOUTHERN OREGON
WINE INSTITUTE®

Wine Cluster Conference II Grants Pass, Oregon December 14, 2010 Summary Report

More than 120 Southern Oregon vintners, winegrape growers and winery owners from the Southern Oregon America Viticultural Area – together with interested business representatives and educators – attended the second Wine Cluster Conference on December 14, 2010, in Grants Pass. The six-and-a-half hour session, presented by the Southern Oregon Wine Institute (SOWI) at Umpqua Community College, focused on ways to unify the region’s fast-growing wine industry and generate significant additional support for it.

Speakers were **Nick Frey**, President, Sonoma County Winegrape Commission; Santa Rosa, Calif., **Patty Skinkis**, PhD, viticulture Extension specialist and assistant professor, Oregon State University; **Joe Dobbles**, Owner and Winemaker, Dobbles Family Estate and Wine By Joe, Dundee, Ore.; and **Elizabeth Martin-Calder**, past Executive Director, Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance. **Jeanette Morgan**, Executive Director of the Oregon Wine Board, Oregon Winegrowers Association and TOWER, also addressed the conference. **Neil Shay**, PhD, Director of the Oregon Wine Research Institute at OSU, attended as well.

Afternoon brainstorming sessions with all participants focused on developing action plans to enhance winemaking and vineyard operations, plus expansion of marketing and destination tourism. The Cluster Conference was sponsored by Umpqua Bank (lead sponsor), ETS Laboratories, Davis Wright Tremaine attorneys at law, Express Employment Professionals, Ogden Roemer Wilkerson Architects, Lake County Grapevine Nursery Operations, Pacific Winemaking and Linde Vineyard Supply.

For more information on the conference or Umpqua Community College’s viticulture and enology academic program, contact Chris Lake, Director, Southern Oregon Wine Institute, at (541) 440-4709 or chris.lake@umpqua.edu; or Allison Priestley, Program Assistant, (541) 440-4629 or allison.priestley@umpqua.edu; or visit www.sowicellars.com.

Presentations

Nick Frey

President, Sonoma County Winegrape Commission

“Infrastructure & Resources to Create a Successful Wine Region”

Integrating support for the wine industry. Solid, effective infrastructure takes time to build. Sonoma County got its first fine wine producer, Buena Vista, in 1857. Today, there are 1,500 vineyard owners and 450 wineries, many of them multi-generational. The county includes 13 AVAs, each with its own unique attributes; and there are 5 grower and vintner organizations to promote those AVAs. Sixty-six different grape varieties (22 white and 44 red) are grown there. One tremendous advantage is the close proximity of San Francisco and the Golden Gate Bridge – tourism generates \$1.3 billion annually in economic activity. Historically, the county’s wine groups did not work together – and in some cases the AVAs viewed each other as competitors, as did the vintners and growers. The region’s diversity made it very hard to define, and the wine groups were all poorly funded.

Responding to the challenges. Successful cooperation only happened when local leaders recognized the need for it and value of it. The Sonoma County Tourism Bureau (SCTB) formed a Business Investment Area in 2005 and increased its budget four-fold. The Sonoma County Winegrape Commission (SCWC) was created in 2006 and increased its budget three-fold. The Sonoma County Vintners (SCV) hired a new executive director and increased dues in 2006, doubling its budget. A Presidents’ Council, formed in 2009, holds quarterly meetings of all organization presidents and staff. The “Trio” of SCTB, SCV and SCWC was formed and the county organizations started sharing office space in 2006. Now, SVC and SCWC jointly develop marketing messages. Three major marketing events (Sonoma in the City, Sonoma Summit and the Sonoma County Showcase of Food and Wine) are jointly funded. A major unifying event is the Wine Country Weekend in Sonoma over Labor Day weekend at the McMurray Ranch in the Russian River Valley. The groups hired a single public relations firm in 2009. And the AVA groups began participating in county marketing efforts in 2009, with SCWC providing matching cooperative grants to them. Marketing work is funded in large part by .5% assessment of the gross value of non-estate grape sales. Pooling resources (roughly \$1.2 million annually) allows for better marketing programs. A key development. Conjunctive labeling legislation was passed in 2010 and “Sonoma County” will now appear on all labels.

