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Sonoma County Harvest Fair Top National Wine Judges Selected

SANTA ROSA, CA (August 31, 2009) – Sonoma County Harvest Fair is host to the largest regional wine competition in the United States. The competitions' 23 judges from around the country will arrive in Sonoma County on September 22 to taste some of the best wines the county has to offer.

Bob Fraser, Professional Wine Competition Coordinator for the past seven years, said “The Sonoma County Harvest Fair selects judges nationally from diversified wine industry occupational areas. Almost all judges have professional wine judging experience prior to judging the Harvest Fair Wine Competition and are renowned for their wine palate. The Sonoma County Harvest Fair has set the highest industry standard for this "West Coast" style of judging which has been emulated by many other wine competitions in the country.”

West coast style of judging is a collaborative style of judging by which five industry professional judge on a panel representing trade, media, winemaking, education, and food industries.

From local and syndicated columnists to bloggers, this year's judges represent a wide range of wine media. Returning this year with over six years of Harvest Fair judging experience is William Bloxson-Carter, executive chef and food & beverage director for Playboy Mansion West. “Judging at the Harvest Fair has afforded me excellent opportunities to target wine buying decisions for the Playboy Mansion; particularly because of the wide range of varietals (and flavors) coming from Sonoma County that can't be replicated in other California counties. I have broadly featured Sonoma County wines at the Playboy Mansion since 1990” stated Bloxson-Carter.

The judges will have a demanding five days of judging - reviewing more than 1,000 premium wines. Awards will be announced at the annual Harvest Fair Awards Night Gala, Saturday, September 26. Tickets and information are available at the fairgrounds or harvestfair.org

Professional Wine entries are being accepted until August 28th in person or by mail. Judging occurs September 23-25 at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds.

Twenty-three judges are now confirmed for this year's judging panels. Two more judges, to replace drops, will be added by September 22nd. The twenty-three confirmed are:

Carl Brandhorst, Vice President / Vinifera Wine Growers Association, Fairfax, VA
William Bloxsom-Carter, Executive Chef/Playboy Mansion West, Los Angeles, CA
Chip Cassidy, Wine Director / Professor, Miami, FL
Jill Ditmire, Writer, jad Productions, Indianapolis, IN
Barbara Ensrud, Wine Journalist, Durham, NC
Bob Foster, Editor, California Grapevine News, San Diego, CA
John Giannini, Professor Enology Fresno, Fresno, CA
Dr. Barry Gump, Professor of Beverage Management, Aventura, FL
Daryl Groom, Owner/Winemaker Groom Wines, California/Australia, Healdsburg, CA
Ray Johnson, SRJC Wine Instructor, Santa Rosa, CA
Ralph Kunkee, Professor Enology, UC Davis, Davis, CA
Ken Landis, Owner/Chef, Landis Shores Oceanfront Inn, Half Moon Bay, CA
Ellen Landis, Owner/Sommelier, Landis Shores Oceanfront Inn, Half Moon Bay, CA
Ann Littlefield, Direct Wine Marketing Specialist, Napa, CA
Tim McDonald, CSW & Associates, Napa, CA
Tim McNally, Radio Wine Talk Host, New Orleans, LA
Christopher Majer, Jam Packed Restaurants, Santa Rosa, CA
Charles Mara, President / The Mara Wine Group, Pound Ridge, NY
Ben Pearson, Wine Buyer/Bottle Barn, Santa Rosa, CA
Ron Rawlinson, Director of Marketing & Sales / Domaine Alfred Winery, Arroyo Grande, CA
Dr. Gerry Ritchie, Director of Enology/Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo, CA
Christopher Sawyer, Sommelier / Wine Radius & Carneros Bistro, Petaluma, CA
Richard Williams, Wine Buyer/Oliver's Market, Santa Rosa, CA

The Harvest Fair Awards Night Gala is held on Saturday, September 26, the weekend prior to the three day fair. Medals will be announced at the Gala for the hundreds of participating wineries, restaurants and caterers. Wine and food aficionados gather to find out who is the best of the best while enjoying unlimited tasting of some of the county's finest food and wine. The Awards Night Gala is from 7-9:30 p.m. Awards are announced at 8 p.m. Tickets are available at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds office or on-line.

Sonoma County Harvest Fair is a celebration of harvest featuring three days of wine tasting with 150+ wineries, wine sales, chef demonstrations, microbrew tasting (Saturday only), farm and harvest agricultural activities for children and adults, The World Championship Grape Stomp, continuous live jazz, an art show, farm animals to meet, giant pumpkin contest and much more.

The Fair opens Friday, October 2, at 10 a.m. and is open until 8 p.m. that evening. It continues Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission for adults is \$6; children 7-12 are \$2; children 6 and under are free.

Complete information on how to enter the Harvest Fair, purchasing tickets and more is available at harvestfair.org or by calling the Sonoma County Fairgrounds at 707.545.4203

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