



CSU Enology Program



Colorado State University

High Country Enology

Volume II, Issue 1

Winter 2013

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Editor's Note

High Country Enology is a quarterly newsletter, distributed first to all licensed Colorado wineries in electronic or print form, and then available for electronic download to anyone on the Western Colorado Research Center website, http://www.colostate.edu/programs/wcrc/pubs/research_outreach/outreach.htm. It is intended to provide information for the Colorado wine industry, to encompass the area of enology topics and technology, especially those that deal with wine quality and the wine business in Colorado. Suggestions for topics or upcoming events should be emailed to: stephen.menke@colostate.edu

2013 CSU Enology Outreach Program

With the cooperation of and partial funding from Colorado Association for Viticulture and Enology (CAVE), the State Enologist, Stephen Menke, will perform 36 individual comprehensive winery site visits and hold six industry workshops in 2013. To enable efficient use of travel expenses, it is desirable to schedule several site visits in an area on consecutive days. It is best if these visits are arranged within a 100 mile radius or less on each day. It is also desirable to schedule site visits to concur with the Colorado Wine Industry Road Show meetings around the state. Dr. Menke will schedule these individual site visits. Contact him at stephen.menke@colostate.edu

The first 2013 workshop is:

Sanitation Workshop and Demonstration

When: May 21, 2013, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Where: Canyon Wind Cellars, 3907 North River Road, Palisade, CO 81526

Registration: Pre-registration is \$15 for CAVE members, \$25 for non-members, and must be paid by check or cash only by May 17, 2013. Registration at door is \$40, by cash or check only. Register at **Sanitation Workshop, WCRC-CSU, 3168 B1/2 Road, Grand Junction, CO**

Agenda: TBA by April 1, contact Stephen.menke@colostate.edu

Future workshops are being prepared, including:

- **“Wine Quality Assurance Faults Training”** (TBA, probably June or July)
- **“Crush Readiness Workshop and Berry Sensory Analysis Demonstration”** (TBA, 2-consecutive days in August)
- 2 x **“New Variety Grape and Wine Workshop”** (TBA, both sides of mountains, probably November)
- 2 x **“Blending for Wine Niche Workshops** (TBA, both sides of mountains, probably November)

Please send suggestions for topics and/or presenters for additional 2013 or for 2014 Enology workshops to stephen.menke@colostate.edu
Announcements of future workshops will be sent to all wineries and to CAVE members, and published in future issues of *High Country Enology*.

2013 Colorado Wine Industry Road Show

The notice from CWIDB about the Road Show is as follows:

“As we mentioned during VinCO last month, the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board is taking the show on the road this spring:

Dr. Horst Caspari, CSU's State Viticulturist, Dr. Steve Menke, CSU's State Enologist, Kyle Schlachter, CWIDB Research and Outreach Coordinator and Social Media guru, and I will be visiting four locations this spring to meet with area winemakers, grape growers and other industry members, to talk about recent research topics, available resources and upcoming opportunities. Dr. Menke will also be available for individual winery site visits or winery startup consultations, which must be pre-scheduled for the day previous and/or day following the meeting at each regional location. To schedule an individual site visit, contact Dr. Menke at stephen.menke@colostate.edu

Some details are still in the works, but the dates are:

- Wednesday, March 20 in Paonia, Rogers Mesa Research Station, 30624 Hwy 92 in Hotchkiss.
- Monday, April 8 in Cañon City, location TBD.
- Thursday, April 25 in Denver at Metropolitan State University's Hospitality Learning Center, Speer Blvd. and Auraria Parkway, next to Springhill Suites.
- Monday, June 10 in Cortez at the Mesa Verde Welcome Center Conference Room, 928 E. Main.

Please put these dates on your calendar. We are asking the local wineries and industry members to help us recruit prospective new growers and wineries to these events, and to encourage your neighbors and colleagues to participate.