Regional differentiation is critical – without that, grapes become a commodity. Wineries can source grapes from anywhere and regional reputation drives grape demand. Too many wine regions sound the same: “Warm days and cool nights, perfect for winegrapes (but **my** nights are cooler than **your** nights!”). Regions need to tell a unique story to consumers, just like wine brands do. And the story needs to be different than, not better than. Sonoma County commissioned research in 2007 and found that the wine region is the most important information to predict quality on wine labels. (1) “Consumers prefer labels that include the larger region over those that only describe an American Viticultural Area (AVA) within the region, the case being Sonoma County.” (2) Whereas the current trend in the industry is to favor the use of ever-smaller AVAs, this practice of not leveraging the larger region to its full extent is not optimal.” Also, consumer recognition is low for new, small AVAs and marketing dollars can be limited.

Frey stressed the importance of consumer and trade research – and of creating a brand that is supported with appropriate, consistent messaging. The messaging must differentiate the AVA from others and answer these questions:

- What makes your AVA distinct?
- Which wine(s) best define the region?
- Where is the AVA?
- Is there unique history?

Sonoma’s challenge was to “exploit the recognition and perception of Sonoma County wines – and make it the ‘Endorsing Brand.’” Now all AVA marketing is linked to the Sonoma County brand. To the consumer, a defined geography implies higher quality, limited availability and higher price points. In Sonoma, wineries use the AVA to achieve higher price points. The overall marketing challenge: increasing consumer recognition of the AVA and the wines it produces – and demonstrating that “place matters.” Doing all of that with limited dollars and in a crowded marketplace (200+ AVAs in the U.S., plus hundreds of international appellations).

Frey saw four key parallels between Sonoma County and Southern Oregon:

- Multiple organizations at work (OWA, OWB, RVWA, UVWA, SOWA, SOVA and others) and not a lot of collaboration
- Limited acreage to support promotional costs
- Home to multiple varieties

- Existing in the shadow of another wine region (Willamette Valley) with a higher profile and a signature wine

He encouraged everyone to consider: What makes Southern Oregon and its AVAs unique and distinct from other regions? The people? The local events? The natural resources? The climate? The wines? The history? Something else? And can other regions make the same claims?

Biggest lessons from Sonoma County

1. AVAs can't go it along. Stay connected to Oregon – maybe it's the Willamette Valley and More (Southern Oregon, just beyond the Willamette Valley).
2. Link AVAs with Southern Oregon region. No single AVA has the money to go it alone.
3. Link wine promotions to other Southern Oregon events and attractions: Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Britt Festival, Steamboat Conference, etc.

Patty Skinkis

Viticulture Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor, Oregon State University

“Advanced Vineyard Practices”

Site and cultivar selection is crucial for successful vineyard production that is economically sustainable. Being able to match cultivars with a given environment is critical for the production of high quality winegrapes. In general, grapevines are not difficult to grow, but it is challenging to grow them well. The challenge in any new region is the understanding of diverse environments and diverse soils to be able to select vineyard production regions that will succeed. Oregon's industry is based on diversity of climates and soils that makes it difficult to find one suitable method of management or one market for grapes. There are 16 separate AVAs across the state that encompasses a larger diversity of soils than is found in other states or regions. Southern Oregon has its own diversity of environment with 2500-2900 growing degree days and highly variable rainfall with ranges of 19, 33 and 61 inches annually in Medford, Roseburg and Cave Junction, respectively. This allows for diversification of cultivar selection and production in the region and includes a range of the following: Pinot noir, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Tempranillo and Viognier.

