



New Initiatives Highlight Annual Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers
“State of the Alliance” Forum

Sonoma Ca (February 9, 2009) This past Thursday, February 3rd, more than 170 people filled the meeting room at the Lodge at Sonoma for the Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance (SVVGA) “**State of the Alliance**” presentation – an annual recap of the group’s past performance and future plans for promoting Sonoma’s grapes, wines and tourism industry. Presenters at this year’s forum included **Grant Raeside, Executive Director, SVVGA; Ken Fischang, Sonoma Country Tourism Board (SCTB); Greg Silvi, Gourmet Magazine; Maureen Cottingham, SVVGA; and Sonoma Mayor Ken Brown.**

“We look forward to this meeting all year,” noted Raeside, “as an opportunity to share our past success, as well as new initiatives with our grower and winery members, strategic partners, charity benefactors and community members. It’s an energizing, and inclusive way for us to build awareness for our events and programs.”

The meeting was called to order by SVVGA Board President **Michael Muscardini** of **Muscardini Cellars** who introduced Raeside’s presentation of the SVVGA’s 2008 year in review. Highlights from Raeside’s report included:

- Record media exposure for Sonoma Valley, including feature editorial in *Gourmet Magazine, San Francisco Magazine, Angeleno Magazine, Orange County Magazine, Riviera Magazine and 944 Magazine.*
- Introduction of first-ever SVVGA Sonoma Wineries Map, distributed at over 200 North Bay hotels, rental car agencies and visitor centers
- Sponsorship of **Sonoma Jazz+ and San Francisco Magazine’s Best of the Bay**
- Hosted visits from top US and International Sommeliers
- Email Newsletter Campaigns to Top 300 Bay Area concierges
- Third year of Good Morning Sonoma Valley e-Newsletter



Next up Ken Fischang reported on the SCTB's 2008 and 2009 efforts to promote Sonoma County as a key overnight destination, including:

- New website/web 2.0 launch
- Distribution of 455,000 printed promotional pieces
- Introduction of mid-week and value-season incentive programs
- 2009 plans to intro new advertising campaign, add online booking engine to website and institute "Local Hero" incentive program

After Sonoma Mayor Ken Brown spoke to the audience about the importance of the SVVGA's work to the city of Sonoma, pointing to the increase in TOT taxes generated by winery and tourism programs instituted and supported by the SVVGA and its members, Raeside again took the podium to outline the SVVGA's 2009 initiatives including:

- **Quarterly Sonoma Valley Wine Competition** – first ever local wine competition designed to promote the grapes and wines of Sonoma Valley
- **The Sommelier Experience:** A partnership with **Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa** to invite, immerse and inform sommeliers from all over the world about Sonoma Valley grapes and wines.
- New "**Merchant**", "**After Hours**" and "**Restaurant, By the Glass**" programs to build traffic and sales at local businesses, wineries and restaurants.
- **Sonoma in the City:** SVVGA to partner once again with Sonoma County Vintners to produce this Media blitz, symposium, Sommelier and key customer tasting in Chicago, IL and Austin TX.
- **VinOlivo, Passport to Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend and Holiday in the Vines** featuring the **Gingerbread Winery Competition**

Greg Silvi of *Gourmet Magazine* spoke briefly of the magazine's sampling, merchandising and promotional opportunities that will provide Sonoma wineries with access to key Gourmet readers and culinary connoisseurs' saying "Gourmet's readers love Sonoma Valley and its wines."



The last speaker of the day was Maureen Cottingham, the newly appointed Executive Producer of the **Sonoma Wine Country Weekend**. Cottingham outlined details of the three day event, which takes place over Labor Day weekend, September 4th-6th. Now in its second year, Sonoma Wine Country Weekend is a partnership between the SVVGA and the **Sonoma County Vintners** and marries each agency's signature event - the Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction and Showcase: TASTE of Sonoma – into Sonoma's premier food and wine event of the year.

This year's highlights include:

- **Member's Kickoff Rally** at **Paradise Ridge Winery** on March 5th
- Honorary Chairs, the **Sangiaco Family** and Auction Committee Chair, **Squire Fridell**
- Host venues for Showcase: TASTE of Sonoma, **MacMurray Ranch** and Sonoma Valley Harvest Wine Auction, **Cline Cellars**
- Major Sponsors, *Gourmet Magazine* and **Visa Signature**
- Return of successful **Sommeliers Stars** program
- Reduction in number of auction lots to 35
- Nationally promoted online auction beginning August 1st.

About SVVGA Annual Events

Each year, the Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Alliance partners with local wineries, growers, restaurants and hospitality providers to produce four signature events designed to raise awareness and appreciation for the beauty and bounty of Sonoma Valley. The events include: **Holiday in the Vines, December 1st -31st**; **VINOLIVO, February 13th**; **Passport to Sonoma Valley, May 16th -17th**; and **Sonoma Wine Country Weekend, September 4th -6th (Labor Day Weekend)**.

About SVVGA

The Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance (SVVGA) is a non-profit trade organization serving over 500 vintners, growers and associates who share a mission to promote awareness of Sonoma Valley's grapes, wine, terroir and history as the birthplace of the California wine industry. The Sonoma Valley Vintners and Growers Foundation (SVVGF) is a non-profit organization that has raised over \$8,000,000 for local Sonoma Valley charities through Sonoma Wine Country Weekend. To learn more about the SVVGA and SVVGF, visit www.sonomavalleywine.com or call 707-935-0803.

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