



## **THE GREENING OF CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY**

### ***Regional Wine Associations Share Local Examples of Sustainable Winegrowing***

Being good stewards of the land as well as good neighbors are important business and personal values in the wine community. A healthy and beautiful environment benefits neighbors, communities and wine country visitors. Vintners and their employees benefit as well because most of them live at or near their wineries. Earth-friendly methods also produce high quality winegrapes and leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

Building on these major trends and successful regional efforts, California's vintners and winegrowers joined together in 2002 to introduce the statewide Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices – a best management practices guide and self-evaluation tool that covers all aspects of winegrape growing and winemaking. The Code includes methods for reducing water and energy use, minimizing pesticide use, building healthy soil, protecting air and water quality, recycling natural resources, maintaining surrounding habitat, providing employee education, communicating with neighbors about vineyard and winery operations, and more.

Several thousand vintners and growers have participated in educational workshops throughout the state, and more than 1,300 workshop attendees have evaluated their operations through the program to expand their sustainable winegrowing practices. The effort is the first time an entire industry sector has scientifically documented their level of sustainability. The results are published in the 2004 California Wine Community Sustainability Report at: <http://www.sustainablewinegrowing.org/reports/index.html>.

Nothing illustrates the California wine community's commitment to being a global leader in sustainability better than the many on-the-ground examples from the state's diverse winegrowing regions.

### **LAKE COUNTY**

Diverse and beautiful rural landscapes surround the Lake County winegrowers in the North Coast. The area's cool mountain climate is unfavorable to many pests and diseases that trouble other growing regions. This natural advantage has helped reinforce the commitment of winegrape growers to preserve the land and other natural resources. Lake County winegrowers were among the first to embrace the Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices when it was introduced in 2002, and over 70 percent of the growers have participated in sustainability workshops. The county's winegrowers continue to support a year-round education program to expand sustainable winegrowing and other high quality wine production methods.

Several of Lake County's wineries are building a sustainable future. Among them is **Ceago Vinegarden**, which combines biodynamic farming with ecological building to create an educational and hospitality center on the North Shore of Clear Lake. **Cougar's Leap Winery** has built its facility entirely off the power grid, using photovoltaic and ground source cooling to power the winery. **Six Sigma Winery** donated a conservation easement when it originally acquired the property and established vineyards integrated with native vegetation and wildlife corridors to preserve natural habitat for deer, bobcat, and other animals that grace the area.

## **LODI**

Wine consumers will be able to express their support of sustainability when California's first set of certified sustainable-grown wines reach the market. The "Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing" is an innovative program building upon Lodi's long-standing leadership in environmentally friendly farming. Participating growers believe the program will lead to higher quality wines from the Lodi appellation. In the first year, 2005, 1,400 acres were certified under the program. A proposed 6,200 acres will be audited in the fall of 2006. "Lodi Rules" wines will be distinguished by the red "Lodi Rules" logo on the label. Watch for these wines to reach the market soon.

## **NAPA VALLEY**

Over the past few years, Napa Valley vintners and growers have worked together to develop a voluntary program called Napa Green, which enhances the watershed and restores habitat through a comprehensive set of sustainable agriculture practices. Currently there are 17,000 acres enrolled in the program, which looks at not only vineyard or farmed land, but also the roads, buildings, stream set-backs and non-farmed land of the grower/farmer. This year the program is being expanded to develop a code of sustainable and green practices for use throughout the winemaking process. The Code will help demonstrate to regulators, distributors and consumers that certified wineries are implementing sustainable practices and protecting the environmental quality of the Napa Valley region.

There are almost 40 Napa Valley wineries, ranging from large to small vineyards, currently participating in the program, including **Beringer Vineyards, Saintsbury, Peju Province, Trinchero Family Estates** and **Larkmead Vineyards**.

## **PASO ROBLES**

Paso Robles Wine Country, located along California's Central Coast, has many leading examples of sustainable farming programs. Visitors can find certified organic vineyards at **Tablas Creek**, solar energy panels at **L'Aventure**, and use of biodiesel fuel at **Halter Ranch Vineyard**. **Pipestone Vineyards** established and manages its organic vineyards using principles of feng shui. Native grasses, wild sage and rosemary flourish between vine rows at **Adelaida Cellars**. **Robert Hall Vineyards** uses aggressive deficit irrigation practices in the vineyards to conserve water and develop concentrated flavor and color in the wines. **Five Rivers Winery** uses several environmental practices, including energy efficient tanks that handle both heating and cooling, recycled building materials and rocks from local quarries, and a night air-cooling system to minimize cooling costs. These are just a few of the methods that have become a way of life for the region's sustainable farming vision in Paso Robles.

## **SONOMA COUNTY**

Sonoma County is among the leaders in sustainable winegrowing. As a longtime agricultural region, the county has a close connection to the land and a long history of environmental stewardship. More than 250 Sonoma County wineries and grapegrowers participate in the statewide Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices, a voluntary self-assessment designed to ensure proper care of the land. Pesticide use in Sonoma County has decreased every year since 1997, while grape acreage during that period has increased by more than 50 percent! Numerous wineries, such as **Quivira, Peter Michael Winery, Davis Bynum, Moon Mountain Vineyards, Kunde Estate Winery & Vineyards** and **Benziger Family Winery**, use a combination of integrated pest management, soil and water conservation, fish-friendly farming and other environmental practices to guarantee that Sonoma County's land and vineyards will remain healthy and sustainable now and far into the future.

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