Challenges in viticulture:

- Plant materials
- Management for quality
- Maintaining economic sustainability
- Production Standards

Obtaining suitable plant materials is critical to advance an industry. Rootstock and cultivars must be selected that will thrive in the diverse environments of S. OR. Planting to phylloxera resistant rootstock is recommended, and currently the state has 52% of the acreage grafted. Finding clean plant materials that are certified virus-free will also be required to maintain a healthy, developing industry. Northwest Grape Foundation currently is developing crown-gall free vines. Suggestions were made to seek only certified plant materials rather than obtaining the “hot” new cultivar or clone. Efforts to understand and manage virus in plant materials and keep insect vectors at bay will be required to maintain vineyard growth in the future. This is a concern for the region and state as new virus-vectoring pests may be introduced and viruses in current planting are identified. OSU is working on mealybug monitoring and trapping efforts in S. OR and across the state to better understand these concerns.

Managing vineyards for quality requires an understanding of how to manage the environment and vine response. Challenges for southern Oregon are irrigation and nutrition management. OSU efforts are currently in place to help develop better ET-based irrigation scheduling and studies to understand irrigation effects on fruit quality.

A statewide concern is management of excessive vine vigor and canopy management to deal with this vigor. Canopy management is a tool used for high quality wine production and is very costly, ~\$1500/acre each season (135 hours/acre). As the economy puts pressure on vineyard and winery budgets, production costs must decrease, and research is in place to better understand what management methods can be altered without compromising quality. These tools include use of irrigation management or competitive cover crop management. Research from OSU was showcased and included information on increases of fruit quality with competitive cover cropping in cool climate regions.

Management of disease and nutrition are also important to reduce the input cost in the vineyard and/or to increase fruit quality. Research is currently being done with spore-trapping methods in Oregon to help reduce fungicide inputs in the state. Nutrient feeding studies are also being conducted on grape to better identify standards for managing vine nutrition and helping better determine inputs into the system.

As the industry begins to advance in the state and region, standards for production are likely to be sought. Certification bodies such as LIVE, OR Tilth and Demeter provide guidelines for production. However, judging quality and management requires knowledge of the vineyard and environment, flexibility in management and funds to make the changes, regardless of a certifying body. Challenges for the region and state are to determine common ground (cultivar to grow and market), understand how to manage the vineyards given the climate, and how to manage viticulture with specified methods for the region and production goals.

Joe Dobbles

Owner and Winemaker, Dobbles Family Estate, Wines by Joe and JOVINO

“Building a Base of Fault-Free, Consumer Friendly Wines”

What are fault-free, consumer-friendly wines?

Values priced wines at \$20/bottle and less, deliver high value and over-deliver on expectations, technically and varietally correct, fruit forward and full of flavor. Reds: Soft, round and with “sweet” ripe tannins. Whites: Aromatic, well balanced, clean, lively, often contains small amounts of residual sugar, juicy and with a yum factor, drinkable tonight off the shelf.

What does the market demand now and in the future?

The market seeks, demands, and expects higher quality at less money now more than ever. Consumers are savvier than in years past; they’ve found better quality for less money and will not retreat. The economic collapse spurred the new normal, or “the great reset.” Americans overspent and now they’ve changed their spending habits. The high-end, luxury category is undergoing a small resurgence, but the future is now and the die is cast. Current market conditions led to consumer reluctance, oversupply, discounting \$30 wines to \$20 or below. The “spoiled consumer” wins and now expects and receives value. Cheap is the new chic. Value wines have grown considerably.

Opportunities for the Industry

- Current surge in value-priced wines/brands
- Surge in the need for value-priced fruit
- Surge/resurgence in alternative packaging: kegs, bag/box, single servings, tetra packs
- Eco-friendly initiatives

Challenges for Wineries

- Increased world competition in value segments
- Consumers not as brand loyal
- Defining the new normal and acting on that is more prudent than waiting for the old normal to return

Against what standards must Southern Oregon winemaker's judge themselves?

