



Website Revamp Earns Rave Reviews

Where do you go to find out all you need to know about the Lodi wine region? It's www.lodiwine.com of course!

That web address may sound familiar, since it is the same site the winegrape commission has been using since its original launch back in 1997. "With the new wine and visitor center we needed a more consumer-oriented site" according to LWWC Program Director Stuart Spencer, who spearheaded the revision. "We have completely overhauled the site to make it more contemporary and to give it a more tourist and media friendly feel."

A quick perusal will prove why the site is being so well received by consumers and the press. Bright exciting graphics featuring the wine center greet the visitor on the home page. From there, half a dozen subsections are merely a mouse click away, including area maps and climate data to Lodi history and links to local wineries. The site includes a complete photo tour of the visitor center displays, exhibits and the "Wines of Lodi" tasting room.

"The new site is a virtual treasure trove" offers Spencer. "Visitors can get most of their questions answered before they leave home, and wine writers can get all the background they need for stories on Lodi before they pick up the phone."

The grower community is not ignored here either, with three sections catering to their needs; *Sustainable Viticulture*, *Grower News* and *Winegrape Commission*. Growers can read the latest newsletters online and check out upcoming events, meetings and seminars. Later this season the BIFS vineyard pest monitoring data will be available online for growers to compare their own counts.

Whether you're new to wine or an old-time Lodi grapegrower this site is both useful and entertaining. Mark it on your "favorites" menu, and send it to friends and family as a source of Lodi pride.



Lodi Wine Hits Jackpot

Want to taste the fourth highest rated wine in the world according to an international panel of wine experts? Go no farther than the Robert Biale Spenker Ranch 1999 Lodi Zinfandel! Congratulations once again to Chuck and BettyAnn Spenker, who grew the grapes for Mr. Biale.

The Wine Institute of Las Vegas sponsored the taste-off at the prestigious Bellagio Hotel in November. Forty-two top wine producers and critics from Europe and the USA evaluated 250 wines over 4 days. According to Mark Chandler, "this was the most revered panel of tasters I could imagine, and the results for Lodi were spectacular."

Garnering a score of 95.59, the Biale wine outscored dozens of venerable French wine estates and top end California Cabernets. A gondola load of well-known California Zins trailed the Biale, including Dry Creek Old Vine, Raffanelli, St. Francis, and Ferrari-Carano.



For complete details on the tasting check out winevegas.com on the web. Go Lodi!

Lodi Zins Show Well at Winter Events

The vines may be asleep but winter is full of activity on the promotional scene. Lodi wines showed extremely well at a number of recent tastings and trade shows.

To ring in the New Year on January 9th Mark Chandler conducted his popular “Zinfandel Challenge” tasting to a sell-out crowd of 75 enthusiastic sippers at the American Wine Society in Vancouver, British Columbia. Lodi Zins bested the best as Phillips, Woodbridge, St. Amant, Watts, Biale, Ravenswood and J. Lohr lined up against wines from Mendocino, Sonoma, Contra Costa and Amador. This outing proved that the Vancouver market could be rewarding to Lodi wineries wanting to venture north.

The Commonwealth Club of San Francisco enjoyed a similar Zinfandel treat on January 18th, as



Lodi conquered the City by the Bay. Here Chandler presented wines from Benson Ferry, J. Lohr, Watts, Bear Creek, Van-Ruiten-Taylor, St. Amant, Jessie’s Grove, and Phillips. The format allowed for wines to be purchased through the club, and according to organizer Tom Merle “we sold more wine at this tasting than at any of our previous events.” Bravo, Lodi!

The ever-popular Zinfandel

Advocates and Producers (ZAP) Annual Festival in late January gives Lodi wines their broadest exposure of the year. This year a new event was added on Wednesday, the first day of the festival, called “Flights of Fancy”. Six sets of wines from six different regions were presented by the wine-makers in a seminar format. Lodi vintners Clayton Russell and David Phillips, and Napa vintners Robert Biale and Larry Turley proudly showed off their 99 Lodi vintages to an adoring crowd of 150 zinners at the Copia Center in Napa. Feedback on the Lodi wines was enthusiastic. On the festival’s main day, Saturday, a record 32 Lodi Zins were tasted by the estimated 9000 zin fans in attendance at Fort Mason in San Francisco. It was a great day for both wineries and consumers.

Zinfandel’s Origins and Popularity Explored at Unified Symposium

Lodi was well represented at Sacramento’s Unified Wine and Grape Symposium on January 29th as LWWC executive Mark Chandler moderated a panel on “Zinfandel – Cult or Culture?” before an audience of 500 California growers and vintners.

