

# Trellis Wire

The Monthly Newsletter of the  
**Sierra Wine & Grape Growers Association**

February 2016



[www.sierragrap growers.org](http://www.sierragrap growers.org)

## Calendar

### February 18, 2016

Can this wine be saved or improved. Mark Foster, Nevada City Winery & Jacques Mercier, Solune Wine Growers

### February 25, 2016

BOD Meeting

### March 17, 2016

Wine Blending Basics with Rod Byers

### March 24, 2016

BOD Meeting

### Dec. 15, 2016

Holiday Party

**SWGGA Wine Pairing**  
January 21, 2016

- Wine: Tony Mello, Sauvignon Blanc  
**Caribbean Shrimp Skewers**  
...Grilled juicy citrus marinated shrimp with fresh okra
- Wine: Bob Hilsman, Chardonnay  
**Smoked Salmon Mousse**  
...Fresh baked profiteroles filled with Smoked Salmon Mousse
- Wine: Bill Betts, Barbera  
**Tomato filled Polenta Cups**  
...Polenta Cup filled with a medley of tomatoes, pesto, and fresh beef cutlet in a fresh herb polenta cup
- Wine: Guy Lauterbach, Bordeaux Blend  
**Cowboy Sushi**  
...Seared grilled tri-tip wrapped around traditional sushi rice, & seasoned soybean with a dipping sauce
- Wine: Dan Kruger, Red Blend  
**Chocolate Salami**  
...Semi-Sweet Chocolate rolled with pistachios, almonds and extra biscuits



## January 21, Wine and Food Pairing

Fifty members and guests participated in our recent wine and food pairing meeting. This event really kicked off the new year with a lot of great food and great wines and I think set a higher bar for further meetings. Not that this group isn't up for the challenge; just look to the calendar bar on your right.

Many thanks to the participants: Bob Tonnie and Donna Alarie for the wonderful foods (cowboy sushi, who would have believed it...) Bob Hilsman, Chardonnay, Double Oak Vineyard & Winery; Guy Lauterbach, Bordeaux Blend, Gray Pine Vineyard & Winery; Tony Mello, Sauvignon Blanc; Bill Betts, Barbera; Dan Kruger, Red Blend.

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## February 18 Meeting

### Can this Wine be Saved or Improved

Once again we will welcome winemakers Mark Foster of Nevada City Winery and Jacques Mercier of Solune Winegrowers.

This annual event is one of the most popular meetings that we have as it is a great learning experience for home winemakers. It is invaluable for amateurs to have their wines evaluated by pros who consistently give out constructive criticism that you can use for improving your wines.

1. No more than 2 wines may be entered from each membership.
2. Bring 2 bottles of each wine entered, so we can all taste. This is important as we all follow along with the comments from Mark and Jacques.
3. Be prepared with notes about the detail of how the wines were made ( yeasts, fermentation, chemistry, etc.).



4. Because of the volume of wines, please come early to register your entries.
5. Bring your own tasting glasses. Water and spit buckets will be provided.

Please don't think that anybody is going to laugh at you for your wine. It doesn't happen! This is a learning experience that most home winemakers will never get to participate in; please take advantage of this opportunity.

Also, please bring a wine to share for the social half hour.

### California State Fair Home Wine Competition

The California State Fair is pleased to announce that the Home Wine Competition will be held on Saturday, April 30, 2016 at CalExpo. All home winemakers in California are invited to submit their wines for judging. We are very excited to also announce that we will require only one bottle per entry again this year!

This competition recognizes California's rich history in the craft of winemaking and aims to increase the knowledge, skills and abilities of the home winemaker. In addition, it recognizes and rewards wine making talent. Wines are judged in a formal, professional manner and meaningful, actionable feedback is provided to the winemaker from multiple judges for each wine entered. Prestigious technical judges such as Darrell Corti, Scott Harvey and Brad Alderson provide expertise and insight throughout the evaluation process and participate in the Best of Show competition.

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## **California Home Wine Competition cont.**

Here are the key dates:

March 16 - April 13 - Online entries and drop offs will be open

Saturday, April 30 - State Fair Home Wine Competition

Saturday, June 26 - Awards Ceremony and Wine Tasting Reception at the State Fair Racetrack Clubhouse; All winemakers who submit entries are invited to attend with a guest – a fun party you won't want to miss!!

