

Napa Valley Vintners Report on Harvest 2008 *Climate Discussion, Green Initiatives and Economic Study Add to Report*

October 21, 2008

San Francisco, CA-The Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) non-profit trade association representing 330 Napa Valley wineries reported on the 2008 harvest today from the Port Authority Board Room in the Ferry Plaza Building. With floor-to-ceiling windows with sweeping views from the ferry landing across the bay to the hills of the renowned Napa Valley, the vintners once again brought the Napa Valley to San Francisco.

The panel of speakers included Susan Boswell, owner of Chateau Boswell Winery; Bruce Cakebread, COO of Cakebread Cellars; Chris Howell, winemaker and general manager, Cain Vineyard and Winery; and Linda Reiff, NVV executive director.

“We have a long and wonderful relationship between the City and the Valley,” said Linda Reiff, executive director of the NVV. She continued, “Dating back to the 19th century San Francisco has been the gateway to Napa Valley winegrowing region. Back in the 1940s and 50s vintners decorated cable cars to celebrate the harvest. The San Francisco market has long been integral to the success of Napa Valley. Today that partnership is showcased on an international level; in fact in just a few weeks, we will be traveling to Cape Town, South Africa for the Great Wine Capitals annual meeting. San Francisco-Napa Valley represents the U.S. in this global coalition.”

Speaking to members of the media, Reiff presented an overview of the Napa Valley, and placed some of today’s topics into a historical perspective. Of note, she said, “December 5 will mark the 75th anniversary of the day Prohibition was repealed. Prohibition had a far-reaching effect on American wine drinking and obviously posed one of the most overwhelming obstacles to the industry in the U.S. But January 1, 1934, as wine sales became legal, a new chapter opened. California has seen wine sales grow steadily over the years as wine has been incorporated into the fabric of American culture. The U.S. is poised to soon be the largest wine-consuming economy in the world—a very different place than where we were 75 years ago.”

A Toast to America’s First Agricultural Preserve

However, the industry has had a number of challenges to overcome and so far it has done very well, not only in Napa Valley, but all over California. Forty years ago residents of Napa County established the nation’s first agricultural preserve, the Napa Valley Agricultural Preserve, which today permanently protects more than 38,000 acres of prime valley floor land. In fact the urban footprint of all the county’s municipalities was defined back in 1968. The root of our success in Napa Valley is tied to the Ag Preserve. On November 4, Napa County residents will vote again to protect ag land for another 50 years. What was once known as Measure J, appears on the local ballot as Measure P - Ag Land Preservation – which will continue to ensure the valley’s rural and agricultural nature.”

Strength in Numbers and Dollars

Reiff continued, “We have reached another important milestone in our organization, which turns 65 in 2009: we now have 330 member wineries, 38 new members this year alone—a healthy and dramatic increase from the seven founding members in 1944. The strength of the reputation of Napa’s legendary wines is strong in the marketplace. For a snapshot of Napa Valley: 95% of the wineries are family owned. 2/3 produce less than 10,000 cases and ½ produce less than 5,000 cases annually. 86% of our vintners own vineyards.”

The value of Napa Valley to the greater California wine industry is disproportional to the appellation itself. Just 4% of California’s harvest comes from the Napa Valley, yet its wines account for nearly 30% of the economic impact of the state’s industry to California’s economy and nearly 34% of the economic impact of California’s wine on the U.S. economy. In a soon-to-be-released report, the Napa Valley industry has an annual value of nearly \$11 billion on Napa County, and \$41.9 billion nationwide. The study by top industry analyst Barbara Insel of Stonebridge

Research concludes that, “While Napa Valley is uniquely suited for fine winegrowing due to its geography and climate, this value statement is also a reflection of the region’s reputation for quality and consistency...”

Climate Change is the Industry’s Top Challenge

Chris Howell, winemaker and general manager of Cain Vineyard and Winery in Napa Valley’s Spring Mountain AVA, is a leader on the NVV’s Climate Study Task Force. Howell asked and answered the question, “Why are we concerned about climate? Today climate change, and its potentially significant impact on our business, is our greatest challenge.” He continued, saying that the wine industry has overcome challenges such as Prohibition, pests and diseases like Phylloxera, land-use battles and challenging economic times like today. He offered, “The good news is that we can educate ourselves about the situation and still take action that can have a positive effect. When you’re a farmer you have to be optimistic, you’re planting a vineyard for a generation, 20, 50 or 100 year – it’s not like Wall Street, we need to be grounded in reality and need think about how to adapt.”

For the past two years, Howell and a group of vintners have been working with two of California’s top climate scientists, who were hired by the NVV to create climate models for the future specific to the Napa Valley. Dan Cayan of Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego and Kimberly Nicholas-Cahill, a doctoral fellow from Stanford University have been working to capture historical vintner and grower records to overlay onto regional climates shifts. Research to date has been very broad-stroke and specific conclusions as they relate to the varied micro-climates of the Napa Valley have not been developed and the study seeks to provide a road map to the future for the appellation.

