



*Viticulture Association of the Santa Cruz Mountains*

# **The Grapevine**

## **July, 2009**

### **VINE TALK**

**Set 2009.** Somehow through the fog and cold and the unseasonable spring and early summer weather we still have managed to arrive at fruit set. Now one can truly take stock of the value of the year. Ideally you see full, clean clusters with uniform berry size evenly spaced along the cordon.

This is the year of canopy management. The most successful set that I have seen in different sites has been where the vines were properly shoot thinned to allow airflow and access for insects and spray penetration into the canopy. If the interior of the canopy was too crowded there was a far higher incidence of botrytis and the flowers turned brown and fell off of the cluster without setting fruit. A successful set also seemed to relate to the health of the vine. Weak vines were more prone to shatter and botrytis.

If you experienced shatter (clusters where berries fell off or never set) in your vineyard you must perform the unpleasant task of removing deformed clusters where only a few berries cling to an empty stem. If allowed to go to harvest the wine will reflect the bitter stems more than the fruit. Work with your winemaker to determine their level of tolerance for this condition in the clusters.

Many vineyards set unscathed despite seemingly numerous opportunities for disaster. Now it is time for leaf removal. This is a delicate topic and like so many things is very vineyard specific. Sites that are directly exposed to the sun (south facing, high elevation sites with low vigor) may want to reduce the amount of leaf pulling in the fruit zone or not do it at all. Sites that have more vigor or where there is a wider range of temperature and fog variation will want to implement some form of this practice. Most vineyards will have their leaves removed on the North or East side of the canopy or where the fruit is in the shade in the afternoon.

### **Next Meeting**

**July 16 at Hicks Family Vineyard, Corralitos. 3:00pm.  
Followed by our summer bbq**

3:00: starts with an in-vineyard workshop with Rick Anzalone and Ron Mosley on seasonal practices, including hedging, thinning, etc.

Then: Speaker Judit Monis, Ph.D., from STA Labs in Gilroy will talk about disease in the vineyard: viruses, fungus, symptoms, what to look for, testing. STA Laboratories is a diagnostic laboratory for the seed and plant industry, and its Plant Health Services division provides disease detection and eradication services specifically for grapevines. You can view articles written by Dr. Monis on the STA Labs website at [www.stalabs.com/Grapevine\\_Testing/Grapevine\\_Testing.php](http://www.stalabs.com/Grapevine_Testing/Grapevine_Testing.php)

As always, bring a bottle of wine to share for tasting at the end of the meeting. Remember that the after-meeting tasting is strictly that - a tasting. Drink responsibly or bring a designated driver. *Directions to Hicks on back.*

### ***President's Corner***

Many growers are remarking on huge cluster size this year, and many who irrigate haven't started yet. Some are saying this was the best Spring they can remember, with the mild winter, no disastrous frost, and late Spring rains that saturated the earth. Our vineyards appear to be thriving! I am hoping we can spend some time at this next meeting sharing notes on how our vineyards are doing. With the cool weather we have had, flowering and fruitset in ours was later than usual by a couple of weeks. Some areas are apparently feeling botrytis pressure. What is going on in yours? It would be interesting to compare notes at next week's meeting between vineyards in Corralitos, *(cont.)*

**You are invited:**

**July 19, 1-4:00pm**

**Grand Opening Reception, "From Vines to Wine: A History of our Local Vineyards and Wineries"**  
Forbes Mill History Museum, 75 Church St., Los Gatos

*Vine Talk, cont.*

In a normal year one might remove leaves just below the cluster and maybe one node above. In a cold year like this it might be necessary to remove more leaves to ensure that the canopy is open enough to allow airflow from one side to the other. No fruit likes full exposure to the afternoon sun. That said, different clones and varieties respond differently to varying degrees of leaf removal. Again, check in with your winemaker and compare notes from last year to determine the level of leaf pulling required this year. It is clear from research that early leaf removal (just after set) is the best policy for preventing sun burn. By exposing the clusters to a moderate amount of early summer sun they have time to develop their own protection against the brutal rays of late summer. Remember to always leave some filtered shading on the clusters and never fully expose them to the afternoon sun.

The last word on canopy management is to be prepared for the unexpected. A cold day today could easily become a record high the next day. Be vigilant and pay attention to the weather forecast. Never overexpose the fruit to sun.

It is around the fourth of July so there may be some vineyards that are getting that surprise visit from powdery mildew. If you see the white powder on your fruit it unfortunately means that you either missed a spray, or the spray didn't get into the canopy or that your vineyard may have developed resistance to the sprays you are using. If you see black specks along side the white powder the infection is probably well advanced and will be hard to eradicate. Your best course of action is to use an eradicant spray to wash down the fruit. Oxidate or Armicarb are among your options. If the weather is not too hot for a few days you might consider Stylet Oil. Sulfur is not an eradicant and is unlikely to solve your problem. Realize that you are in a fight and be vigilant with the sprays from now until veraison if you see mildew. You may have to open up the canopy even more than you normally would to ensure coverage as most eradicant sprays depend upon contact to be effective.