July 8 – 24 - Award winners displayed at the California State Fair Home Winemaking booth

Additional information, including drop off locations and a link to submit entries online, will be sent out in the weeks ahead, but we couldn't wait to get the word out and give you a chance to start planning which wines you'll be submitting.

## **Just a Friendly Reminder**

Last month all Active SWGGA Members were emailed a 2016 Dues Statement and a copy of the Membership Application with current account data.

Be sure to check the data on the application form, and let me know if there are any changes, additions or deletions to be made, particularly for phone numbers and email addresses.

And, if you haven't checked your entry on the Members List on the new website, please do so. You will notice that the street address has been removed. This action was authorized by the Board of Directors for security reasons. The website is incorporating a number of new security measure to reduce the possibility of hacking.

Please send your dues payment to the address on the statement, or bring a check to the next meeting. Thanks.

Jim Garrett\Membership Coordinator  
jim@relateddata.com

## **For Sale/Wanted**

For Sale: Six used neutral oak barrels. \$70.00 ea. Well cared for. Washed, sanitized and ready for your wine. Contact Guy Lauterbach [rguyl@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rguyl@sbcglobal.net) or 530-432 2907

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## Member Spotlight

*Editors note: This is where we spotlight members so that we can all get to know one another. If you are interested in being spotlighted let me know. Or, I will ask **you!***

### John Lyon and Linda Foreman

John and Linda met each other several years ago in a church choir in Pacifica, south of San Francisco. Their second date was a walk on the beach, where John pulled from a backpack a split of Gloria Ferrer chardonnay and wine glasses. Their mutual interest in wine was confirmed, and finally just this Christmas John proposed.

In 2012 they found a 10-acre ranch south of Grass Valley down McCourtney Road, and settled here with two horses.

Their introduction to SWGGA was via a friend of their real estate agent, Laura Berman. Seemed like many of the nice folks in SWGGA grew grapes, so John took a Sierra College extension class in setting up a vineyard. John presented the vineyard setup cost analysis to Linda, and that resulted in “Whoa.” Hey, our priority here is hay!

John eagerly participated in the 2014 SWGGA group zinfandel vinification project and proudly

showed his two 30-gallon Rubbermaid Brute fermenters and newly-developed punch-down technique to friends Bob and Donna, who happen to be featured in last month’s Trellis Wire. John chuckles at being called Bob and Donna’s “wine coach.”



With a love of chemistry laboratories and a Master’s degree in organic chemistry, John leaned towards the lab analysis side of winemaking, and took a course in Wine Analysis at UC Davis. Linda tolerated carboys taking over her laundry room, and for a while it was John’s new home wine lab.

Disharmony in the laundry room, and a perceived need from other home winemakers led John to find a place for his lab where he could offer wine lab analysis services to others. He convinced Anthony Schoensee, new co-owner of our venerable local beer and winemaking supply shop Sierra Moonshine, to allow him to set up in a back corner of the shop. He has been helping out home winemakers including SWGGA members with some of the basic tests, pH, T.A., free and total SO<sub>2</sub> by aeration/oxidation, acidity adjustments and ML fermentation monitoring.

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From humble beginnings John is adding new testing capability including Alcohol by Volume (distillation/hydrometry), and has just started servicing small local commercial wineries. Volatile Acidity by Cash Still is next, and Yeast Available Nitrogen (NOPA spectrophotometric method) is planned for the summer. "I'm starting up with traditional wet chemical methods rather than the newer automated 'analyzers.' For example, SO<sub>2</sub> by aeration/oxidation using the R&D Glass apparatus is considered the ultimate go-to test method, where there might be doubts about Ripper-based techniques. These methods however require time, skill and technique. "I'm glad to be able to put my chemistry background to use to make this type of testing service available in Nevada County."

If asked about Bob and Donna's second vintage as mentioned in the January Trellis Wire, John will proudly draw a sample of 2015 zinfandel from one of the 100-liter tanks. "We were very lucky to get these grapes from Gary DeRivi's vineyard in the far southwest corner of the county. I believe it's all due to Donna's great picking."

John very much appreciates all the help getting started in winemaking from SWGGA members.