Please submit any topics you would like the four of us to cover. If you would like us to cover other topics, please submit those as soon as you can. The agenda will consist of an overview of the [Western Colorado Research Station's web site](#) as well as

www.coloradowine.com, so you can find research information and other resources more easily. Additionally:

- Horst will present an overview of the Quadrilateral pruning techniques and other cold mitigation practices that he has been working on recently
- Steve will present some of his findings from the lab analysis of Colorado flavor components
- Kyle will offer social media instruction
- Doug will talk about licensing and compliance issues.

Registration will be \$20 in advance and include lunch and break snacks, or \$30 the day of the event. On-line registration and credit card payment will be available soon. However, for the moment and especially to register for the March 20 Road Show in Paonia, please use [the registration form here](#) and send a check payable to the CWIDB for \$20.

Pre-registration is critical, as we need a minimum of 10 people in an area to do the seminar. And if we get a stronger turnout than anticipated, we may need to find a larger space. If no one expresses interest in particular field, one of the four of us may not attend that presentation. So please sign up early and send us your suggestions for topics.

Each event will start at 10 AM and run until 3 PM including a working lunch. We will endeavor to do a tasting of new or experimental wines after 3 PM and welcome you to bring innovative wines that you would like evaluated. This tasting will be set up as a roundtable, encouraging growers and winemakers to exchange ideas about new products

From the Editor (Re-printed from *Phytoworks*, Spring 2013)

A Sustainable Colorado Wine Community

What is a sustainable Colorado wine community? Sustainability and viability are current buzzwords in our culture. What do they really mean, and how are they expressed in the context of Colorado agriculture and the Colorado wine industry?

To sustain, from the Latin *sustener*, literally means to hold from underneath or to uphold. The Random House Dictionary provides several derivative meanings, including: "...to keep going, as an action or process..." and "...to provide for (an institution or the like)..." Synonyms include: "...to maintain or to nurture..."

To be viable, from the Latin *vita + haber*, literally means life having. The Random House Dictionary provides several derivative meanings, including: "...having the ability to grow or develop..." and "...practicable or workable..."

In daily use, the meanings of sustainability and viability are not so precise, and can have a lot of variability in economic, political and social applications. However, most of us might agree that a sustainable entity is socially, environmentally, and economically responsible. Many of us in agriculture might say that sustainable agriculture engages in practices that keep the environment healthy and food production economically and socially viable. Notice that in this definition, viability is part of agricultural sustainability, because the land hosts the living organisms needed for production of food and fiber and bio-energy.

So what are the things that will keep a Colorado wine community sustainable and viable? The wine industry is somewhat unique, in that the economic, environmental, and social components are tightly intertwined in ways unlike almost any other industry. So, to simplify this discourse, let us consider economic sustainability as the main variable, and assume the environmental and social components will follow.

Is the Colorado wine industry economically sustainable? It depends on your point of view. Right now, most vineyards and wineries do not independently generate enough revenue to pay for both their expenses and a living income for the owners. This deficit is covered by dependent income from other sources, either funds generated from another crop or another business or other salaries, or from 'legacy' funds that the owners previously accumulated or inherited. In many Colorado vineyard and winery enterprises, these dependency-covered deficits have occurred for many years. In most industries, these would be regarded as non-sustainable and either closed or sold. This begs the question of identity. Are these operations truly businesses, which are supposed to sustain ownership through income to live on and profits, or are they dependent hobbies of interest to the owners, but that will exist only as long as the interest and legacy money hold out? Can an industry, consisting mostly of a generational turnover of dependent hobbyists with legacy money, hope to be sustainable and grow? Who will invest the resources necessary to grow the Colorado wine industry if the industry never makes a profit?

