

Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission



AUGUST 2001

Old Vine Zinfandel Shootout

Lodi Zins Best the Competition at SWE Tasting

75 members of the Society of Wine Educators witnessed an eye-opening surprise during a wine seminar at their recent conference in Eugene, Oregon. Dubbed An Old Vine Zinfandel Shootout Lodi was the only region standing after all the tasting was done!

The seminar, conducted by Stuart Spencer and Mark Chandler, was a blind-tasting - meaning that the brand and region of production were not revealed until after the wines had been evaluated. The tasting compared 5 Lodi Zinfandels with the best Zins other districts have to offer, including Sonoma, Contra Costa, Mendocino, Amador and Paso Robles.

After each pair of wines was tasted Stuart Spencer would ask which wine the audience preferred. By a show of hands, in 4 out of 5 cases the Lodi wine was preferred by a margin of 2 or 3 to one! In one case the wines were tied.

According to Spencer Our goal was to demonstrate that Lodi Zinfandel can stand in the company of the world's best Zins. As it turned out, our wines actually stood head and shoulders above the competition. This was an audience of wine professionals and wine writers, so this is a huge accomplishment for Lodi's reputation..

Chandler observes This was a calculated risk, putting our

best against the best in the state, but we were confident in the quality of our Lodi wines, and they came out on top..

Lodi Zinfandels represented in the tasting were Jessie's Grove 1998 *Westwind Reserve*, St. Amant 1999 *Mohr-Fry Ranch Marian's Vineyard*, Ironstone Vineyards 1999 *Reserve Old Vines*, Robert Biale (Napa) 1999 *Spenker Vineyard*, and Eola Hills (Oregon) 1999 *Lodi Old Vine*. Congratulations to all! The Society of Wine Educators is a 1200-member international organization dedicated to professional development in the wine trade. The Society's annual conference draws 450 wine professionals each year to expand their knowledge of wine regions of the world. The Society became familiar with Lodi in 1998 when the conference came to Sacramento and many local wineries hosted winemaker dinners here. Mark Chandler was chairman of the Sacramento conference, and was later elected President of the Society, a role in which he continues to serve.

No doubt the triumph of this event will help Lodi's reputation for fine wine continue to grow&

Sunset Casts Friendly Glow on Lodi

Sunset Magazine is encouraging readers to sample the fun in Lodi in a feature article in its September issue, currently on newsstands throughout the country.

Sunset writer Lisa Taggart actually gathered the material for the article while attending the Lodi Wine and Visitor Center Grand Opening festivities last September.

The three-page feature focuses on the changing landscape with regard to Lodi wines and hospitality. Author Taggart points to the visitor center and the expansion of Lodi labels as a regional resurgence that is shaking up the wine world.

Local winemakers Lance Randolph of Peirano Estates and Mike Phillips of Phillips Vineyards are featured prominently. A sidebar Travel Planner story also mentions Lucas Winery, Woodbridge Winery, Wine and Roses Inn, and Café Woodbridge.

Because *Sunset* has such a large readership, this article will really draw attention to Lodi and put it on the map as a premier wine destination according to Lodi Conference and Visitor Bureau director Nancy Wilkinson.



Wine & Visitor Center Update

Positive

The Lodi Wine and Visitor Center is beginning to catch its stride as a stream of positive press begins to roll out.

The Sacramento Bee Travel Section ran a three-page feature on Lodi entitled *Lodi Uncorked* in its Sunday edition July 8. Travel editor **Janet Fullwood** had spent a weekend touring the region in early June. Her article captured the high energy of the emerging premium wine business in Lodi, and included numerous photos and a guide to local wine tasting rooms. Wine center employees reported visitors arriving with the article in hand, saying "We were going to Napa today but saw this article and thought 'Let's go winetasting in Lodi instead.' We're glad they did." Over 150 people passed through the center that day. A reprint of Fullwood's article in the **Modesto Bee** the following Sunday yielded similar results.

Napa-based wine writer **Paul Franson** has also discovered Lodi. His glowing articles about the region have run in **6 East Bay papers**, as well as the **Reno Gazette-Journal**. Franson does a wonderful job of not only describing area wineries, he also focuses on

the many visitor related activities such as bed and breakfasts inns, restaurants, Lodi Lake and even sky-diving. Visitors to the center from the East Bay express how Lodi is just as accessible as the North Coast, much less crowded and therefore more enjoyable.

More exciting new media attention is upcoming in September. **Wine Enthusiast Magazine** will be doing a feature on Lodi. West Coast Editor Steve Heimoff spent four days touring the region and loved every minute of it. Also **Shield Hood's Wine Notes** will focus on Lodi Zins in his next publication. Finally **Taster's Guild Magazine** will extol the virtues of Lodi in a cover story for its fall issue which is distributed to some 75,000 core wine consumers nationwide. Add to the mix the **Sunset Magazine** story mentioned earlier and we can expect the traffic to grow rapidly.

The constant flow of visitors at the wine center includes people from around the globe. Jim Lapsley of UC Davis brought 70 students on the European-based International Office of Vine and Wine (OIV) Short Course to tour the center on July 13. In addition, groups from Armenia and Uruguay were eager to taste Lodi wines and to learn about sustainable viticulture.

Influential policymakers are also among our recent guests. Under the auspices of the Agricultural Leadership Alumni twenty Washington DC legislative staffers and regulatory agency personnel were hosted at the center August 11-13. The visit was designed to help these agencies to appreciate the impacts of their decisions in the real world. The Lodi City Council was also on hand to extend their hospitality, and numerous local growers provided homestays for the visitors. A worthwhile network has been created.