Hopefully this is not your problem and your fruit is clean. Concentrate instead on keeping the canopy

open, protecting against botrytis if there is a series of wet mornings, and consider your options for irrigation and fertilization.

The grape clusters are sizing up at this time and if you want bigger clusters you will have to feed them. Review your petiole samples or vineyard history and determine what nutrients might be appropriate at this time. Do not be afraid to water and add nutrients to your vines if they need them. Healthy fruit makes great wine. Vines that are starved for water and nutrients during the ripening phase have the potential to shrivel up to nothing when the heat is on in late summer. Smaller cluster varieties and thin skinned clones are especially prone to this problem. Planned deficit irrigation and monitored stress on the vines does not mean starvation and anorexia. Take care of your vines and the fruit will ripen to its greatest potential.

Walk the vineyard, clean it up, and make it beautiful. Veraison is around the corner.

Buena suerte.

Prudy Foxx  
Foxx Viticulture  
Santa Cruz Mountains

Copies of all of Prudy's Vine Talk columns since 2004 can be found on our website at [www.vascm.org](http://www.vascm.org).



*(President's Corner, cont. from page one)*

the Summit area, Skyline, the Vine Hill area, Saratoga, Ben Lomond Mt. – the subregions we've been talking about.

**A testament to the quality of our fruit:** I recently came across a couple of things that I would like to share with you as testaments to the quality of winegrapes we produce in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

First, congratulations to the wineries that have been garnering high ratings for their wine made from Santa Cruz Mountains fruit – and to the growers who labored in producing such high quality fruit! Below is a list of high-scoring SC Mts. wines from recent (2009) issues of Wine Enthusiast, for Chardonnay, Cabernet, Pinot. **Coincidentally, our next meeting is at Hicks Family Vineyard, and Vine Hill was awarded 94 points by Wine Enthusiast for its wine from this vineyard.** As well, our vineyards and wineries have been bringing in medals from statewide and international competitions. Congratulations to all!

Then, in doing some research for the exhibit at the Forbes Mill History Museum on the history of our local vineyards and wineries, I found the transcript of a wonderful interview with David Bruce on the website for the Bancroft Museum at UC Berkeley. It is part of an oral history project of influential California winemakers. You might be interested to read this transcript in its entirety (and explore some of the other interviews), and it is available at [http://www.archive.org/stream/davidbrucewinery00brucrich/davidbrucewinery00brucrich\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/davidbrucewinery00brucrich/davidbrucewinery00brucrich_djvu.txt).

Bruce talks about the experimentation and innovations for which he is known. And among other things, explains how he decided to come to the Santa Cruz Mountains – because this was the best place to grow Pinot Noir (of course!). And no coincidence that Martin Ray was then producing what he found to be the best Pinots produced at the time.

Bruce explains that the Santa Cruz Mountains is one of the (two) best places in California to grow Pinot Noir (he considers the Russian River Valley to be the other, but let's not dwell on that). **Bruce observes that there is more complexity in Santa Cruz Mountains wine, and says, "To my feeling, at least, they have longer longevity, these Santa Cruz Mountain wines."** Aah, music to our ears – and on our palate!

**Exhibit at Forbes Mill History Museum – reception July 19.** Thank you to all of you who stepped forward to share your stories, your photos,

the treasures you have found or that have been handed down through the family to put on loan to the Museum for this history project. You have all helped to make this a rich and exciting exhibit.

You are all invited to the grand opening reception on Sunday, July 19, 1-4:00. *This is your exhibit.* This exhibit honors the viticultural and winemaking heritage of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Featured vintners include Charles LeFranc, founder of Almaden Winery; Antoine Delmas; Paul Masson; Peter Lint; Martin Ray; David Bruce, and many others who have played a role in the growth and success of our industry locally. The Town of Los Gatos is recognizing the importance of our industry. Mayor Mike Wasserman will say a few words, and more festivities are planned. The Los Gatos plein air artists have been painting in our vineyards and will showcase their art. Some of our local wineries will be pouring wine, so come on out and check out the intimate, industrious Forbes Mill Museum and the historical artifacts and stories about our local vineyards and wineries on Sunday afternoon, July 19.

