

A Message From President Diane Houston



We Need You Board Elections at the November 9th meeting and other ways to get involved.

In 2023, the Board had only seven directors, down two from the nine we've had for many years. We've been notified that one of our current directors will not be running again. Frankly, we need Board members; we'll be down to six if no

one volunteers so we're asking you to consider serving on the Board. The time commitment is not excessive; the Board meets monthly along with helping on SWGGA activities. All you need is a desire to serve the organization. For organizations to remain vital it requires members to get involved.

Even if a Board position is not for you, we need volunteers and committee people to help with the Summer Picnic, Holiday Party, and any other activities SWGGA members have come to rely on. Most immediately, we are looking for people to pitch in to help with the Holiday Party; contact Al Schafer on that one.

Should you have an interest or a question, please don't hesitate to reach out to whomever seems appropriate. All the current Board's e-mails are on the last page of the Trellis Wire. Now is the time to be thinking if, and how you might like to get more involved. Please think about it.

Budget Challenges

We have maintained our annual dues at \$50 per year for a long time and it is no longer enough to meet the needs of the organization. The Scholarship Fund is doing well due to everyone's generosity, but that has nothing to do with our annual operating budget. Historically, our big costs are renting Ponderosa Hall, our

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Events Calendar

October Meeting
Thurs., October 19th, 6:30 p.m.

**Field Trip To
Coufos Vineyards**

November Meeting
Ponderosa Hall

Thurs., November 9th, 6:30 p.m.
**This is a date change as well. This is
the second Thursday of the month.**

The Annual Business Meeting and
Election of the Board of Directors.

Special Wine Tasting

A study in oak. Seven different oak
treatments, all with the same wine.

You figure it out.

December Meeting
The Holiday Party
Thursday, December 14th,
Ponderosa Hall

We are in the very beginning planning
stages. Anyone interested in volunteering
to help with the Holiday Party please
reach out to Al Schafer at
afsarch@sbcglobal.net

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insurance premium, the Summer Picnic, and the December Holiday Party.

For the last several years SWGGA has subsidized the costs of the picnic and December party. Last year the charge to attend the Holiday Party was \$25 per person while the actual costs were \$53 per person. We do not have the funds to continue subsidizing the event, so this year the cost of your ticket must reflect the actual cost of the event. If we do something like last year, we're looking at about \$50-\$60 per person to attend. We are trying hard to keep costs in check, but rising costs have hit SWGGA too, and we wanted to share our financial reality with you.

As you can guess, we will likely need to increase the annual dues as well.

On a positive note, we're excited about our last-minute opportunity to hold our October meeting at Coufos Vineyards in Rough and Ready, thanks to the generosity of Janet Wheeling, owner of the vineyard. Not only will we be able to catch up on Janet's vineyard news, the floor will be open to everyone who wants to share their vineyard or winemaking tales from this year.

See everyone on the 19th, Cheers, Diane

October Meeting A Field Trip to Coufos Vineyard

Thursday, October 19th, 6:30 p.m. 10065 Rough & Ready Road, Rough & Ready

Here's a big thanks to returning SWGGA member Janet Wheeling who has graciously offered us a perfect indoor space at her vineyard for our October meeting. If you have never been there it is one of the most picturesque vineyards you will ever see, perched in a natural amphitheater at the intersection of Rough and Ready Road and Rough and Ready Highway.

Janet and her longtime vineyard manager Eduardo Tinoco will be our hosts. We will get an update on the vineyard and hear about what Janet and Eduardo have been doing with the grapes since Coufos Cellars closed. In addition to that we will open the floor to anyone who wants to share their harvest and winemaking tales from this year.

The Social Hour will start as usual at 6:30 and then roll into the meeting. Please bring wine to share and of course a wine glass. If you would like to bring a food tidbit or dessert to share, that would be lovely.



SWGGA Club News

General Meeting Thursday, November 9th, 6:30 p.m.

Our SWGGA bylaws require an annual Board of Directors election that takes place at the November meeting every year.

This is a notice, per the SWGGA Bylaws, to inform you that we will elect officers, directors and coordinators to serve in 2024 at the General Meeting on November 9, 2023. Here is the proposed slate as it now stands. Nominations from the floor will be gladly accepted at the meeting. Now is the time to get involved.

President:	Diane Houston
Vice-President:	Dave Elliott
Treasurer & Membership Co-ordinator:	Bob Hudelson
Secretary:	Susan Clarabut
Director: Social Co-ordinator	Al Schafer
Director: Program Co-ordinator	Rod Byers
<i>Director: Communications</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
<i>Director: At Large</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
<i>Director: At Large</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
Web Master: Jim Garrett	
Trellis Wire Editor: Rod Byers	

A Study In Oak Thursday, November 9th

To oak, or not to oak? Every winemaker knows that oak has a huge impact on the flavor of a wine. The question often revolves around how much. How much is enough? How much is too much? During the second half of the November meeting we will ask, which kind of oak?

