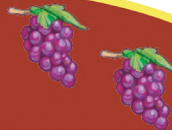


# SUISUN VALLEY GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION<sup>™</sup>



## Venture east by vintner becomes profitable move

By Danny Bernardini

*As Seen in The Vacaville Daily Reporter*

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While winemakers in Suisun Valley continue to make a name for themselves in California, one vintner is venturing in another direction by sending 200 tons of grapes, along with wine, to the East Coast. During a trip to a trade show in Pennsylvania earlier this year, Wooden Valley Winery grower Ron Lanza quickly became popular among East Coast wine drinkers.

Lanza and others took freshly pressed wines, hoping at least to make one or two contacts at the show. He said he was not prepared for the attention given Suisun Valley wines.

“We were well-received,” Lanza said. “We poured them wine and got a lot of good comments. We made several fans.”

Roger King, president of the Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association, helped to set up the trip and said he heard good stories when the group returned.

He said several of the larger winemakers on the East Coast heard a buzz about a new wine during the show, and soon had to see it for themselves.

“It just exploded,” King said. “They would show up to the booth and ask ‘What the hell do you guys have?’”

Lanza said the reaction went so well, that he was soon entertaining guests at the winery who were interested in buying Suisun Valley grapes to truck back east. Although it meant creating a whole new way to package the grapes - which they do right in the vineyards, and extra work - the rewards are too good to pass up.

“It’s a lot of work, yet it’s a potential marketplace,”



*The Suisun Valley Grape Growers Association has erected signs throughout the valley identifying the owners. (Rick Roach/The Reporter)*

he said. “It might not be for everyone. It’s something that no one has done.”

Lanza said some of the purchasers are small wineries, but most are independent growers like those in the Suisun Valley that don’t advertise that the grapes are from California. He said when he sells to the larger “grocery store” labels locally, the flavors get lost amongst the many other grapes they use.

“We’re just another group thrown in an ocean,” he said. “It’s always more rewarding to sell to the little wineries. That’s important to them.”

In the few months Lanza has been doing this, he said a relationship has been created that will continue to grow.

“There are thousands of boxes heading back east with the Suisun Valley name on them,” he said. “The buyers say ‘Don’t drop us.’ I’ve got a commitment now and will do it for a couple of years.”