

Sonoma Odyssey of food and wine to benefit wine library, farmworkers

Gala and auction will be held Sept. 16

A dozen great chefs from the Sonoma County Culinary Guild and 30 Sonoma County wineries will work in concert under majestic oak trees on Saturday, Sept. 16 from 2 to 5:30 p.m. at the Sonoma Odyssey of Food & Wine, the annual fund-raiser of the Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County (WLASC). This year's presentation brings back focused food and wine pairings, media sponsorship (Sonoma West Publishers and KRCB) and a new offering of silent and live auction items. Proceeds benefit the Sonoma County Wine Library as well as farm worker education and housing programs of the co-producer, the Sonoma County Grape Growers Association (SCGGA).

Moved from June to the threshold of autumn, the Sonoma Odyssey of Food & Wine returns to Richard's Grove and Saralee's Vineyard in the heart of the Russian River Valley with a fresh crop of collectable wine lots, creative artifacts and wine-country lifestyle activities slated for auction or raffle. Those in search of book bargains will once again be able to browse the Wine Library's book tent. Kenn Cunningham and local radio celebrity Tom Simoneau will serve as auctioneer and master of ceremonies respectively.

"We are confident the partnership with the

Sonoma County Grape Growers will bring needed support and attention to the wine library as well as farm worker housing and education in Sonoma County," said Mike Neely, president of the WLASC.

Initiated in November 2003 by the SCGGA, the Employee Development Program is an ongoing, comprehensive seminar series taught in Spanish that covers the important aspects of viticulture and employee management. The program is intended to attract, retain and advance vineyard employees in agricultural careers. Twenty-six classes have been offered to date with attendance averaging 50 vineyard employees per session.

Running parallel to the SCGGA's Employee Development Program, the Spanish-speaking Outreach Program of the Sonoma County Wine Library includes workshops in viticulture and library tours. Wine Librarian Bo Simons says that his organization and the SCGGA have co-produced a handful of classes, sometimes with the help of Santa Rosa Junior College, the Sonoma County Farm Bureau, and the University of California Cooperative Extension.

"The wine library and our vineyard employees are important contributors to our community and to grape growing," said Nick Frey, executive director of the SCGGA. "Sonoma Odyssey provides our entire community the opportunity to support these worthy causes."

The Farm Worker

Housing Fund of Community Foundation Sonoma County provides safe affordable housing for local vineyard workers, the backbone of the county's wine and grape industry. While estimates vary, county government calculates that a majority of the 5,600 to 9,000 laborers lack adequate housing. In Sonoma County's high-end real estate market, much of this work force cannot afford even minimal housing.

Wineries and growers have provided unmarried vineyard workers with housing under the Model Bunkhouse Ordinance since 1992. Despite these efforts, additional housing is needed for a growing number of full-time employees, their families, and temporary workers employed by more than one company.

Reservations for the Sonoma Odyssey of Food & Wine may be made by phone at 431.2898 or mail with check to Sonoma Odyssey/WLASC, P.O. Box

43, Healdsburg, CA 95448.

Tickets are \$45 for members of the Wine Library Associates and the Sonoma County Culinary Guild, and \$50 for non-members. Additional information about the Sonoma Odyssey of Food & Wine or the Wine Library Associates may be found at www.sonomadyssey.org.

The Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County (www.sonomadyssey.org) is a non-profit organization that supports the Sonoma County Wine Library with fund-raising, volunteers and special events.

The Sonoma County Wine Library www.sonomalib.ca.us/wine.html is a special collection and service of the Sonoma County Library that is located in the Healdsburg Regional Library (139 Piper St.). Funded in part by the local wine industry, the library provides business, technical, historical and consumer information on wine.

Its collections comprise more than 5,000 books and subscriptions to some 80 periodicals as well as maps, photographs, labels, clippings and extensive current and historic wine information files. Its one-of-a-kind online database may be accessed at www.winefiles.org.

The Sonoma County Grape Growers Association (www.scgga.org) is a trade association representing more than 500 grape growers throughout Sonoma County that works to ensure a viable, profitable wine grape growing industry through education, promotion and community involvement.

The Sonoma County Culinary Guild (www.sonomacountyculinaryguild.org) is an alliance of food, beverage and agriculture professionals and friends dedicated to education, resource sharing and community service. The Guild is an open forum that explores common interests in a convivial

atmosphere. The diverse membership respects the heritage and supports the promise of agriculture in Sonoma County.

Sonoma West Publishers (www.sonomawest.com) produces three newspapers (The Healdsburg Tribune, The Windsor Times, Sonoma West Times & News) and Discoveries magazine.

KRCB-TV and FM 91 (www.krcb.org) is the PBS and NPR station serving the North and East Bay areas of the San Francisco Bay region. It provides educational, informational and cultural telecommunication services in partnership with the community by broadcasting noncommercial programming available from national and international sources as well as its own productions.

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