Meanwhile, Linda is back at the new ranch, enjoying her laundry room, keeping a close eye on the remaining eight carboys to make sure they stay tucked back in the corner out of the way ...

So, next time you see John and Linda at a meeting, just say hello!

## **Welcome New Members**

Randall and Blair Newsome, Nevada City

Randy is a retired bankruptcy judge. He and Blair moved up here a few years ago. He is a very serious red wine drinker, with a fairly extensive wine cellar, especially French burgundies and Rhones. Blair is a delightful person, who still works in finance, so they are not here full time yet.

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## **Nevada County Grape Growing & Wine Making in 1867, yes, 1867!**

*(Thanks to Bernie Zimmerman and the Historical Society; Beans History of Nevada County, 1867)*

One of the most important of the industrial interests of our county is raising grapes and making wines. I rank it among the most prominent branches of industry, not because of the amount of capital invested or the number of men employed in the business, but because the experiments made have proven conclusively that grapes can be grown successfully on thousands of unoccupied acres that now invite the labors of the culturist, and that wines of a noble quality can be produced, equaling the best table wines of foreign lands. It is an important interest because the field is so large and the inducements so great; the kinds of wines which the soil and climate are adapted to produce being such that no other parts of the State can compete with them in the market.

But, the business of wine making in our county is yet in its infancy. Four years ago probably not a barrel of wine was produced in the county. The Assessor's Report of 1866, a paper gotten up with more accurate data than any of its predecessors, gives the number of vines in the county at 124,000, and the number of gallons of wine produced that year 10,000. The tax upon wines has decreased their production, besides giving a motive to the producers for not reporting to the Assessor all they have made. It is thought by men conversant with the subject that at least 20,000 gallons of wine were made in the county last year.

Since it has been demonstrated that wines of good quality can be made in the mountains of the county, an interest has been awakened in the business of vine planting, and ere long the Assessor will report a million vines instead of the number given in his communication of last year to the Surveyor General. All that is required is the planting of the right kinds of grapes upon the proper soil for them, and crops will come that would astonish any country in Europe. Four tons on an acre of vines five years old is not an uncommon yield. And grapes are produced here with far less expense than in the best grape growing regions of France and Italy. The land can be had for nothing, and the country being the home of the grape no extreme artificial system is needed calling for constant labor to mature a crop. Land being plenty, the vines can be planted far enough apart for horse cultivation, and the soil being dry in the Summer no exertion is required to keep down weeds as in countries having a moister climate. The vines need irrigation the first year, but after that on most soils they will take care of themselves. It has been found that working the ground in Summer with a plow or cultivator renders it moist and supersedes irrigation in many localities.

The vineyards of the county are yet small. Probably there is not one of more than 10,000 vines. Generally they are but experimental patches of from one to three thousand vines. The French have tried the cultivation of the grape about French Corral, and with good success. Their wines of last year's vintage, are already disposed of and at fair rates. Mr. Ponce has 4,000 bearing vines; Mr. H. Poulinier 3,000; Mr. Monier 2,500, and Mr. Freschot 1,500, at that place. The wine produced was a sort of claret, 2,000 gallons of which found a ready market. The grape cultivated is the Mission and Black Hamburg. General Evens has 3,500 vines of the Mission variety at Sweetland, and Mr. Strahline 1,100, of the same sort. Eight hundred gallons of white wine were produced from these vines.

At North San Juan, Louis Buhring, to whom I am greatly indebted for information concerning the grape culture and wise making in Bridgeport township, and who is a successful experimentalist in the business, has 2,000 vines—half Mission, and the other half of Hamburg, Catawba and white Muscat of Alexandria. George D. Dornin has 1,000 vines, and P. Bush 500. Buhring has made several varieties of wine, some of which I have sampled, that promise well. The grape in that section of the county develops a great deal of saccharine matter, which by fermentation is transformed into alcohol. The wines are, therefore, of considerable strength—too much, perhaps, for table wines. However, the introduction of grapes of other varieties may enable that part of the county to produce the light wines for dinner use, which is the great desideratum, since Los Angeles can produce the strong wines in excess, and the counties north of the Bay of San Francisco, the Hocks and sparkling kinds.