To a small extent they may be competing against themselves locally. Predominantly, however, they are competing against the world – whether aware of it or not! Challenges from competition: High quality, consistency, great value, large marketing budgets, multi-national reach, expansive and cheap land, cheap labor, large efficient production facilities.

A slice of the competition:

- Washington state: Ste. Michelle, Columbia Crest, Hogue.
- California: Take your pick among many.
- Australia: Rosemont Shiraz, Yellow Tail reds and whites.
- Chile: Montes.
- Argentina: Catena Malbec.
- France: Fat Bastard.
- Italy: Santa Margarita.
- Spain: Concha y Toro.

Value wines are less dependent upon variety than high-end. “Give me a red...or Give me a chardonnay” is common. And they're less dependent upon the region of origin. Varietals are blurred (Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio, Syrah/Shiraz). Restaurants want a Malbec, Shiraz/Syrah to pour by the glass at high profit. It's a very crowded field and getting more so.

Key challenges can also present opportunities.

Southern Oregon has many varietals (“a world of wine”) in multiple climates – which results in lack of a focused story. Promote distinct sub-AVA’s, or districts, and what grows best in each like Sonoma: Illinois Valley, Applegate Valley, Southern Rogue District, Northern Rogue District, Umpqua Valley (Northern and Southern), others to be determined. Give attention to “other” varietals besides Bordeaux that show much promise: Grenache, Dolcetto, Petite Sirah, Tempranillo, Albarino, Marsanne, Roussanne.

The Southern Oregon challenge. Increased competition from warmer climates of the world for most planted/popular varietals, than from cooler regions. Oddly, Southern Oregon growers have an advantage over Willamette Valley Pinot noir producers because of warmer climates and assured ripeness. “Value Pinot noir” used to be an oxymoron, but not any more. Few regions of the world can produce high-quality, high-value Pinot noir. There is room for major SO producers to be leaders in value-priced Oregon Pinot.

Building a baseline of fault-free, consumer-friendly wines. Quality and consistency of all wines from the region are imperative. As a producer, you generally have once shot at the consumer, so make it count. Acknowledge that:

- Poor quality hurts all in the region
- Poor packaging hurts, too
- Your package is your 24-hour salesperson
- If you shorten the learning curve, you can save pain and money
- It’s important to hire experienced help, ask questions, seek advice from peers and consultants, or take classes at UCC.

Final thoughts.

Production and growing are the easy parts – marketing and execution of sales are the difficult parts and becoming more so. Before you spend a dollar on a drop of winemaking, define your marketing/sales plan. Establish a brand identity and a strategic brand plan – and stick to it. Answer these questions: Who are you? Who do you want to be when you grow up? What are your price points? Where do you plan to sell? Who is your target market? Marketing must drive production! Marketing of value-priced, higher volume wine is more important than lower

production of high-end. Value-priced wines make more economic sense on a larger scale. Your grape purchase plan must jibe with your marketing plan. In your vineyard layout, trellising should be dictated by the marketing plan. Grow grapes in means that support the brand plan and target price points (Value: soft, forward, low tannins, juicy, easy to drink. Reserve: bigger, richer, more extracted, lower tonnage). And winemaking must jibe with the marketing overview. Wine quality must over-deliver on price, but must save pennies where possible. At the high end you can put the wine in the oak; at the value end, you put the oak in the wine. Do all you can to control costs in the winery footprint, equipment, process flow, etc. Remember, there is opportunity in every market!

Elizabeth Martin-Calder

Executive Director (past), Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance
“Walla Walla Wisdom: Years in the Making”

Martin-Calder shared a snapshot of the 200-year history of the Walla Walla area, which is steeped in history and tradition. Long known as a wheat, pea and barley producing region, Walla Walla today hosts 135 wineries, the majority of which produce 5,000 to 10,000 cases. The largest producer does 45,000 cases. Early on, Walla Walla was very lucky to have some high-visibility, flagship labels – including K Vintners, Cayuse and Leonetti.

