



# the GRAPE POST

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION of WINE GRAPE GROWERS



December 2014 Issue

## 2014 Annual Grower Caucus

Scott Williams, WAWGG director and owner of Kiona Vineyards in Benton City, predicted the 2014 wine-grape crop in Washington state will be a record that is 10 percent larger than originally expected. The Grower Caucus was held Tuesday, December 9 at Yakima Valley College's, Grandview Campus.

## The world . . .

Williams introduced the first speaker, Erica Moyer of Turrentine Brokerage in Novato, Calif. ([www.turrentinebrokerage.com](http://www.turrentinebrokerage.com)) "Every country is pointing to the United States" where wine consumption is on the increase, she said. American consumers aren't wedded to domestic varieties but are "willing to try other countries' wines." She said, for example, Malbec from Argentina is gaining in popularity with U.S. consumers.

More and more, she said, "The consumer doesn't care where the wine comes from." Another burgeoning trend, she said, is the increasing popularity of red blends and less loyalty to given varieties.

Moyer discussed consumer trends in other parts of the world but stressed repeatedly that in both consumption and wine quality, Washington state "is going to be a force to be reckoned with. It's a great time to be in the wine business here in Washington."

## The weather . . .

Russ Smithyman, director of viticulture for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, discussed the weather, saying 2014 was the warmest summer on record in Prosser, following the warmest spring in 20 years. July and October 2014 set all-time records for warmth as measured in Prosser, Smithyman said.

Those and other positive factors, including the absence of damaging weather events such as hail storms, all added up to "an even better year" for grape growers than 2013, which "was a darn good year."

## The market . . .

## In This Issue

- 2014 Annual Grower Caucus
- WAWGG Supports Minor Crop
- Farmer Alliance
- WAWGG Conference
- Registration Opens!
- Membership Message From Board Chair
- Limited Edition Print
- Did You Know?
- FREE Annual Meeting
- Workshop
- Banquet Guest Chef Selected
- Thank You Sponsors
- WAWGG Board Election
- WAWGG Supports Research



[Click here for event calendar](#)

## SAVE THE DATES

**2015 WAWGG ANNUAL MEETING, CONVENTION & TRADE SHOW**

Convention

Tues, Feb 10 - Fri, Feb 13



Martin Johnson, senior vice president for marketing for Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, was part sociologist, part demographer, part futurist and, certainly part marketer in his discussion of wine-consuming trends, including these:

- Like Erica Moyer, Johnson said the popularity of red blends is on an upward trajectory. Red blends are more interesting to increasing numbers of consumers than varietals," he said. "Blends have more intrigue."
- Some varieties, including Riesling, Merlot and Syrah, have lost ground in recent years. But Syrah, for one, is making up for it with its use thanks to the increasingly popularity of red blends.
- With \$7 considered the line between premium and sub-premium wines, Johnson said, "The world is going premium. The real growth is in the \$10-\$15 range. . . . Look on store shelves and you'll see premiums" getting more and more space. . . . "This is really good news for us. I wouldn't want to be in the sub-premium part of the business right now."
- "Quality is what we've got to be focused on," Johnson stressed. "The consumers are not stupid. They have their smart phones out" when they shop for wine and look up reviews and ratings.
- There are generational changes in consumers' tastes, Johnson said. "Millennials (mid-teens to about age 30) are harder to pigeon hole" than older consumers, he said. They aren't as likely to be loyal to a given variety or winery, he said. "They want quality, flavor and value. We better give it to them. The 'Boomer' generation's wine consumption is going away" as they age. "We've got to crack the code of the millennials."
- Despite the growing popularity of red blends, "Cabernet is king. It is the gold standard. It continues to push the pricing higher. It is the benchmark varietal in Washington."
- "Washington has turned the corner in terms of 'being in the game,'" Johnson. "Eight years ago, when I came to Ste. Michelle, I had to tell people about Washington wines. Now we're like the Seattle Seahawks. We're on the radar."

Erik Hoins of Hogue Cellars also said there has been a shift by consumers away from some varieties, such as Riesling and spoke of the growing popularity of premium wines. "You can't do a proper red in the sub-\$10 category," Hoins said.

