

## **Yields below average, but quality outstanding in much of the region**

**December 1, 2011 – Santa Rosa, CA:** Throughout Sonoma County's 14 appellations, region by region, variety by variety, and vineyard by vineyard, reports indicate that there was much variation experienced in terms of yield and timing of harvest, but the general consensus indicates that overall yield was down by an estimated 20% from the average. Nevertheless quality of the fruit that was picked was very good to excellent with distinctive attributes resulting from the cooler-than-normal growing season.

Actual grape tonnage for the Sonoma County winegrape harvest will not be known until preliminary numbers are released in the USDA Crush Report on February 10, 2012, but anecdotal reports on yields varied widely based on varietal and location within Sonoma County.

The cooler-than-normal temperatures allowed slow, gradual flavor development and preserved natural acids in the grapes. Alcohol levels in wines are also lower than average, creating additional factors in flavor development that winemakers are watching evolve in the cellar.

"It was a year I've dreamed about as a winemaker," said **Rod Berglund, winemaker at Joseph Swan Winery in Russian River Valley**

"And the quality I've seen so far, especially in Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Zinfandel, is outstanding. A lot of wines I've been tasting show more sense of 'completeness' than I've ever seen at this stage, and the lower alcohols are icing on the cake."

In the Sonoma Valley, **Chateau St. Jean** winemaker **Margo Van Staaveren** was optimistic about the quality of this year's fruit. "This vintage will finish lighter than normal, but we have some beautiful Merlot from our Asti vineyard in Alexander Valley, some very concentrated mountain Cabernet Franc from Sonoma Valley and bright Pinot Gris from Sonoma Coast."

In the Russian River Valley, **Rodney Strong Vineyards** Director of Winegrowing **Douglas McIlroy** summed it up by saying

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“Overall, this harvest certainly had its ups and downs like we haven’t seen in many vintages, but it has surprised us with how well the wines have turned out.”

In the Dry Creek Valley, **Quivira Vineyards & Winery** Winemaker **Hugh Chappelle** looked ahead to the release of these wines in coming years and said, “Sommeliers should love this vintage for its alcohol and acid balance.”

Sonoma County Vintners has posted all regional harvest-related news and updates at [www.sonomawine.com](http://www.sonomawine.com)

### **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 14 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 175 member wineries and 25 Affiliate Members. For more information on the wines and wineries of Sonoma County, visit [www.sonomawine.com](http://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](http://www.sonomawinegrape.org) .