The Wine Alliance was formed in 2001 and it built a reputation for professionalism and organizational structure. Walla Walla’s Tourism Board was established in 2005 and quickly began to collaborate with WWVWA. Visual and performing arts are a big draw to Walla Walla, as were the culinary attractions. The Alliance put a tremendous emphasis on partnering with other organizations involved with economic development, business promotion, higher education, travel/tourism, hospitality, arts and culture, and others. For a while, every event was linked with wine to the point of overkill.

The area started with some distinct disadvantages, one of the biggest of which involves a four hour car ride from any major metropolitan area (Seattle, Portland or Boise). The Alliance did a competitive analysis of other wine regions and decided that Walla Walla was in charge of its own destiny. Leaders recognized that they weren’t alone, though, and that Wine America is a big tent.

The Alliance's overarching philosophy was: "Make do with what we had, be thankful for what we had, celebrate what we had." The organization had three different winery constituencies: small (focused on direct to consumer sales), medium (had some distribution, at least regionally), and large (already in many states and perhaps exporting), and it recognized the need to provide programs that spanned the interests of all three. They did a roadshow with Walla Walla wines in 10 markets and brought top sommeliers to the Walla Walla Valley. They hosted the fundraising ENTWINE, Holiday Barrel Tastings, Spring Release Weekend, and other signature events, including the International Wine Bloggers Conference in 2010. Also, the Alliance started an active Wine Ambassador group that involved many volunteers in the wine industry.

Martin-Calder stressed the need to be nimble: what works this year may not work next year. Alliance leaders constantly asked themselves key questions: What is the common thread of the Walla Walla wine experience? Who leads the telling of our wine story? And who owns the story? Admittedly, Walla Walla had to change and adapt its story on occasion. Noted Martin-Calder: "Walla Walla is like an onion. There are many layers to it that can be revealed slowly, which keeps people engaged."

Ideas from Breakout Sessions

After the morning speaking sessions, the conference attendees moved into three separate breakout sessions with each session conducted two times to allow attendees to be participate in two different sessions. Moderators were selected to guide the conversations in these sessions but the objective was to allow a free flow of ideas around the topics and encourage vigorous discussion of the most pressing issues that are facing the Southern Oregon Wine Cluster.

Viticulture

Moderators

Greg Jones, Department of Environmental Studies, Southern Oregon University

Chris Lake, Director, Southern Oregon Wine Institute, Umpqua Community College

The two viticulture discussion sessions each had approximately 15-20 people in attendance with very good discussion covering topics ranging from general viticulture to wine quality to marketing issues.

Participants in both sessions acknowledged that the wine and grape industries in Southern Oregon continue to face many of the same critical issues that were identified at the first Wine Cluster Conference, held two years prior to this conference. We again discussed the need to market wines and grapes produced in Southern Oregon as an overriding concern for our industries. One of the participants summarized this need in the form of a question: “What is the (wine consuming) market’s perception of Southern Oregon wines?” This led to further discussion on the types of research needed to better understand the overall market perception and potential for Southern Oregon wines. Participants agreed that both local and regional general and core wine consumers need to be surveyed to gain a better picture of how the region is perceived and where work needs to be done to enhance its image.

Since many of the critical viticultural issues in this region are related to the broader marketing needs, the group explored how the marketing needs would drive potential action plans for solving these issues. Participants agreed that one of Southern Oregon’s greatest attributes - its climatic and variety diversity - is also a challenge because it hinders the region from developing a signature or flagship variety. While this presents some difficulty when crafting a marketing strategy, many of the participants echoed the message from the morning presentation by Nick Frey, President of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission, in which he told the conference that a broad and generic message of quality wine production superimposed over multiple AVAs has been proven to be a successful marketing tool.