At Nevada, Josiah Rogers has 10,000 vines, mostly of the Los Angeles or Mission variety. His is probably the

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largest bearing vineyard in the county. R. R. Craig has 5,000 vines, of many varieties, but mostly Mission. Mr. Seibert has a vineyard of 2,000 vines, of forty varieties. E. G. Waite has a thousand vines, all foreign, with the exception, of a few Catawbas and Isabellas. The wines produced by Craig have been sold at two dollars per gallon by the cask. Seibert's wines are sold readily at fine prices; his brandy has, also, commanded a ready sale. He has attempted several, varieties of wine, and generally with good success. Good judges pronounce some of his wines equal to any produced on the coast. Waite has made wine which is said to be the only approach to a good article of French claret yet produced in the State. The late Wilson Flint, whose judgment in such matters will not be disputed, said it was the best wine of its age he ever sampled. [This is not an advertisement; there is not a bottle of it left for sale.] It sold readily at good prices, and gave universal satisfaction. All the wines above mentioned have been thrown into market young, but such is their character that it is confidently predicted they will develop splendidly.

P. Bergantz has a vineyard of 3,500 Mission grapes, three miles below Grass Valley, which yields a white wine unlike any I have tested that came from that variety of grape. It resembles some of the Rhine wines strongly. The yield for 1866 was 1,800 gallons. This wine seems to be a favorite with many persons of various nationalities.

There are quite a number of vineyards in Grass Valley township and, also, several in the vicinity of the Anthony House, in Rough and Ready township, which produce wines; but we have no knowledge of their quality or character. The grape culture has begun in Little York township. The few vines in bearing in that part of the county are said to give promise of good results from enterprises on a larger scale. Vines are also grown in small numbers, by way of experiment, in Bloomfield and .Washington townships. The hardier sorts will flourish in those sections of the county.

Probably, estimating the quantity of land in Nevada county at the lowest figure, there are not less than sixty thousand acres, about one-twelfth of the whole surface, capable of producing grapes, for the market, for wine, for brandy and for raisins. The soil fit for the growth of the grape is of volcanic ash or sedimentary lava, or is of decomposed granite, enriched with the potash and soda set free by the decomposition of feldspar, and impregnated with oxide of iron. The tops of the ridges coming down from the high Sierra is of the volcanic character, pretty generally, and the volcanic materials have been washed down and mixed with the soil of granitic origin in some localities, forming a combination favorable for grape cultivation. But the soils of granitic or volcanic origin, are not objectionable to the vine grower. Of ground proper for grape cultivation, the county is not deficient.

It has been demonstrated that in a climate where the grape grows so naturally, the highly artificial system, of pruning and training vines which is in vogue in some parts of Europe, will not do. In a country of cloudy skies, and where the high price of land induces the crowding of as many vines as possible upon an acre; there must be considerable Summer pruning required to give the grape the requisite amount of heat and light from the sun. But, under our brazen skies, that labor had better be spared. There are none too many lungs to the vine to condense moisture and gather from the atmosphere the elements to perfect the Fruit. The more foliage the better, provided it be not so dense as to prevent the free circulation of air among the vines and around the fruit. The grapes grown upon vines let alone by the pruner during the Summer, have been found to be the largest and best, and the more lungs to the plant the greater its capacity to bring to perfection a large crop. After the vines have been cut back, the "let alone" practice is best, till the cutting back process is again required for another year.

The theory of low pruning will not do for all localities. If the vineyard has a northern exposure and the soil retains moisture, the clusters of grapes near the ground and subject to its humid influence, after the rains in the Autumn, will be liable to mold and rot, while those on the same vine higher up exposed to the warm currents of air, will soon dry and remain sound. The practice of heading the vine low in vineyards with northern exposures is therefore pernicious, particularly when the clusters of grapes 'are large and compact. Small or open clusters may dry when near the damp ground, but large and close ones may not.

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The French and Germans have brought with them from the vineyards of Europe the mode of pruning the vine very short, that is, leaving but few spurs of two or three buds each. I think my experiments demonstrate that a vine in California should not be pruned as closely as in Europe, and should be treated according to its vigor, age and variety. To cut back a vine without reference to its strength and its variety is absurd. Why should not an Isabella five years old produce as many pounds of grapes as a Black Hamburg, both being of equal vigor and the same age? Yet if both be pruned alike, they will produce about an equal number of clusters. But the Hamburg, with its large bunches, will either overbear or the Isabella, with its small ones, will not bear according to its capacity.

