



# LAKE COUNTY WINEGRAPE GROWERS

Fall 2010

## got elevation?



## LAKE COUNTY

*On the elevated ridges and flanks of the Mayacamas Mountains to the west and the Vaca Range to the east, Lake County's 8,380 acres of vineyards ring one of the oldest geological lakes in North America. Under cobalt blue skies that boast the purest air in California, one hundred and forty growers cultivate vines in an astounding array of soils, from rocky volcanic highlands to mountain valleys lined with gravelly river courses.*

### **Quality & Pricing in Line with the New Wine Market**

High quality, varietally true grapes with prices targeted for \$10 to \$40 programs. Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc as well as other varietals (Chardonnay, Merlot, Petite Sirah, Syrah, Tempranillo, and Zinfandel) have gained industry recognition with multiple high scoring wines, the evolution of some 250 Lake County labeled wines, and the inclusion in a number of North Coast wine programs.

### **Compelling Terroir**

Boasting the purest air quality in California, the majority of the region's vineyards are planted at 1,500 feet and above. These upper elevations enjoy higher ultraviolet light levels, promoting phenolic intensity with balance.

### **Historical to Traditional to Professional**

The County boasts a small, experienced cadre of growers who have planted the right varietals in right locations at the industry standard. Lake County is a center of industry research on Sauvignon Blanc as well as the effects of elevation through The Elevation of Wine Symposia. ([www.elevationofwine.org](http://www.elevationofwine.org))

The Lake County Winegrape Commission integrates research and education with the UC Extension system, The California Association of Winegrape Growers, and other organizations.

### **Sustainable**

*Higher, Drier, Shorter, Colder* - Higher and drier mountains have less pest and mildew pressure. Cold winters reduce pest populations, and a shorter season requires fewer pesticide and other applications. As a result, Lake County is among the lowest pesticide use areas of any wine region in California. Lake County's Winegrowing Sustainability Coordinator tracks this measurement using the CA Pesticide Use Reports.

*Organic* - Lake County has 5% of its vineyards organically and or biodynamically farmed and is on track by 2012 to raise that level to 15%, one of the highest rates in the state.

*Sustainable Mindset* - 70% of Lake County growers have participated in the Code of Sustainable Winegrape Practices Self-Assessment Workbook (a CAWG program).

## The wines are damn good!

### **Here's what James Laube of Wine Spectator has to say ...**

"The land is ideal for wine grapes."

Lake County "is more or less an extension of Napa Valley, and of the Mayacamas mountains, but at higher elevation."

"Lake County winegrowers are paying greater attention to their vineyards, discovering that if farmed right, they can make excellent wines. It's a recipe for higher quality, lower-priced wines-the kind the market is craving."

"Lake County lacks name recognition, and its best fruit often ends up in North Coast blends ... but the wines are damn good."

*Source: Wine Spectator, June 15, 2010*

# SPOTLIGHT ON...

## SUSTAINABILITY

### Lake County Winegrape Growers Lead in Sustainability

Lake County winegrape growers are committed to sustainable farming practices that preserve the natural resource base, contribute to local communities, and remain financially sound. As leaders in the statewide program to promote sustainable winegrowing, with over 70 percent participation in workshops to assess their operations, the Lake County growers participate in a year-round education program sponsored by the Lake County Winegrape Commission.

Lake County boasts an ideal climate and altitude for sustainable winegrape production. Vineyards are found from lake level (1,370 feet) to up to about 2,600 feet. As a result, winegrapes are grown in cooler winter conditions and experience a later growing season than other grape-growing regions in the state. Summer temperatures are ideal for ripening Lake County's high quality Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc varieties, and the elevations allow rapid cooling in the evening.

In addition, few pests can tolerate the climate. Lake County does not have moth pests. Leafhoppers and mites are minor problems relative to warmer growing regions. Lake County also has no confirmed cases of Pierce's Disease. Limited rainfall, about 30 inches every year, occurs mostly during winter months and does not contribute to fungal diseases associated with the growing season.



### Sustainable Winegrowing Practices in Lake County

Lake County growers use a variety of farming practices in their sustainable winegrape growing systems. Because every site has a unique combination of soil, slope, microclimate, surrounding ecosystem, and winegrape variety, these practices differ from vineyard to vineyard.

