

October 11, 2011 – Santa Rosa, CA: Sonoma County Vintners, the premier marketing organization for Sonoma County's wine and wineries, will be issuing a series of monthly updates on the 2011 harvest season from the perspectives of wineries in each of Sonoma County's largest regions.

After last week's rains, we wanted to check with winemakers and their vineyard teams to get a sense of how and if their grapes were impacted.

In the Sonoma Valley, **Chateau St. Jean** winemaker Margo Van Staaveren felt confident that the Bordeaux red varietal grapes would easily weather the moderately heavy rains, she had concerns for the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

To minimize losses and maintain quality, Van Staaveren's team "worked all weekend long to bring in those vineyards particularly susceptible."

In the Russian River Valley, **Rodney Strong Vineyards** Director of Winegrowing **Douglas McIlroy** share
d the following report:

"Fortunately the majority of our vineyards that are significantly susceptible to rain were picked prior to the storms, and the portions that were not will be picked will be very shortly, i.e. Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Zinfandel. We were able to achieve this with the cooperation of our growers and our experienced winemaking and winegrowing team, who stayed ahead of the game scheduling our picks. We feel that this preparation and timing will result in little or no impact on quality from the rain for us with varieties this harvest."

"While we still have most of our Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon to go as the weather clears, these rain tolerant varieties will be our next focus. We want to ensure that these varietals fully express themselves, which what wine lovers expect from Sonoma County. By continuing to carefully harvest our Cabernet, Merlot and other Bordeaux varieties at their optimum ripeness, the rest of harvest should turn out well. Of course we will continue to keep a watchful on the weather ahead and enjoy any warm days we get."

In the Dry Creek Valley, **Quivira Vineyards & Winery** Winemaker **Hugh Chappelle** had the following comments relating to last week's rains:

"While weather conditions throughout the growing season have defined the character of the vintage, the recent and current rains remain a challenge for all wineries both large and small. At Quivira, we do not currently have any concerns about the dilution of aromas and flavors resulting from the late-season rainfall, but we're working extremely diligently in both the vineyards and the winery to sort out even smallest amounts of botrytis and late season rot that already existed in the vineyards due to this year's unseasonably cool weather conditions, but have accelerated with the wet conditions."

"At Quivira, we have the ability to slow down and do the rigorous sorting in both the vineyard and the winery necessary to remove any clusters affected by botrytis and rot. We've also been sorting out any raisined clusters that resulted from the pre-rain, late-season heat spike, which particularly affected the Zinfandel."

In Alexander Valley, **Jordan Vineyard & Winery** Winemaker **Rob Davis** commented:

"Our chardonnay and most of our Merlot slid into our presses and tanks just before the initial drops of rain began -- and I mean just before! It was a real race to beat the weather, and we actually had to cover our Merlot with tarps in the event of an early sprinkle which we got. It was a huge relief as our next opportunity for us to pick chardonnay would have been after the rain and would require at least a few good days of sunshine to dry out the vineyard. The growers we work with already had sprayed a preventative botrytis agent in case the fragile Chardonnay did not get harvested before the rain. The good thing is that the total precipitation is not extensive so that re-entry into the vineyards was quick."

Regarding Cabernet, I think our wines are better when we get one quick sprinkling of rain before we pick it. The variety wears well with a rain or two as long as it is not prolonged. The Cabernet skins are thick-- likened to a natural "rain coat". And the clusters themselves are loose and open to air circulation which inhibits the potential for bunch rot. Next week the forecast is for temperature in the mid 80s to 90s. One week of that and we are back in business."

Nick Frey, President of the Sonoma County Winegrape Commission, shared the following general update on the 2011 Sonoma County grape harvest:

“Growers have passed the half-way mark in harvest. Pinot Noir was 90+% harvested before the rain. Just a few vineyards in the coolest regions remain. Chardonnay in warmer areas, e.g. Alexander Valley, Sonoma Valley and Dry Creek Valley, are mostly harvested. Harvest continues in cooler regions of the county. Most of the Zinfandel is harvested and all the Sauvignon Blanc is in. Bordeaux varieties have just begun with Merlot leading the way.

Overall yields are down due to spring weather. The cool summer has resulted in good acid retention and low pH and slow maturation for flavor development. Expect wines with good structure that pair well with food and with lower alcohols.”

Sonoma County Vintners will be posting all regional harvest-related news on their website, www.sonomawine.com, and will issue monthly updates throughout the harvest season.

About Sonoma County Vintners

Sonoma County Vintners is the leading voice of Sonoma County wine, dedicated to increasing awareness and improving the quality image of its wines to consumers, media, and trade locally and globally. With almost 65,000 vineyard acres planted among the county’s 13 American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), Sonoma County is considered one of the world’s premier winegrowing regions, producing an unparalleled range of varietals and wine styles. SCV has promoted this diversity and quality since 1944, and currently represents more than 165 member wineries and 25 Affiliate Members. For more information on the wines and wineries of Sonoma County, visit www.sonomawine.com.

About Sonoma County Winegrape Commission

The Sonoma County Winegrape Commission was established in 2006 as a non-profit marketing and educational organization dedicated to the promotion of Sonoma County as one of the world’s premier grape growing regions. SCWC’s goal is to increase awareness and recognition of the quality and diversity of Sonoma County’s grapes and wines through dynamic marketing and educational programs targeted to wine consumers around the world. For more

information about SCWC and its programs, visit www.sonomawinegrape.org .

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