Some discussion ensued relative to being able to “define what you want to be” before going too far down this path. Participants also discussed the utility of the Southern Oregon AVA as an overarching marketing tool versus the emphasis on individual AVAs in Southern Oregon or the subdivision of AVAs into sub-AVAs, as has recently occurred in the Willamette Valley. Many suggested action similar to that of Sonoma County in formally requiring that all wines from the region say “Southern Oregon” on the label. This led to a discussion regarding the issue that 45-55% of the grapes grown in the region end up in wines produced outside the region, often with only a generic “Oregon” on the label. Discussion centered on contracted fruit sales that might require more complete labeling of these wines as coming from Southern Oregon.

Questions were posed about efforts to discover the most appropriate varieties to plant throughout Southern Oregon. Many participants agreed that variety evaluation trials conducted by Oregon State University at the Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center (SOREC) in the early

1990's provided substantial information on the productivity of many varieties now widely planted in our region. Continued efforts by Greg Jones, Southern Oregon University, funded by the Rogue Valley Winegrower Association, the Umpqua Valley Winegrower Association and the Oregon Wine Board have provided insights into cultivar phenology and fruit composition for several important varieties in our region. This is very valuable information that is needed by growers in Southern Oregon, but all participants agreed that it is important to expand this variety evaluation effort.

Another area of discussion in our group touched upon material presented earlier in the day by Patricia Skinkis, Oregon State University. Most participants agreed that it is very important to define appropriate yield potential for vineyards in our region. Many feel that current yield restrictions incorporated in grape contracts are not economically sustainable nor do they reflect the potential for maximizing the production of sufficient quantities of ripe grapes. The need for research on defining appropriate yield goals for the varieties and vineyard sites throughout Southern Oregon is a high priority. Further discussion regarding contracts revolved around developing a better balance between the grower's limits and economic needs and those of the winemaker, all the while striving for better quality.

Additional comments included recommendations that consulting winemakers be employed to help our industries define the most important grapes and wines for production in this region. Identification of varieties that express the greatest "trueness to type" in Southern Oregon would be accelerated by employing winemakers that are experienced in producing premium wines in other wine regions and having these experts collaborate with Southern Oregon producers to explore the diversity of wines that could be successful in our region.

Another area of discussion centered on how the two regions in Southern Oregon, the Rogue and Umpqua valleys, have solid grower/producer associations, but do not regularly communicate. Suggestions included developing a "President's Council" that would include presidents from the Rogue Valley Winegrower Association, the Umpqua Valley Winegrower Association, and the Southern Oregon Winery Association. The council would look for ways in which the associations could share in hosting educational, research, and marketing events that benefit the entire region. One example given was to collaborate on bringing in speakers/consultants, producing educational events in both regions and sharing overall costs.

A summary of the notes from the session is presented below:

Notes from Session One:

1. Sub-AVA vs. Southern Oregon AVA
2. Lack of a “flagship” variety
3. Broad market research is needed to define our products, “What is the market’s perception of Southern Oregon wines?”
4. Wine quality and grape quality need to be elevated
5. Continued and further cultivar evaluation is needed
6. Research committees – more participation by industry needed
7. Regional characteristics; need definition, encourage tourism, explore cultivar adaptation
8. What identity do we want to have as a region? More wineries? Larger wineries?
9. Fixed yield-per-acre management may not be best for our region
10. 50/50 split in use of fruit from Southern Oregon; used locally vs. sold to northern wineries; grape buyers must understand our yield potential
11. Potential to increase pest pressure by shipping fruit; importation of new pests; movement (within state) of infested fruit
12. What are the key marketing questions that need answers for this region?