In applying techniques that work for their winegrapes, Lake County growers take into account the soil characteristics, use of compost, manures and cover crops, application methods, integrated pest management (IPM) principles, and irrigation systems. The Lake County Winegrape Commission's education program covers the array of sustainability system topics to assist Lake County's winegrape growers in their selection of methods for use.

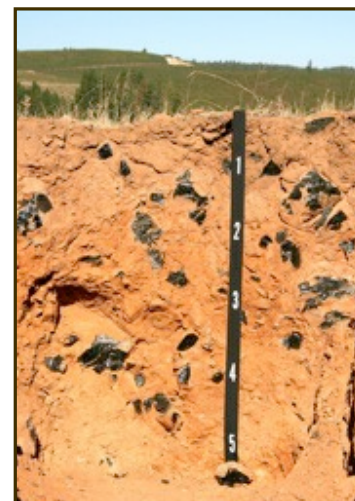
## LAKE COUNTY SOILS

In the heart of Northern California's Coastal Range, Lake County's 8,380 acres of vineyard grace the valleys, terraces and ridges of a remarkable landscape. With Clear Lake at its center, the viticultural region spans a range of terrain shaped by volcanic and tectonic forces. This unique combination of altitude, climate, and soils plus the careful selection of winegrape varieties has resulted in a nearly perfect union of site and variety. The result is an intensity of place that produces grapes and wines of compelling quality and character.

At its core, the nature of Lake County is explained by its wide spectrum of geologic formations. In places, the monumental forces of colliding continents have exposed deep ocean floor rock where serpentine is found. Those same forces have caused folding and uplift of Great Valley Sequence (characteristic of California's Central Valley), resulting in sandstone and shale. And right under these formations, volcanic processes have broken through the surface and laid down a new landscape.

The viticultural soils of Lake County can be grouped into four broad categories: hillside soils formed on volcanic materials, hillside soils formed on sandstone and shale, terrace alluvial soils, and valley alluvial soils.

Volcanic hillside soils dominate in the Red Hills Lake County and the High Valley AVAs. These soils are characteristically gravelly or rocky and very well-drained. Examples include Aiken, which formed on basalt; Arrowhead, which formed on obsidian; and Soda Bay, which formed on scoria, the porous red gravel used in landscaping. Lake County hillside volcanic soils are red, a color often associated with old, highly weathered soils. However, the Clear Lake volcanics are very recent in geologic origin. The scoria formations near High Valley and the lower arm of Clear Lake are as young as 10,000 years old.



Hillside soils formed on sandstone and shale are found on mountains thrust up from an ancient sea floor. These soils are well-drained and frequently shallow, with underlying sandstone found at a depth of 2 to 4 feet. These soils are yellowish-brown in color and well-suited to red grape varieties. Common soil types include Maymen, Mayacama, and Hopland.

Alluvial terraces formed by a combination of geologic uplift and river down-cutting, resulting in a relatively level and well-drained landscape. These terraces are found throughout Lake County, circling valleys and Clear Lake. Many of these soils have weathered to a deep reddish color, leaving a lean soil well-suited to wine growing. Some of the Lake County soils formed on alluvial terraces include Jafa, Forbesville, and Manzanita.

Mountain valleys around Clear Lake, including Big Valley, Upper Lake Valley, Clover Valley, Bachelor Valley, and Scotts Valley, are level with deep alluvial deposits. The soils often have layers with differing gravel content and amounts of sand, silt, and clay, created by the movement of stream courses in the past. Well-drained alluvial soils found in these areas include Still, and Lupoyoma loams, which produce some of Lake County's famous Sauvignon Blancs.

## THE ELEVATION OF WINE

Following on the successful Elevation of Wine Symposium in 2007, the Lake County Winegrape Commission worked closely with ASEV to put together the High Elevation/High Latitude Symposium: Wine Growing on the Edge held at the Unified Symposium in January 2010. Research and in-field experience from Europe, South America, North



America and Australia confirm that there are significant effects of elevation on wine and grape quality:

- Higher levels of UV especially over 2,000 feet
- Thicker skins resulting from the grape defending the integrity of its seed
- Higher levels of anthocyanins
- Higher levels of polyphenols
- Higher levels of resveratrol
- Higher levels of tannin and structure with lower levels of bitter monomeric tannins
- Lower levels of pyrazines, as UV breaks down pyrazines throughout the season
- Smaller berries and more open clusters
- Lower mean high temperature and higher levels of acidity and resultant structure in wine

For more information, visit [www.elevationofwine.org](http://www.elevationofwine.org)