Lastly the round of wine industry meetings hosted at the center continues to grow. All these activities at the center serve to establish Lodi as the hub of the California wine business.

New Faces at the Wine Center & Conference and Visitor Bureau

The commission wishes to welcome two new members of its full time staff.

Kelli Mettler assumes the role of Tasting Room Supervisor. Kelli is the daughter of Larry and Charlene Mettler, and is a recent graduate of Fresno State University in Agricultural Business Management and International Wine Marketing. In addition to her family's grapegrowing background, Kelli made wine at the VERC Winery on campus and brings a wealth of retail wine experience from working at Bailey Cannon Wine Merchants in Fresno during her college days. Kelli's creativity has already made great contribution to the retail operation. Welcome Kelli!

Nancy Wilkinson joins us as Executive Director of the Lodi Conference and Visitor Bureau. Nancy holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Psychology from Cal State Stanislaus. She brings a broad range of management and public relations experience to the position, and was formerly director of operations for the Modesto Chamber of Commerce. Her goals are to give the visitor bureau the visibility it needs to help make Lodi a preferred location for business and leisure travel. Welcome Nancy!

Tom Hoffman Elected Board Chair; New Budget Adopted

The LWWC newsletter is published at 2545 West Turner Rd., Lodi, CA 95242 by the Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission, Crush District 11. Phone 209.367.4727. Reproduction of any part of this newsletter must have the approval of the Winegrape Commission

Lodi Woodbridge Winegrape Commission Crush District 11

Executive Director

Mark Chandler

Program Manager E

Stuart Spencer

Research/IPM Director E

Dr. Cliff Ohmart

IPM Assistant E Lisa May

Hospitality tKara Dondero

Tasting Room t

Kelli Mettler

Receptionist tNelcy Sousa

Bookkeeper t

Renee Chappuis

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Major pieces of winegrape commission business have been conducted in recent weeks, with the new board elections and budget approval principal among them. Well-known grower **Tom Hoffman** has been elected Chairman of the winegrape commission, stepping into the shoes so capably filled by **Joe Cotta** the last two years. Tom has been on the winegrape commission board for 6 years and is active in the Lodi District Grape Growers Association.

Tom is joined by fellow officers **Bruce Fry** as Vice-Chair, **Paul Verdegaal** as Secretary and **Larry Mettler** as Treasurer. Newly elected commissioners and alternates include **Keith Watts** as a commissioner, with **Richard Lauchland** and **Gary Patterson** joining the board as alternates. The commission would like to thank retiring directors **Dale Carlson**, **Joe Cotta** and **Ernie Dosio** for their years of service on the winegrape commission board.

The Fiscal Year 2001-2002 budget reflects reduced anticipated revenues from a smaller crop and potentially lower grape prices this season. Revenues are projected at \$972,000, down from \$1,081,000 last year. The assessment rate remains the same as last year at **.45%** of gross value.

Due to the reduction in overall revenue all three major program areas - marketing, education and research were subjected to budget cuts. The most significant shift in program expenses was to reduce the national advertising campaign to help underwrite the cost of operating the Lodi Wine and Visitor Center. To a large extent the center is our advertising strategy. according to Chairman Hoffman we must continue to support it until it can be financially self-sufficient..

LWWC Education efforts get boost through Federal grant

If you've ever toyed with the thought of creating your own wine brand, the commission is here to help! Through a \$37,000 grant from the Federal State Market Improvement Program a set of classes is being designed to help growers learn more about wine production and the wine market.

Cooperators on the grant are Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and California Department of Food and Agriculture. In consultation with the winegrape commission Cal Poly will design the educational curriculum this fall and classes will run from February 19 through May 12, 2002.

Subjects to be covered during the 36 hours of instruction will include: an overview of the wine industry today, winery business and operations, custom crush vs. building a winery, developing a marketing plan, and sales and distribution strategies. The course will address three different size operations 5,500 cases, 15,000 cases and 50,000 cases consistent with the recent San Joaquin County Winery Ordinance categories.

Interested growers should contact Stuart Spencer at the winegrape commission (367-4727) to be put on the list for next spring.

Lodi Heavy with Gold at CA State Fair

Lodi area wineries large and small generated a lot of gold at the recent California State Fair wine competition.

Delicato Winery s 2000 Shiraz won Best Shiraz of California. Not bad for a \$7 wine! This follows Delicato s recent triumph at Vinexpo in Bordeaux Best USA Wine Producer! They re doing something right down there on Highway 99!

Peirano Estate - 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon was also a Gold winner, followed by two Silvers H 999 Viognier and 1999 Sauvignon Blanc. Better stop by the tasting room to stock up!

Phillips Farms ta perennial star performer! 1999 Syrah wins a Gold medal and Best Wine of Region status. 1999 Lodi White G Gold medal and Best of Class - making Don proud! Silvers for 1999 Reserve Chardonnay and 1999 Maley Zinfandel; Bronze for 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon.

Congratulations Lodi wineries Keep up the good work!

Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Location	Contact Info.
Sept. 13-16	Grape Festival &	Harvest Fair	Lodi Grape Festival Grounds
Call 369-2771	Sept. 25	2001 Wine Industry	Financial Symposium
Napa Valley Marriott,	Napa, CA	Call 707.255-9222	for registration information

*Lodi -Woodbridge Winegrape Commission
2545 West Turner Road
Lodi, CA 95242*

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