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Suisun Valley ~ an AVA Coming Into its Own

May 18, 2006

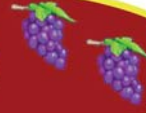
Suisun Valley, CA - For viticulturists in Suisun Valley, most wine marketing has been a sales strategy developing around them; albeit it was within close proximity, as Napa Valley sits on their immediate northern border.

Wine promotion hadn't been a staple ingredient of their daily, planned marketing concepts. Not until recently, that is...

Two major developments within the wine industry have fast-forwarded Suisun Valley winegrape growers into demanding for themselves and demonstrating for others intense viticultural practices. First was the onset of a California winegrape glut. (That set every brand into new S.O.S. marketing strategies, including Two-Buck Chuck as an end result.) The second occurrence was the recent consolidation of wine brands into the oligopolistic spasms for California's top three to four wine brands, which are still all grappling for more labels to expand their ever-increasing wine portfolios.



**SUISUN VALLEY
GRAPE GROWERS
ASSOCIATION**



As seen on
California Wine and Food
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A handful of growers in Suisun Valley were enjoying a somewhat bucolic lifestyle, just prior to these two major developments; however, these two events sent the growers of Suisun Valley into an urgent need to immediately develop some innovative marketing concepts, or face the consequences of becoming not much more than a pretty ride on the way to Napa through their lazy, winding back roads.

With the forming of the Suisun Valley Grapegrowers, came an agreement from within that winegrape growers association that quality grapes were their future, and that would mean examining and then performing fastidious viticultural practices. It was no longer a luxury to just plant vines in any way that suited the farmer's fancy. Instead, it had to become a quality-controlled science that included deciding which clones to use, in which direction the rows should face the sun (or not), to irrigate or not, to mow the rows or to disc them. The list went on, but it became their imperative duty to study and experiment more than they had in the past.

Perhaps these were the two best challenges that could have possibly happened to Suisun Valley, as it forced the growers to have more dialogue with their winegrape buying partners. By working in tandem with winemakers, the growers soon learned that if they could please a winemaker, they could sell their fruit to those who were paying close attention, and perhaps weren't getting a listening ear elsewhere.

Their planned viticultural strategies are beginning to net a planned economic system that will perhaps sustain them in an AVA that's still being developed to find its soul, and not going to be exploited for its little known name.

The following are quotes that were given on behalf of Suisun Valley's recent winegrape growing practices. These winemakers speak volumes about where Suisun Valley is headed.

"The Petite Sirah that I've purchased from the quality producers has been very good. The tannins weren't overpowering, and were quite manageable. That allowed me to make a very approachable wine." **Winemaker Bob Broman, Langtry Estate and Vineyards (a.k.a. Guenoc)**

"All the fruit I bring in from King Vineyard in Suisun Valley, whether it be Cab, Syrah, or Petite Sirah, is hands down the best price-to-quality ratio for super premium grapes." **Winemaker Ted Osborne, Olabisi Wines**

"I have found the quality of fruit from Suisun Valley to be as good as from any other appellation I have worked with. I currently have a Suisun Valley Cabernet Sauvignon in the barrel that, based on early samplings by respected sources, is as good, if not better than Cabernet coming from Napa Valley." **Winemaker Chuck Custodio, Trahan Winery**

"When it comes to great quality at a competitive price, nothing beats the grapes I purchase from Suisun Valley." **Winemaker Doug Sparks, Sunset Cellars**

"The Suisun Valley climate reminds us of the south of France. It yields wonderful Cabernet Sauvignon that we use for our rosé and port programs at Croze. The ripening cycle of the grapes is perfect for the balance and complexity we are looking for when we make our wines." **Proprietor Suzanne Wooton, Croze**

"There are two reasons why I purchase grapes from Suisun Valley: 1) The soil and meteorological conditions are as good as Napa Valley for growing grapes. 2) The growers of Suisun Valley are willing to farm at the highest level of quality if a buyer is willing to team up with them." **Winemaker Abe Schoener, The Scholium Project.**

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