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Lake County Winegrape Growers Dec 2010 eNews

Lake County Rising



The Lake County Winegrape Growers has launched a new marketing campaign. The effort is called "Lake County Rising" and is a nod to the growing reputation the region is experiencing as a world-class winegrape and wine producing area.

The campaign is designed to reach winegrape buyers, retailers, distributors, consumers and others connected to the wine industry. It seeks to inform them about the high quality and friendly price-points that the region has to offer. Additionally, it highlights the dedicated personalities behind the wine industry in Lake County. "The word is starting to get out there," said Shannon Gunier, President of the Lake County Winegrape Growers.

Lake County has deep roots in winegrape growing and making wine. The first vineyards were planted in the 1870's and internationally recognized wines were being produced by 1900. Like many regions, Prohibition stopped winegrape production and it did not reemerge in this agriculturally oriented county until the 1960's. Many of the area's growers are generational farmers whose families grew such crops as pears and walnuts before planting vineyards.



Video of Winegrape Chairman, Peter Molnar, [describing Lake County Rising](#).

Today, Lake County has over 8,400 acres producing winegrapes. "We have gone from historical to traditional to professional," notes Peter Molnar, Chair of the Winegrape Growers and himself, a vineyard manager of his family's Obsidian Ridge Vineyard found in Lake County's Red Hills AVA.

Increasingly, Lake County is gaining notoriety for the quality of the winegrapes and friendly price-points. For example, the Red Hills AVA was recently cited as one of 12 "Next Great Wine Regions" in Food & Wine Magazine. Lake County has also been featured recently in publications such as Wine Spectator and Decanter magazine.

"The Lake County Rising campaign is more about who we are than whom we are not," said Gunier. "We have always had to work hard as a region and that hard work is paying off," she continued.

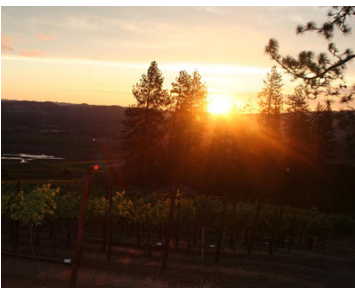
Gunier notes that while many areas are struggling with what to do in a tough economy and with higher price point bottles and winegrapes, Lake County represents a tremendous opportunity. "Our winegrapes lend themselves perfectly to programs that range from \$10 to \$40 per bottle while providing fantastic quality that will stand-up to anything out there," she says.



The region boasts excellent terroir. For example, the Mayacamas Range, sometimes referred to as the “Axis of Cab” runs through Lake County and down into Napa’s famed Cabernet Sauvignon producing area. However, the cost of land is considerably cheaper than other parts of the North Coast appellation, creating a compelling combination. Many experienced growers, such as Andy Beckstoffer and Reynaldo Robledo, who cut their teeth in other parts of the state, have seen this confluence of factors and established operations in Lake County.

The region is most recognized for its Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. But, numerous other varietals do well in the area and are on the rise such as Petite Sirah, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Zinfandel, Tempranillo, Chardonnay, and Riesling. In addition to some 145 growers, there are now 32 wineries in Lake County. Wine critics are paying attention. Lake County wines have been winning awards and receiving critical acclaim.

The region boasts some of the best air quality in the state. In addition, the majority of the vineyards are planted above 1,500 feet. This creates a higher and drier growing environment that reduces the threat of mildew and pest pressure, resulting in less pesticide use. Lake County is positioning itself as a leader in high-altitude winegrape production hosting international symposia on the topic and helping drive “The Elevation of Wine” program.



Sustainable growing efforts are also central to Lake County’s approach. Seventy percent of the county’s growers have taken part in the “Code of Sustainable Winegrape Practices Self-Assessment Workbook,” a program of the California Association of Winegrape Growers. “Currently, 5% of our vineyards are organically farmed, but we are on track to raise that level to 15% by 2013, that will make it one of the highest in the state,” said

Molnar.

Ultimately, as Gunier notes, it comes down to the people. "We have a dedicated cadre of professional growers. We work hard, we're small, we're nimble and we are coming together as a region," she said.

The Lake County Rising campaign features presentations, a new website for the Winegrape Growers (coming soon), marketing materials and messaging. For more information, visit www.lakecountywinegrape.org.



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