Dave Elliott will provide us with a unique opportunity to taste seven different samples of oaks including different toast levels of American, French, and Hungarian oak.

That is pretty cool all by itself. What will make this tasting really unique is that each of the individual oak samples will all use the same base wine.

Oak effects different wines differently so any tasting that uses different wines for the oak samples does not show a true comparison of how each different oak might effect the final outcome. Here you will get to see seven different oak treatments all done with the same wine. If you are feeling really nerdy consider bringing seven different glasses.





In Case You Missed It, by *Bernie Zimmerman* Last Month's Meeting at Montoliva

A delightful late summer evening found about 30 of us gathered at Montoliva Winery to enjoy wine and food. Mark Henry, our very entertaining host, began with a brief story of his journey in 1999 from Seattle, where he was a brewer, to California in search of the perfect spot to plant Italian grape varietals. On day seven of his journey, he was driving up Highway 174 and stopped at the Happy Apple kitchen to discover that Chicago Park was a historic agricultural community, including Italian pioneering families growing grapes. This is the spot, he concluded, he bought some land and in 2000 began planting. He grows 14 Italian varietals, many of them obscure and rarely found in the United States. He produces about 1500 cases a year. He poured Falanghina, Sangiovese, Aglianico & Teroldego. A vineyard tour followed the first two tastings. Pizza, salad and dessert followed the last two tastings and we all enjoyed the Montoliva wines we bought for our meal. Great event. *Photos by Grace Suarez & Bernie Zimmerman.*





Bernie's 2023 Pinot Grigio harvest. Four pounds of grapes. One bottle of wine. Ready next April.

Small Batch Winemaking

My ears perked up when I heard Bernie Zimmerman mention his entire harvest was 46 pounds. 40 pounds of Zinfandel. Two pounds of Nebbiolo. Four pounds of Pinot Grigio.

I could not help but wonder. What is it like to make one bottle of wine?

There is an overwhelming tendency in winemaking to make more. You had a certain amount in mind, but you are almost at the end of the row. Just pick it. Or someone offers grapes for free. You were not planning to but why not? Or you have always wanted to make a certain varietal and now, all of a sudden, you have a source. It is easy to produce more wine than you intended.

Winemaking has a lot to do with capacity. To fill a full size barrel you will need 1100 pounds of grapes. At least 500 pounds to fill a 30-gallon barrel.

Typically 100 pounds of grapes is the smallest amount suggested as a small batch. That is enough to make five gallons of wine, including a little bit extra for topping over the period of production, resulting in 25 actual bottles.

What if your red grape harvest is 42 pounds? So I asked Bernie. What then?

“Picking is picking. One pound or one ton. It’s all the same. One just takes longer than the other.” It’s only when the grapes hit the winery floor that small quantities start to make a difference in production techniques. For example, there is no point in even setting up a crusher/destemmer for a really small quantity of grapes. “It takes longer to clean it than it does to run forty pounds of grapes through it. I de-stem by hand. If the quantities are really small I use a potato masher to crush the grapes.” As silly as it may sound, feet are also a really good way to crush small amounts of grapes. Put the grapes in a five-gallon bucket using one foot to squish them. It feels kind of good and is very effective. It does make a mess if you try to walk anywhere.



Small fermentation vessels and a potato masher to crush the grapes. Presses need to be small as well.

Forty pounds of grapes makes about two and a half gallons of wine. Bernie uses a variety of different size containers for the fermentation, anything from a large soup pot to small plastic buckets. But it is after fermentation when small batches get tricky.

“Pressing small quantities of grapes can be problematic. I have two basket presses. One is small. The other is even smaller and sometimes it is too big.” If Bernie is dealing with a really small amount of grapes, like four pounds of Pinot Grigio, he will load the grapes into a mesh fruit bag and twist and squeeze it to get the juice. If he has enough grapes he will use the small press but then you still have to clean it for 10 minutes work.

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42 pounds of grapes after fermentation & pressing

One of the first things you learn in small batch winemaking is you cannot afford to waste or lose a drop. You need each and every one. When syphoning small amounts of wine you need to use really small tubes otherwise you either leave too much wine behind trying to be too careful or you suck up too much of the lees because it goes so fast.

“Sometimes I use a paint strainer for racking, to separate out the gross lees and sediment. I just pour the wine through the strainer.”