Notes from Session Two:

1. What is the per-acre-yield that we need to remain economically viable?
2. Do we need a flagship variety?
3. Define vine balance – be better farmers
4. Adopt cultivars that express outstanding characteristics in our region
5. Tasting panels to focus attention on wine quality
6. Bringing in winemaker experts to raise wine quality, making varietal “correct” wines
7. Defining a marketable slogan that is “unproveable”, i.e. generic
8. Increase name recognition for Southern Oregon, - conjunctive labeling, - positive identity, - from Oregon but not the Willamette
9. Bring in consultants for wineries
10. Redefine the organization of the Southern Oregon wine industry, -combined council, - representatives from all of the AVA’s, - bond with all of the affiliated industries, - find funding to support our efforts,
11. Define the region, - large varietal mix (65-72 cultivars), covers 1.9 M acres, diverse climates

Enology

Facilitators: Patricia Howe, ETS Laboratories

Dwayne Bershaw, Southern Oregon Wine Institute at UCC

“Good” Wine for Southern Oregon means:

1. Commercially acceptable
2. Fault free
 - a. Color, clarity/haze, sediment, SO₂, oxidation, aldehyde, TCA.
 - b. Some discussions about style: Brett, “too much oak”
 - c. Context: different expectations for local consumption vs in distribution?
 - d. Intensity: detectable flaws vs dominating flaws (see style, above)
3. They sell (see 1 above)
4. Varietally appropriate

Good wine: Who decides what is good? Do consumers know what a flaw is? Third party evaluations? Neutral definitions of “bad”? Is “bad” different depending on the market (i.e., local vs. distribution out of area?)

Suggestion: SOWA minimal benchmark: i.e., lack of obvious flaws (no more spoiled wines). Quality Panel? 90-point tasting panels? Code of ethics for technical tasting group? OWB quality panel? Regional members? Analytical analysis of wines? There is a SORWA group thinking about ways to approach this.

“Good” Practices for Southern Oregon

1. Wines and grapes are not over-ripe. Grapes are “pretty darn good”
2. Need to ID site qualities with wine styles; link best places to grow specific varieties and wine styles

“Bad” Practices

1. Inexperienced and new industry; not asking for help; inhibition to share info or collaborate.
2. Some winemaking problems (quality issues)
3. Still no consistent styles from various sources; need experience and time
4. Still learning sites
5. No ongoing tasting programs and technical discussions

Suggestion: SO Technical/Professional Winemaking Group *

1. share info/best practices
2. Tastings
3. No press; must have confidentiality
4. Technical presentation

*This was attempted in past; but there was some infighting/lack of leadership. One suggestion: Maybe make more informal? Perhaps a “winemaker’s open house” no host visit, taste, converse. Other points: must define attendees: no trade; no owners; no growers (focus solely on enological issues, not grower issues). Some concern over sensitivity of growers not understanding that many winemaking issues with are enological: TCA, Brett, velcorin, filtration etc. Allowed detailed technical discussions and sharing on these topics along with Varietal Workshops. Winemaking-specific topics for unknown/untested varieties; how to make some of these wines rather than “recipe” winemaking. What is varietal typicality for SO and how should these wines be made? Varietal workshops with tastings and experts (Cab, Syrah). Also, sanitation, bottling, quality processes. Who would sponsor? SOWI? SORWA? Local groups?

What do you do about bad wine: Call winemaker? Do nothing? Tell others (not the winemaker?)
How to tell colleagues they have a problem wine when the response are:

1. What problem? It sold out!
2. Winemaking is an art, I don’t do science!
3. Filtration is sin.

Suggestion: Flaw training and/or annual no press large wine evaluation meeting. Review of flaws on an industry level/ Industry tasting at Roxyann-yearly events?

From Cluster Conference I:

Equipment: General sense that there is more equipment...there is a mobile unit and a custom crush site.

Sanitation still a need.

Tech assistance has improved: SOWI/ETS and OSU James/Patty

No press seminar: there was one, plans for another...SOP tech Retreat (Gregg P, Mike Donovan, Kiley?)

Other Suggestions: More wine chemistry classes...real classes. Wine Micro classes.
Extension short courses. Continuing Ed?