At the top of the program it was revealed that after decades of speculation the origin of Zinfandel is now more history than mystery. DNA work by Dr. Carole Meredith of UC Davis proves conclusively that Zinfandel is genetically identical to Crljenak kasteljanski (pronounced tserl yen’ ak kas tel yan’ski) a grape variety from the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia. (To quell

fears of a Croatian wine invasion, this is an obscure variety and poses little threat to California Zinfandel from a production or marketing standpoint).

Panelists included wine industry icons Joel Peterson of Ravenswood Winery, Paul Draper of Ridge Vineyards, Doug Beckett of Peachy Canyon Winery and Leon Sobon of Sobon Estates. Each winemaker gave their philosophy on Zinfandel and presented two of their wines for tasting.

According to the panel, wine-makers and consumers both love the fact that Zinfandel’s heritage in California allows it to be made in the



New World style, with emphasis on the full fruit flavors, rather than the more restrained Old World style of wine-making. Its popularity will continue to grow due to its versatility in making wines that are easy to drink in their youth, to wines that are more complex and age-worthy. In either case the wines represent excellent value and will continue to be consumer favorites, a trend that bodes well for Lodi.



Vineyard Signs Proving Popular

Keep an eye out for the installation of the initial phase of 36 custom Lodi logo vineyard signs around the district. The signs are designed to help the Lodi region gain greater identity, so if you like what you see please contact us to be a part of the program. For costs and details call Stuart Spencer at the commission office (367-4727) where a sample sign is available for viewing.

“Grapes to Glass” course Generates Huge Grower Response

Forty-eight prospective Lodi grower/vintners anxious to launch their own wine brands will try it on for size over the next three months as the commission-sponsored “Grapes to Glass” wine classes begin at the Lodi Wine and Visitor Center



“We want to encourage the creation of more small wineries in the Lodi area” according to commission executive Mark Chandler “but at the same time we want to be sure people are realistic about how complicated, competitive and demanding the wine business is.”

The classes are another Lodi first in America’s wine business. They are funded by a USDA grant and were designed in cooperation with Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, incorporating the Poly “learn by doing” philosophy. Not only will students learn wine production and marketing, they will also create their own business plans by the time the course is concluded. Lectures will be conducted by a combination of Cal Poly professors and hands-on industry producers and marketers. All the classes will be videotaped for later viewing by those unable to attend.

Chandler expresses an optimistic note - “Lodi’s time has come. The commission opened the door for greater recognition, and growers are responding to the call. There are 37 bonded wineries in the appellation now, and more to come. It will be exciting to see it all unfold.”

REPORTS AND STUDIES

CRUSH REPORT SHOWS LODI VOLUME AND PRICES DOWN IN 2001

The challenging winegrape economic picture became a little clearer last week, if only in the rear view mirror. CDFA’s Final Grape Crush Report for 2001 indicated that the local grape tonnage was off some 15% from 2000, and that values were off 5%. Total tonnage was 527,404 tons (vs. 613,079) and average price paid was \$454.56 (vs. \$477.63).

Significant inventories of earlier vintages dragged down prices. Statewide Chardonnay continues to be long, and Cabernet is not far behind. Merlot, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel appear to be in better balance. As more Syrah come onstream its market softens.

Fortunately the pace of planting of all varieties has slowed until the market absorbs the huge acreage increases of recent years. On the plus side, all the positive news about moderate wine consumption and health is helping create more interest in wine. The full Crush Report is available online at www.nass.usda.gov/ca.

UPDATED COST STUDY AVAILABLE

Farm Advisor Paul Verdegaal has updated the UC Cooperative Extension publication “Sample Costs to Establish a Vineyard and Produce Winegrapes – Cabernet Sauvignon in the Lodi Appellation.” Copies are available for pickup at the Wine and Visitor Center or can be downloaded from www.agecon.ucdavis.edu, look under the “cost and return studies” section.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MKF'S GRAPE TRENDS ANNUAL FORUM

April 16 Fountaingrove Inn, Santa Rosa. Half day program includes continental breakfast. \$200 fee. Call (707) 963-9222 to register.

LWWC SPORTING CLAYS FUN SHOOT AT BIRD'S LANDING

May 9 Our 9th annual grower/winery get-together! \$65 covers course fees and steak lunch Call 367-4727 to reserve.

ZINPOSIUM 2002 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AMERICAN ZINFANDEL

June 15 Doubletree Hotel, Rohnert Park. Call ZAP for more info – (530) 274-4900.

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR ENOLOGY & VITICULTURE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June 26-28 Portland, Oregon. For more information: (530) 753-3142 or www.asev.org

UC DAVIS SHORT COURSES

Call 800-752-0881
for registration information

April 13; \$195
Introduction to Wine Analysis

April 2 – June 11; \$550
Introduction to Winemaking
for Distance Learners

April 27; \$120
Successful Small Scale
Winemaking

May 9; \$215
Vineyard Imaging Tools and
Techniques

May 4 & 5; \$475
Introduction to Sensory
Evaluation of Wine

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