– Mary Lindsay

**From Wine Enthusiast, March, May & July 2009:**

**93 points: Mount Eden** 2005 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (SC Mts.) \$50. *Mount Eden makes their estate Cab the old-fashioned way: to age. The score could rise considerably after 2011.*

**92 points: Martin Ray** 2007 Reserve Chardonnay (SC Mts.) \$30. *A brilliant Chardonnay.*

**94 points: Cumbre of Vine Hill 2006 Hicks Family Vineyard** Pinot Noir (SC Mts.), \$59. *Shows the dramatic way that this mountainous region south of San Francisco can ripen Pinot Noir to such perfection.*

**93 points: Cumbre of Vine Hill 2006 Raffaelli Vineyard** Pinot Noir (SC Mts.), \$59. *A very good wine.. will benefit with some time in the cellar.*

**92 points: Cinnabar** 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon (SC Mts.), \$45. *...black currants and smoky cedar, with a long, impressive finish.*

**89 points: Cinnabar** 2006 Chardonnay (SC Mts.) \$29. *Succulent and opulent...*



## **Vineyard Profile: Stu Miller Vineyard**

- by Suzanne Purnell

Just north of Scotts Valley, the Vine Hill Road exit from Highway 17 suggests you might be entering “vineyard territory” in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Indeed, the first vineyards were planted in this region by two brothers, John and George Jarvis, in 1863 and 1864. John Jarvis is credited as the founder of the wine industry in Santa Cruz County.

Immediately to your left lies the land that was once the site of Fontenay Vineyard at Vine Hill, circa 1879. The original Victorian house, Villa Fontenay, still stands and is owned-occupied, but the vines are gone.

As the road starts its descent down the mountainside, you will pass what was Smothers Brothers Vineyard, circa 1974-1980s. The Smothers Vineyard was owned by Dick Smothers, the “straight man” in the Smothers Brothers music-and-comedy team that is still performing today.

Traveling down a series of switchbacks on this old stagecoach road takes you to Jarvis Road, named for John and George Jarvis, who operated their commercial winery approximately 2 miles up Jarvis Road.

A short distance past the old Jarvis Winery site brings you to Rider Ridge Road, the home of Stu Miller’s Vineyard. Vineyards are a popular pastime on this sunny, south-facing ridge with a vista of Monterey Bay—there are five vineyards on 21 parcels of land. At an elevation of 1050 feet, Rider Ridge experiences warm sunshine for hours every day and cool evenings with frequent fog. The soil is a rocky, clay loam flecked with chert.



Stu Miller always dreamed of having a vineyard, especially having lived in Napa during his early years of marriage. In 1971, he and his wife, Joan, bought approximately 8 gently sloping acres and immediately planted a zinfandel vineyard and built a new home. Three years later, they proudly harvested their first crop and set to making wine for their own

consumption. By the following year, they quickly realized their yield produced way more wine than they could ever consume! So, Stu researched the type of grapes being purchased by local wine producers and decided that Chardonnay was in great demand. He ripped out all his zinfandel vines and planted 400 Chardonnay vines, which thrive today.

As head tanner at Salz Tannery, a chemist by training and a long-time member of VASCM, Stu conducted his viticulture activities with a scientific approach. When Stu passed away last year, he had spent over 35 years tending his vineyard and it was always a labor of love.

Harvest yields have varied between 2-6 tons. Most years’ harvests were sold to Ken Burnap, owner of Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, located a short distance up Jarvis Road.

In later years, Storrs Winery began to buy Stu’s premium, hand-picked Chardonnay grapes. Due to the small harvests, the resulting wine was blended with several other Santa Cruz Chardonnays. However by 2007, Steve Storrs honored the then, seriously-ill Stu with his own bottled Chardonnay (Storrs 2007 Stu Miller Chardonnay). That wine has won both a gold medal and a best-of-appellation, 90 points + award at the 2009 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. Stu would be proud!

The vineyard is currently maintained by James Fucillo, a VASCM member and a relative of the next-door neighbor. While a realtor in his day job, James wanted the viticulture experience and jumped in when Stu became ill and was seeking someone to lovingly care for his vines. The harvests have come full-circle since the grapes are now sold to Nick Guerrero at Vine Hill Winery (formerly Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard). Rachel Ormes from Vine Hill is a consultant to James, as he quickly moves the vineyard care to more sustainable practices. He has transitioned all of the spraying from conventional methods to an organic regimen utilizing Stylet-Oil, Agraquest’s Serenade® and Sonata® and others. Cutting back on Roundup® spraying has taught James that sustainable vineyard managing is more time- and thought-intensive. Eventually, James would like to reach a certified organic designation for the vineyard, requiring an estimated seven years of continuous work to achieve.

And, so, viticulture may eventually return to more similar practices used in the pioneer vineyards of the 1800s.

**Directions to Hicks Family Vineyard**

for the 7/16 meeting:

2805 Pleasant Valley Rd., Aptos, CA 95003

From Hwy. 1, exit Freedom Blvd.