As every winemaker knows, once fermentation is complete your containers need to be full. Air is still the enemy. With small batch winemaking you need a really big selection of really small bottles. “Topping off wines is a problem. I have a good selection of one to four-liter size bottles. If I don’t have enough wine to fill one size, I have to go down to the next smaller size. Once I fill the appropriate size bottle I still have a small amount of wine left over so I have a collection of two-ounce, four-ounce, really every ounce size of bottles. I can’t afford to throw anything out because I am going to need it later for topping. I need exactly the right size tiny bottle to capture every drop.”



Another area of concern is whenever you are using additives, for example, adding tartaric acid to bump the acidity. “Standard measurements are much harder to apply in small quantities. Just doing the math and scaling to the appropriate amount doesn’t always work. Recommended quantities do not necessarily translate in small quantities. I have learned to do the math and then use a quarter of the recommended amount. I try that and see if I get the results I want. I can always add more later but it is a problem if I have added too much. The same is true for oak. I carefully add chips to my containers, what ever size they end up being.”

When it is all said and done, Bernie will end up with one bottle of Pinot Grigio that will be ready next spring and perhaps a dozen or so bottles of Zinfandel that will be ready in 18 to 24 months after harvest.



“After bottling I wait a month and then try a bottle. If I like it I start drinking it. If not I wait another month and then try another bottle.”

Small batch winemaking is sometimes more about counting clusters of grapes than even pounds of grapes. There is of course quite a bit of variation in the size of clusters and in the juice to skin ratio. However an approximate rule of thumb tells us there are about 80 grapes in a glass of wine and 400 grapes in each bottle. That would put Bernie’s harvest at about 5500 grapes. Doesn’t sound as small when you put it that way.



Lisa Whittet crushing it with Cabernet from Peterson's Rocky Ridge Vineyard.

We will continue this conversation at our next meeting at Coufos Vineyard.

Tales From The Crush Pad

It was apparent, as we neared the end of September, that harvest was going to be later than usual. I started reaching out to a few of our winegrower members to try to get a sense of what was going on. In their own words, here are some of the answers I received.

Peter Willcox, September 28th. "Our Russian River grapes are running late. They say two weeks, but it may be more. So we have received nothing, but we did harvest Sauvignon Blanc and Albariño from Ray Frescas' vineyard. That wine is nearing the end of fermentation. The story is yet to play out for the Russian River guys. We certainly hope we get grapes."

Bill Betts, September 30th. Applegate. "Harvested my Zin and Primitivo last Sunday and I'm harvesting my Petite Sirah this morning at 9am. We harvested my friend's Petite Sirah last Saturday. We picked up Barbera on Thursday from Pilot Hill in El Dorado County. Everything is late this year, especially the Barbera. All of the fruit looks great. My grapes are as good as I've had. Everything seems to be coming in at 26 brix."

Janet Wheeling, October 1st. Rough & Ready. "My harvests got pushed out another two weekends."

Mark Henry October 1st. Chicago Park. "Just wrapped up doing aerated pump-overs on the Barbera, Aglianico and Nero d'Avola. Regarding rain yesterday . . . jury is still out. It was not good, however, I am going to reserve judgement. I just don't know. I'd feel better about it if the sun was shining today with a light breeze, but that hasn't happened. We are supposed to see temperatures in the mid-80s by mid-week. Is that soon enough to prevent bunch rot? Another factor is tightness of cluster. Chard is really susceptible to bunch rot because it is such a tight clustered varietal, along with being thin skinned. My Sangio is thin skinned, but fairly loose clustered. The Montepulciano is thick skinned, but tight clustered, like Chard. I will know for sure by late this upcoming week whether I dodged it, or am busted."

Phil Starr October 1st. Grass Valley. "This time my rain gauge was not out so I don't know exactly but am guessing about 4/10 of an inch. The old rule of thumb is worry if it's a half inch or more. What concerns me is that today, the day after the rain, was crappy. Cold, cloudy, and not much drying wind. Bunch rot is not a, rain-today-see-problems-tomorrow, thing. It takes some time which is weather/temperature dependent. My guess at this point is we might see a bit of rot in some of the Zinfandel but I just don't think it will be much of an issue. We don't starve the vines of water so the grape splitting that can occur when dry vines get a surge of water is unlikely. I guess the few days of cool weather will slow ripening a bit. I think we have another three, maybe four, weeks to completion."



Harvesting and crushing Dave Elliott's grapes on September 10th. Sometimes you do things when you have to, not necessarily when you want to.

Diane Houston October 2nd. Chicago Park. “In a nutshell, this vintage has been very interesting; unlike any year I’ve seen. Overall: delayed, abundant, but uneven ripening and more wimpy clusters. Brix has been slow to move, and we’ve had to navigate rain events. I reviewed my records back to 2013 and this will be the latest Cabernet Sauvignon harvest date in ten years. Due to last year’s freeze wipeout, excited to have a more “normal” year. But, since Cabernet is the bulk of my vineyard (three acres), it has been a fingers’ crossed month wondering/hoping that mother nature would cooperate.”