Our vines are so thrifty in California that the short pruning system is destructive. If too few buds are left there is not room for the ascending sap in the Spring, and it breaks out along the body of the vine, destroying its vitality. Better leave more wood and cut away a portion of the incipient clusters of grapes afterward, than ruin the vines with short pruning.

In the way of wine making, there is little new to be said. Most of the white wine of the country is made as near as possible after the process of making cider in the older States of the Union. Ked wine is made from fermenting the pulp of mashed grapes. The color comes from the skins. Sometimes the pulp is partly fermented when the wine is pressed out and finishes its fermentation in a clean cask. Sweet wine is made by boiling the must to one-half its original quantity, and afterward treating it as white wine. I have adopted the mode of fermenting wine by the use of iron tubes, like a syphon. One end is inserted in the barrel of must; the other in a bucket of water. Fermentation is by this mode retarded, and compensation is found for the deep, cool cellars of Europe.

But, I am not writing a guide to vine growers and wine makers. The object of the above observations is, to notice some facts which experiments have shown to be useful in this region in connection with a few others which are known but which could not well be passed in silence.

I cannot well express in language the prospect I see spread put in the future—a county teeming with agricultural life; hillsides clothed in vineyards opulent with purple clusters; happy, vine-embowered homes and the joys of the vintage; leaping rivulets of wine and cellars stored with liquid ingots, more valuable to the nation than mines of gold, because the source is inexhaustible and perpetual. This is the aspect of our county to be. It is not a vision, but a coming reality. The time is not far distant when as a people we shall look no longer to France, Spain and Italy for our wines, and silks, and raisins, and figs, and olives, but will resort to Hesperian gardens for them all, and Nevada will supply the American Chambertins, Burgundys and clarets for American palates and American commerce.

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# Sierra Wine & Grape Growers Association

## SWGGA Shirts Will be Available at Monthly Meetings

Tony Mello, Outreach Coordinator, will have a few shirts on display and for sale at the monthly meetings. The current inventory is somewhat limited in sizes but he can get you what you need. Get in touch with Tony if you want to place an order or have questions: [tonymello49@gmail.com](mailto:tonymello49@gmail.com)



Ladies Denim shirt has no pocket and comes in short or long sleeve, a variety of sizes, 100% cotton and preshrunk.

\$35.00 ea.



Men's Denim shirt has a pocket, available in short or long sleeve, a variety of sizes, 100% cotton and preshrunk.

\$35.00 ea.

## SWGGA Logo Wine Glasses Are Again Available

Tony now has a good stock of the glasses and they will be on display at our monthly meetings.

\$3.00 ea.



### Commercial Members

**Besemer Cellars**

**Clavey Vineyards**

**Coufos Cellars**

**Double Oak Vineyard & Winery**

**Gray Pine Winery**

**Lucero Vineyard & Winery**

**Solune Winegrowers**

### Please support our Commercial SWGGA Wineries

Our commercial members support us with their generosity of their time and knowledge and we would like to support them as well.

Buy some wine and ensure your friends do the same!

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# Sierra Wine & Grape Growers Association

## SWGGA Notices and Information

### SWGGA Officers and Board Members

President: Bernie Zimmerman  
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### Please Note:

Unless specified otherwise, Member Meetings are held on the **Third Thursday** of the month at:

**Ponderosa Hall**

**Gate 2**

**Nevada County Fairgrounds**

**7:00 PM**

Board of Director Meetings: All members are welcome to attend the BOD meetings. If you wish to attend, please inform one of the officers or directors at least two days prior to a meeting so the host can prepare for the number of attendees as there is usually a dinner prior to the meeting.

Check your profile on the web site to see if the data is correct. Go to the SWGGA site at: **sierragrapegrowers.org**. If a change is needed contact Grace Zimmerman as she can make corrections.  
gracesuarez@me.com

If your spouse or significant other wants to be included on the email list, please send a request with the details to Membership Coordinator Jim Garrett:  
Jim@relateddata.com

### Mailing Address:

SWGGA  
P. O. Box 1264  
Grass Valley, CA 95945

### Speaker Topics:

Please don't hesitate to communicate your ideas on what subjects or speakers that you feel SWGGA needs to cover. Your comments are welcome.

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