At a recent report to the NVV members on the climate study moderated by Howell, Chris Field, founding director of the Carnegie Institution’s Department of Global Ecology, Professor of Biology and Environmental Earth Systems Science at Stanford University, and most recently co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the group that shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, said, "I am happy to see the leadership the Napa Valley Vintners have shown on this topic."

“We don’t know of any other appellation that is working on this issue in this way,” said Howell. Though studies to date show skyrocketing carbon levels world-wide since the Industrial Revolution, to date only winter overnight temperatures have risen slightly in Napa Valley. Continuing, “Our goal is to know what’s weather and what’s climate change. As the warmest years on record have provided the coolest growing seasons in Napa Valley, there is a lot we don’t know. In 2008 we don’t have to question the quality of these wines, but we have a responsibility to our industry and to the economy to do all that we can to learn what might be ahead, determine what’s mitigatable and, what adaptations need to be made to climate challenges. We will do a better job of adapting if we know what to expect”

Environmental Programs Thrive in Napa Valley

Susan Boswell, owner of St Helena’s Chateau Boswell Winery, is a strong proponent of the Napa Green Winery Program, as her winery was one of the first to be certified under this new NVV program that at this early stage already has ten certified wineries and another four pending certification. Boswell said, “We were thrilled to be part of the pilot program which has now gone valley-wide as winery production facilities seek to reduce their carbon footprints through energy reduction, water and resource recycling, pollution prevention and solid waste reduction. Green initiatives like this just make good sense economically – green business is smart business.”

Napa Green Winery is the perfect complement to Napa Green Certified Land that began in 2000 with farming and land-use plans tailored to a land owner’s unique site. The plan begins with an assessment of the entire property, not just the vineyard land, but roads, alleys, stream corridors, non-farmed and natural lands as well, to ensure that the entire property is well integrated into a cohesive land management program. Napa Green Land looks at and determines long-term plans for water run-off and erosion control, stream bank stabilization, wildlife habitat, farm chemical reduction or elimination, cover crop management and more, and meets or exceeds the standards set by more than twenty regulatory agencies, to ensure the very best practices in sustainable land and vineyard management. Currently there are nearly 25,000 acres enrolled in Napa Green Land.

Linda Reiff reported that renowned environmentalist and Patagonia® founder Yvon Chouinard said of Napa Green in an interview with *Wine Spectator*, “I’ve been at this for 30 years and this is the best, most well-thought-out program I’ve seen.”

Notes from the Field and the Cellar-Harvest 2008

Bruce Cakebread, president and COO of Cakebread Cellars, reported on the 2008 growing season, harvest and initial tastes from the cellars around Napa Valley. He said, “We experienced a crazy start to the year because of weather, which allowed a smaller than average crop to come to fruition, but valley-wide, winemakers are delighted with the results.” Many of the region’s winemakers have noted that challenging years are those that provide the purest expression of terroir in the final bottling.

Cakebread continued, “Often we have to remind ourselves what our product is, and it grounds us – it grows in dirt, comes from a vine, lives in a wooden barrel and we stick a piece of bark in the bottle as a stopper. But there are four things that make our wines the best in the world; climate, soils, our focus and diversity of varieties and our secret – our people. As part of our ‘Napa Style Statement,’ our people are dedicated to the community, its people, its resources and constantly striving to be better.” He continued by noting that in the Napa Valley appellation, there are roughly 45,000 acres under cultivation for wine grapes, yet there are at least 50,000 acres in conservation easements which makes the point of excellent land stewarding.

On the 2008 vintage he said, “What makes a vintage different or better is better decision making, we continually learn. We might harvest to conserve energy, reduce traffic and bring perfectly chilled grapes to the winery. We are all constantly striving for better quality.” He noted and his fellow panelist agreed that they feel great about what’s in the barrel and if one were to compare a vintage to 2008, it might be to 2001, or to the low-yielding 1999.

[2008 Napa Valley Harvest Report from North to South and East to West](#)

After the presentation and Q and A, the media attendees tasted a variety of 2008 Napa Valley white and red varieties in various early stages of development for a “First Taste” of vintage 08. The discussion on the wines reinforced the winemaker’s beliefs that the vintage is very well balanced, intense in color with deeply concentrated fruit flavors.

[2008 Harvest Quotes from Vintners \(pdf\)](#)

[Harvest Photo Gallery](#)

About the NVV

Now in our seventh decade, the Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) non-profit trade association is the sole organization responsible for promoting and protecting the Napa Valley appellation as a premier winegrowing region. Respect for our history reinforces our commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the Valley’s land, wine, and community for future generations. We address the shared interests of our 330 member wineries

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