P.S. “My neighbors are even more delayed on all varietals due to the positioning of their vineyard and having two late ripening varietals (Tempranillo & Petit Sirah). Brix still low; 20-23.”

Janet Wheeling October 2nd. Rough and Ready. “We are expecting to achieve our five year averages in tonnage. The fruit and canopy has been beautiful. With that said, this is the latest harvest we’ve had over the 20 years we’ve been growing. Thankfully, the canopy remains healthy and the rains have been light and are not back to back. We are halfway through the harvest having picked six tons. We expect to finish picking another six tons by mid-October. The loss of 80% of our crop in 2022 was significant. With the 2023 yields and quality, it renews our interest in continuing to grow wine grapes.”



Mary Compass October 2nd. Southwest County. “I wanted to let you know that we had a bumper crop this year - the quality of the fruit is outstanding and the yields are the best I’ve ever had. The new block came on line as well, supplementing some of the existing varietals as well as producing two new grape (for me) varietals, Roussanne and Cinsault. Carlos is thrilled with the fruit and the overall condition of vines and vineyard. Salvador Gonzales, who managed Naggiar’s vineyards for almost 30 years, is chiefly responsible, as he has helped me with the vineyard ever since I’ve been here.”



We will continue this conversation at the October meeting at Coufos Vineyard. Join in to tell us your **Tales From The Crush Pad.**

John Geraghty October 4th. South Auburn. “Harvest is about 2 weeks behind normal. I had to pick early because of a planned trip to Italy. Normally I pick my reds with brix 25.5-26.5 but this year about 24. pH is normally about 3.55 for Syrah and Grenache and 3.45 for Sangiovese but this year the pH is lower: 3.45 for Syrah and Grenache and 3.36 for Sangiovese. TA’s are also high at 7.2 and usually about 5.2 although Sangiovese is usually about 6. My Viognier was 3 weeks late and sugar 22, pH 3.42 and TA 7.5. So everything was late and I picked too early.”

Rod Byers, October 8th. Grass Valley. “I still have not picked my little vineyard. Four different red varieties ranging from 18 to 25 Brix. The Tannat is very tight clustered. I am watching carefully for bunch rot. Jackson Starr told me I would more likely smell it than see it. A bit of a moldy, vinegar-like smell. So far, none. If we can get through this week with little or no rain then I will hopefully pick in another week or so. That way I can make my own three gallons of wine, if I get that much.”

**Officers
and
Directors**

President

Diane Houston

diane.houston

@managementtrust.com

Vice- President

Dave Elliott

djelliott

@skydancesranch.com

Treasurer

Bob Hudelson

bob

@hudelsonranch.com

Secretary

Susan Clarabut

sclarabut@gmail.com

Social

Coordinator

Al Schafer

afsarch@sbcglobal.net

Program Coordinator

Rod Byers

rodbyers

@pinehillwineworks.com

Director At-Large

Louis Quaintance

bodyart@lmi.net

Web Master

Jim Garrett

jim@relateddata.com

Trellis Wire Editor

Rod Byers

rodbyers

@pinehillwineworks.com

More SWGGA Club News

I received this note from Bernie Zimmerman asking if we could give a shout-out to Sierra Harvest. If you are interested in local farming, you might want to check it out.

“Could you please insert an announcement in the next newsletter asking if anyone is interested in being a part of Sierra harvest? They got me involved when I was president. It occurred to me that some of the younger folks who are interested in farming might be interested. Here is a link to their website.

<https://sierraharvest.org/farmers/> *Bernie*

On A Sadder Note

We are very sad to report that one of our newest SWGGA members, Nancy Palmer passed away in September. A stalwart member of our community, she served on the Sierra College Board of Trustees for 29 years which included seeing the establishment of the Grass Valley campus in the first place. Gracious and dignified, Nancy was a women of great character.

We were equally saddened to receive this note from our Social Coordinator, Al Schafer.

With Sadness: “Linda had lunch with Cindy Hren recently, to learn that Bob Hren passed 12 days ago after a series of strokes. Bob was a grape grower, winemaker and former member of SWGGA.”



As long as we are on the topic, and we are having our next meeting at Coufos Vineyard, let’s take a minute to remember Henry Coufos.

There are 20 reasons to remember Henry with great fondness but mostly it is because we really liked him. I, for one, am greatly looking forward to getting a chance to visit his old stomping grounds.

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O’Hara’s Brew House Supply

Gray Pine Vineyard & Winery

Sierra Moonshine Winemaking Supplies