

WINE GRAPE INFORMATION FOR PENNSYLVANIA AND THE REGION

From Penn State Cooperative Extension

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Happy New Year!

As 2009 disappears from view it is important to digest the lessons learned and anticipate how 2010 can be a better vintage for everyone. The vintage was highly variable depending on your vineyard's location. A grower in Berks County told me his vineyard absorbed 55" of rain during the growing season, hardly a recipe for fine wine. But are there measures to cope with these conditions? A critical assessment of the vintage in the vineyard and cellar is very appropriate at this time, before the details fade from memory. What were the main problems in the vineyard - disease, insects, canopy management, labor needs, yield adjustment, etc. or the cellar - fruit maturity and integrity, processing, extraction methods, primary and ML, ATA, H2S, etc. Bruce Zoecklein's HACCP list is always a good outline of harvest protocol in the cellar and vineyard. You already know that I encourage growers to meet with their wine makers and talk about the vintage in a relaxed setting and to discuss what improvements can be made to help the collaboration and improve wine quality. It's time to prune, go to meetings and network and enjoy the industry we are all a part of and take time to reflect and anticipate.

Pruning season is here. Pruning is often taken for granted and not given the attention it deserves. Looking at a vine without leaves is a great opportunity to measure balance and use pruning as a tool to move vines into better balance, which should yield higher quality fruit. The skeletal vine offers a revealing viticultural story about the past growing season. Indicators are short, stunted shoots, long bull canes, unfilled trellis space, shoot distribution and positioning, node numbers, etc. All of these, along with yield data, can be used to determine the relative balance of a vine. Richard Smart's Golden Rules, which you can find in *Sunlight Into Wine*, can serve as the general guidelines for vine balance. My own rudimentary explanation of vine size and balance has been updated and is attached to this message.

Pruning workshops are being planned and dates and vineyards will soon be announced. There is a right way and wrong way to prune a grapevine. If you have any doubts about your ability to prune, you should attend one of these workshops or get together with an experienced, quality pruner before you begin pruning your vines. There are some good written pruning guides but nothing beats the experience of working on live vines. The old carpenter's saying applies: measure twice, cut once. Once it's gone, it's gone for good.

Upcoming Wine Grape Program Meetings: I'm putting together what I hope will be an exciting year of viticulture workshops and meetings. They will include a new grower workshop, topics including viticulture in Bordeaux, organic and sustainable viticulture, a study of vine density and

size, wine extraction and blending, vineyard twilight meetings and the annual summer vineyard walkaround. Remember, too, that there are outstanding viticulture and enology meetings around the region, including Viticulture 2010 in NY and Wineries Unlimited in King of Prussia. You'll be updated on dates and places as we move into the year.

Viticulture 2010: <http://www.viticulture2010.org/>

Wineries Unlimited: <http://wineriesunlimited.vwm-online.com/>

Cornell has got the goods when it comes to viticulture and enology in the East including a venerable graduate program and a new and successful four-year undergraduate program. It has outstanding scientists and extension personnel working to help the wine industry in NY to thrive. Lucky for us, some of the goodies trickle down to Pennsylvania. Cornell extension enology is offering a workshop called *Principles of Wine Analysis from Harvest to Bottling* on January 21-22 at the Food Research Lab in Geneva NY. The focus is basic winery laboratory equipment and practices but it would be a great refresher course for any wine maker and an excuse to see the research facilities at NYSAES and meet some of their key people, not to mention visit wineries around the lakes. For a program and registration information go to: <http://grapesandwine.cals.cornell.edu/extension/>

Grape Section of the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Conference at the Hershey Convention Center will be held on Tuesday, 2 February in Cocoa Suite 1. You can view the entire program including the grape section at <http://www.mafvc.org/html/>. There is a large trade show and sessions on every conceivable fruit and veggie crop as well as marketing, pesticide education, labor issues and more. There are core credits will be available in the grape session. Register on-line or at the door.

Core Pesticide Credits: Do you need core pesticide credits? You do not have to limit yourself to viticulture meetings to earn them. The Penn State agronomy team in the Capitol Region offers numerous meetings in the winter with core credit opportunities. Try to select topics, such as sprayer calibration, worker protection standards, pesticide handling and storage, etc. that would benefit your vineyard practices and farm safety and compliance. The meeting schedule will be posted on the agronomy web site at: You can also check the PDA Pesticide Education web site for recertification opportunities and the status of your credits.

<https://www.paplants.state.pa.us/PesticideApplicator/ApplicatorExternalSearch.aspx>

Contact Jeff Graybill for more information at 717.394.6851 or visit

<http://lancaster.extension.psu.edu/Agriculture/Agronomy/CropsandSoils.htm>

Best of Pennsylvania Wine Tasting: Establishing benchmarks, near and far, in wine quality is important to the development and success of every winery and wine region. I would encourage every grape grower and wine maker who feels they are engaged in the pursuit of fine wines to attend the 2010 Pennsylvania Wine Society Best of Pennsylvania Wines tasting on Sunday, January 17th at 3 p.m. at the Harrisburg Hilton Hotel. PWS hosts this competition every year and engages Dr. Gary Pavlis from Rutgers, who I know has an exceptional palate, to guide a

panel of judges through many of the best wines produced in PA. The tasting features the top wines from the competition and is an important window into the quality potential of our state's terroir and wine making. It is a benchmark event for PA wine growers and it would be instructive for everyone to come to taste these exceptional wines and honor those who produced them. Two fine vintages, 2007 and 2008 will be presented so the wine quality should be at a very high level. For more information, please go to: <http://www.winesocietypa.org/default.aspx>