



Ron Lanza, left, with Wooden Valley Winery and the Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association and Roger King, president of the SVGGA, stand next to a field of grape vines on Suisun Valley Road. The SVGGA is celebrating the 25th anniversary of Suisun Valley's designation as an American Viticultural Area. **Photo by Brad Zweerink**

Suisun Valley grape growers savor 25 years of quality

By Joe Giovannetti | [Daily Republic](#) | December 25, 2007

FAIRFIELD - Vintage Caffe is a short walk from the tasting rooms of Suisun Valley's wineries and stocks bottles of the local product.

According to Roger King, president of the Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association, Vintage Caffe sells a variety of brands, including King Andrews, Sunset Cellars, Wooden Valley, Ledgewood Creek, Koch, Olabisi, Vezer and Forlorn Hope.

But sit down at many of Fairfield's other dining establishments and you won't find a bottle, glass or even a drop of those Suisun Valley wines.

On Thursday, the SVGGA kicks off its year-long celebration of the 25th anniversary of Suisun Valley's designation of an American Viticultural Area. An AVA is significant to grape growers because it justifies the unique geographic pedigree of the wine.

Current requirements for an area to be designated as its own AVA include evidence that growing conditions such as climate, soil, elevation and physical features are distinctive from other areas. The evidence is based on scientific data gathered over the course of several years.

'The 25th anniversary is a major milestone,' said King, who has been SVGGA president since the association's inception five years ago. 'It shows longevity. It allows us to put some history behind it for an environment (Suisun Valley) that wasn't well known. History is important in relationship to how you're perceived in the industry.'

But even after 25 years with the AVA designation, the SVGGA says that Suisun Valley doesn't receive the same recognition as other AVA areas in the more famous wine-producing region of Napa County. This greatly affects grape growers, many of whom make a living or at least additional income from selling grapes to wineries that bottle and sell the product.

'When we approach the buying market, going to Sonoma or Napa wineries, they don't perceive that we're even in the north coast region,' King said. 'By using the anniversary to push ourselves forward, not just celebrating 25 years, we're using it as a tool to define a market presence. We're not Napa Valley and we don't want to be Napa Valley. We want to be Suisun Valley. We want to stand on our own merit.'

The SVGGA hopes the AVA silver anniversary will remind potential buyers in Northern California and across the country of the quality and history of Suisun Valley's grapes.

King said Suisun Valley has established more of a national presence in recent years by selling grapes to bottlers across the country, but only after the SVGGA decided to send representatives to conventions on the East Coast.

Locally, the SVGGA is hosting wine tastings this weekend to promote its product and is pushing to get wine made from Suisun Valley grapes into nearby dining establishments.

'We want better awareness of the local communities of our product,' King said. 'We want to bring more people from Fairfield and Solano County into an awareness of the product we have out here.'

At a glance

The Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association is hosting a celebratory weekend at four Suisun Valley wineries in honor of Suisun Valley's 25th anniversary of its designation as an American Viticultural Area. The SVGGA is offering premium wine and specialty food tastings as well as barrel tasting and vertical wine tasting by select vintners. Those who attend will be offered a complimentary logo wine glass at each location.

When: Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 29 and Sunday, Dec. 30

Where:

Ledgewood Creek Winery, 4589 Abernathy Rd.
Suisun Valley Wine Cooperative, 4495 Suisun Valley Rd.
Vezer Family Vineyard Tasting Room, 5066 Clayton Rd.
Wooden Valley Winery, 4756 Suisun Valley Rd