Why is the Colorado wine industry in this position of dependent economics, leading to questionable sustainability? There are both historical and agricultural causes. Historically, most modern Colorado vineyards and wineries were started by industry pioneers, who started an industry in an unproven physical and economic location, and often with very limited practical experience in the industry, especially with regard to climate, soils, and horticultural and winemaking practices. As well, most of these industry pioneers invested and maintained their enterprises with either external income or legacy money, alleviating the pressure to have a profitable industry. However, despite economic deficits, these pioneers have had a strong commitment to the industry, and their accumulated experiences and financial investments are the basis for future sustainability, including economic, environmental, and social components. Many of these pioneers are still in the industry, but will soon turn over their enterprises to the next business generation of the industry. This turnover phase of the industry is critical to industry growth and sustainability. The emotional and financial investment of the pioneer generation in the industry must be converted to a new generation of much more economically sustainable enterprises. The alternative is stagnation and eventual decline. Also historically, wine made in Colorado faces many market barriers. The most difficult barrier is establishing a brand reputation for new products from an unknown region, within a national industry that sells highly on already established regional brands. As well, many novice winemakers took years to develop a Colorado wine brand with wines of consistent sensory quality, though most now do so very well. The effort to promote the Colorado wine brand has been largely successful in the last decade, but an increase in industry volume and product niche placements is needed for industry growth. In terms of location, most vineyards and many wineries are not near consumer population centers. This geographic barrier to distribution has been compounded by the low volumes of each

wine niche produced by each winery, making consistent supplies to larger populations, necessary for industry consumer growth, very difficult.

The main agricultural impediment to sustainability was the initial assessment that growing *Vitis vinifera* grapes in Colorado was a climatic given for the Grand Valley and West Elks AVAs. This assessment has proven to be less than dependable, even in the best locations. Unpredictable cold events in fall, winter, and spring have imposed a heavy burden on economic viability for vineyards. As well, many new growers do not have experience with this agricultural region or with horticulture, and they often repeat the mistakes of earlier novices in site selection and variety choices and in marketing to wineries. This dependence on unreliable supplies of *Vitis vinifera* grapes has also been compounded by the difficulties, both perceived and actual, of creating a market for the non-traditional flavor profiles of wines from cold-hardy hybrid grape varieties. This creation of new consumer wine niches is riskier and requires more intensive education of consumers, and thus engenders initial reluctance in winery participation.

So what are the needs and possible solutions for achieving growth and economic sustainability for the Colorado wine industry?

First, the industry needs more acreage of grapes and higher yields per acre than presently achieved. These grapes should preferably be grown in Colorado, both to maintain the Colorado brand and to be able to monitor consistent grape quality at harvest. The effects of cold events must be avoided or mitigated in these new plantings. However, most sites suitable for *Vitis vinifera* cultivars are either already planted or are in peaches or converted to housing. This means that most growth in grape supply will of necessity have to rely on either planting cold-hardy hybrid cultivars or on importing grapes from outside the state. Cold-hardy hybrids have only been grown in small experimental plantings in Colorado. Thus, a learning curve will be steep in both growing and making commercially acceptable wine from these cultivars in our locations. This learning curve must be accompanied by educational of consumers on behalf of these new cultivars.

Second, at WCRC, we have been experimentally growing a number of cold-hardy cultivars and making test wines from them for several years, as well as making blended wines from both *Vitis vinifera* cultivars and cold-hardy hybrids. We believe that these blended wines can be a great way to prepare the market for new wine niches that use these cold-hardy cultivars. Each year, we have industry workshops on cultivar performance in our test vineyard. We also taste and blend wines from these cultivars, to introduce them to the industry as possible wine components. Blind tastings, by Colorado consumers, of these cultivars and their blends have also led us to believe these cold-hardy hybrids can be incorporated into highly acceptable commercial wines.

Third, there must be more efforts to recruit investment capital for industry expansion and to promote high quality business plans for generational transfer of existing Colorado wineries and vineyards. To get this capital, we must convince investors that growth in size, market penetration, and continued wine quality can be coordinately accomplished. And we have to consider that using cold-hardy hybrids and creating a new set of consumers for wines using these cultivars may be an important part of any preferred strategy.

If cold-hardy cultivars are a necessary key to industry growth and sustainability, then we need to start soon to develop, promote, and market high quality wines from cold-hardy grapes grown in Colorado.