#### **Un-grape topics . . .**

Mark Erickson, senior vice president of Blue Book Services, (Credit rating and marketing information for the produce industry). His firm's history is in the fresh fruit and vegetable industry and the wholesale lumber industry. "We provide the tools to find new customers," Erickson said. "We are looking to help this industry grow." ([www.producebluebook.com](http://www.producebluebook.com))

Bill Shibley, regional vice president of Northwest Farm Credit

#### **Trade Show**

Wed, Feb 11 & Thur, Feb 12

#### **REGISTRATION IS OPEN!**

#### **BOOK HOTEL ROOMS FOR CONFERENCE NOW**

WAWGG has arranged special Annual Meeting rates at the hotels listed below. Rooms available at these rates are limited. Book now for best availability.

#### **Comfort Inn, 7801 W Quinault Ave, Kennewick**

Rates from \$89

Expires 1/10/15

Phone 509-783-8396 and ask for WAWGG Block

#### **Courtyard by Marriott,**

**480 Columbia**

**Point Dr, Richland**

Rates from \$124

Expires 1/19/15

Phone 509-942-9400 and book under group code

GGAR

#### **Fairfield Inn Marriott**

**7809 W Quinault**

**Ave, Kennewick**

Rates from \$119

Expires 1/19/15

Phone 509-783-2164 and ask for WAWGG Block or

[Reserve Online](#)



Services ([www.northwestfcs.com](http://www.northwestfcs.com)) spoke on "Filing Uniform Commercial Code Financing Statements."

Vicky Scharlau, executive director of the Washington Wine Industry Foundation, discussed the award of a grant to address Risk Management Tools for Wine Grape Growers and Wineries. She said members of WAWGG will be invited to attend seminars that will provide a "how to" fill out UCC liens and use other tools to help get paid.

In the final presentation of the day, the focus shifted back to the vineyards with Michelle Moyer, assistant professor and Statewide Viticulture Extension Specialist for the WSU Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center in Prosser. Moyer's topic: "Tips for Managing Cold Damage." Her talk was not for the faint hearted as her topics included intracellular water freezing, bud damage, regulated deficit irrigation, fall freezes vis-a-vis winter freezes, cold hardiness modeling and pruning strategy. In conclusion, she said the weather's effect on the vineyards this year "is not a great concern." Moyer can be reached at (509) 786-2226 or [michelle.moyer@wsu.edu](mailto:michelle.moyer@wsu.edu). Her website is <http://wine.wsu.edu/faculty/michelle-moyer/>

The meeting was capped with a reception hosted by Yakima Valley Vintners.

---

#### **WAWGG Supports Minor Crop Farmer Alliance**

*News and information about the activities of the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance (MCFA) is provided to you through WAWGG's membership to MCFA. Just one of many benefits of being a WAWGG member.*

Members of the MCFA Technical Committee worked through an extensive agenda at the group's October meeting in Washington, D.C., illustrating the range of issues facing specialty crop access to crop protection tools. ([see related stories](#))

Notable agency attendees included the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Dr. Sheryl Kunickis, who reported that pesticide resistance is garnering higher levels of interest at that agency; in addition, she advised that her office is also busy on pollinator health and Endangered Species Act compliance issues.

The Technical Committee is scheduled to meet on January 7, 2015, in conjunction with the MCFA Annual Meeting. ([See related story](#))

Read the Fall issue of MCFA Member News [HERE](#)

---

#### **2015 WAWGG Conference Registration Opens!**

Washington Wines - We're on the Map! And, all roads lead to Kennewick for the 2015 WAWGG Annual Meeting Convention, and Trade Show, Tuesday, February 10 through Friday, February 13.

#### **Hampton Inn. 486 Bradley Blvd, Richland**

Rates from \$119 (2 night minimum) - Expires 1/23/15  
Phone 509-943-4400 and ask for WAWGG Block

#### **Hilton Garden Inn 701 N Young St, Kennewick**

Rates from \$127  
Expires 1/19/15  
Phone 509-735-4600 and book under WAWGG group code WINE15

#### **Quality Inn**

**7901 W Quinault Ave, Kennewick**  
Rates from \$80.10  
Expires 1/27/15  
Phone 509-735-6100 and ask for WAWGG Block

#### **Red Lion Columbia Center N 1101 Columbia Center Blvd, Kennewick**

Rates from \$95.95  
Expires 1/19/15  
Phone 800-733-5466 and ask for WAWGG Block group code WAAS0210 or [Reserve Online](#)

#### **Red Lion Inn & Suites 602 N Young St, Kennewick**

Rates from \$115.95  
Expires 1/19/15  
Phone 800-733-5466 and ask for WAWGG Block