Head NE on Freedom (away from the beach) 2.5 miles

Left on Hames Rd.

In a little over half a mile, turn left on Pleasant Valley Rd.

Hicks Family Vineyard will be on the left in a little over 1 mile,

Past Hauer Apple Way

**2009 Memberships Are Due.**

***If you are receiving a membership form with this newsletter we have not yet received your dues. If you believe you have paid, please let us know. You can also find a membership form on the website at [www.vascm.org](http://www.vascm.org)***

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**Newsletter**



**Next Meeting: July 16 -"Vine Disease: Symptoms, Testing."  
Also: in-vineyard Vine Talk  
At Hicks Family Vineyard, Corralitos**

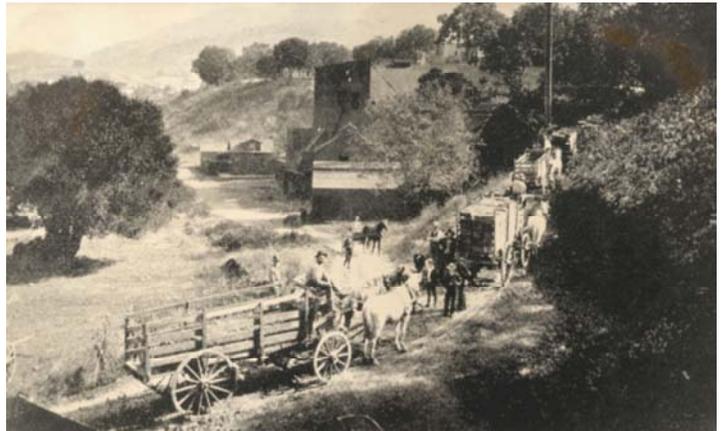
**Vines to Wine: A History of our Local Vineyards and Wineries**  
**At the Forbes Mill History Museum, Los Gatos**  
**Grand Opening Reception: July 19, 1-4:00**

The vineyards and wineries of the Santa Clara Valley and Santa Cruz Mountains have been pivotal to the California wine industry for 200 years. In the boom years of the 1890s, 12,000 acres of vineyards stretched from the Almaden Valley to Cupertino and northward in the Santa Clara Valley. An additional 2000 acres spread upwards into the Santa Cruz Mountains. Through the decades, the local wine industry has gone through booms and busts along with the economic fortunes of the times, temperance, prohibition, and changes in public tastes. Vineyards have waxed and waned with bounty, disease, misfortune, and suburbanization. Today, there are about 1500 acres of winegrapes and over 70 bonded wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and 37 in the Santa Clara Valley. Over the past two centuries, both regions have been tremendously influential in the creation of today's premium wines through improved viticultural techniques and emphasis on premium winegrapes and wines. These local vineyards and artisan wineries are largely family-owned, as many were a century ago, and are an important part of the economic livelihood and fabric of the community. Additionally, there are many home winemakers who make wine for personal consumption.

This exhibit at the Forbes Mill Museum commemorates the history of our local wine and viticultural heritage, its colorful and influential personalities, and the legacy that continues today with our local wineries. The region surrounding Los Gatos has been home to some of the most important wineries and vintners in California's history, and many more whose impact is still felt today. The exhibit traces the influence of the many French, German, and Italian immigrants to the 'Valley of Heart's Delight' and its surrounding

mountain communities, starting with the founding of Mission Santa Clara and extending into the modern period. Featured vintners from the 1800s include: Charles LeFranc, founder of Almaden Winery; Paul Masson, founder of the champagne house under his name (now home to the Mountain Winery); the Novitiate Winery in Los Gatos founded by the Jesuits, and many others. From the 1900s, notable vintners include: Peter Lint in Los Gatos, who won a Grand Prize at the Panama Pacific Exposition in 1915; and Martin Ray, whose innovation and legacy pushed vintners to improve wine quality to its current high standards. More recently, a group of local winemakers who have predominated the modern era have helped define the Santa Cruz Mountains as a premium winegrape growing region producing world-class wines.

The Museum exhibit opens the weekend of June 13 with a preview focusing on the history of The Novitiate Winery in Los Gatos, with artifacts and photos from the archives at Santa Clara University. The Grand Opening for the full exhibit will be July 19, 1-4:00pm, with wine tasting featuring local wineries. The exhibit will continue through the end of the year. The exhibit will run through the end of the year. Hours are Wed.-Sun., 12-4:00. The Museum is at 75 Church St., Los Gatos.



The Los Gatos Cooperative Winery, circa 1889. The winery was producing 300,000 gallons of wine by 1889, mostly from vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and was Santa Clara County's largest winery at the time. Photo courtesy Los Gatos Public Library and The Museums of Los Gatos.