Marketing/Business/Destination Tourism

Facilitators: Marilyn Hawkins, Hawkins & Company PR
Carolyn Hill, Southern Oregon Visitors Association

Recorder: Vicki Griesinger, The Griesinger Group

What are the core elements of the Southern Oregon wine brand and wine story?

Rural nature of our setting

Source of artisanal, non-corporate products

Desirable tourist destination

Limitless recreational opportunities

Still wild and scenic

Northwest cuisine is different than elsewhere in North America

Great climate: best of the Pacific Northwest, without all the rain

Uncrowded, open spaces – and lots of trees, mountains, rivers

Opportunity to actually meet the people who grew the grapes and made the wine

Many people living here chose this place on purpose, sometimes for the sole reason of growing grapes and/or making wine

Long history as a “fruit basket” growing area; still has an agrarian feel in many areas

Peter Britt was making wine here in the 1800s

Best known for warm-weather varietals

The wines are personable and easy-drinking, fruit forward and not too high in alcohol

The grapes grown here are good now and getting better every vintage

There is a reverence for the land and responsible growing practices

We can make good wine and good price points (at least as compared with some parts of California). Low or no tasting fees

Casualness of the people, the built environment, the entire lifestyle

What are the attributes of our **best** current customers?

Not a novice wine drinker, nor a know-it-all

People who like to learn more about wine and participate in education/training

Have sufficient disposable income

Appreciate uniqueness in wines and like many different types

Adventurous and willing to try something new (in wine, arts/culture, recreation, etc.)

Enjoy the experience of drinking wine and all that goes with it

Social and fond of entertaining

Personable, convivial and culturally aware

Loyal to their favorite wineries and constantly recommending them to others (they like our winery enough to join the wine club, regularly attend our events)

Arts/culture and recreational activities may get visitors to the area, then some of them want to taste wine, too

They like to be in the winery's inner circle; know the owners and the winemakers

People who are tired of the Napa experience

Enjoy introducing new, not easily obtained wines to their friends and colleagues

Some people come to the winery because they had the wine in a restaurant or wine store outside the area

Does Southern Oregon need a signature wine?

Don't have one yet, and it may be hard to agree on just one

Diversity is really a key strength, not a sign of lack of focus

Maybe take a page out of Sonoma's book and have a signature wine for each sub-AVA (the Southern Oregon 6-Pack)

Among the strong and rising stars: Merlot, Riesling, Tempranillo

What draws visitors here?

#1 tourist information request from outside the state: The Oregon coast

Crater Lake, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Rogue River are the biggest Southern Oregon draws

Decently priced, middle-market lodging here. Not many major destination resorts, though

#1 tourist activity: hiking (that may be a function of an aging population)

How can the industry work better together?

Form a Presidents' Council that brings together UVWA, RVWA, SOWA, Travel Oregon/Oregon Bounty, and other interested parties

Do a thorough, current self-assessment. Identify strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities

Devise a plan to raise sufficient resources to market the region more aggressively

- Assessments on wine and winegrapes
- Increased membership dues
- Events that make money
- Grants

Engage more with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Crater Lake Trust, Britt Festival, SOVA, Travel Oregon, etc.

What would be the best use of significant grant money, if secured?

High-visibility outdoor signage campaign: get people off I-5
 Joint promotion with hospitality and culinary venues
 Work with hospitality and airline industries on “Fly, Dine & Wine” packages
 Consumer and trade education/training on Southern Oregon wines
 Do more extensive road shows, geared mostly to trade
 Conduct a multi-media “Drink Local” campaign, as a complement to tourist promotion
 Conduct a two-pronged marketing campaign: one for tourists and one for locals
 Stage lower-cost public tastings

Possible Promotional Platforms

Four Seasons of Southern Oregon Wine (a wine quartet)
 The New Oregon Trail
 Southern Oregon: Pioneering Wines
 The Family Farm Experience
 Wine Beyond Borders
 Wine for the Adventurous
 Oregon: The Willamette....And Beyond

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