

Gala Dinner Raises Over \$20,000 For New Vinification and Brewing Lab at Geneva

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by Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: Fermentation science is the focus of Cornell University's new Vinification and Brewing Technology Lab that opened one year ago at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva, NY. But it was the art of fine wine, beer, and food that was the focus of the Fourth Annual Gala Dinner and Wine Auction held at Casa Larga Winery, in Fairport, NY, on behalf of the new facility, on March 9.

Harris Wilcox and his son, Craig, auctioned 48 items on behalf of the V&B Lab, ranging from cases and magnums of wine, to dinners and weekend stays. The black tie affair raised over \$20,000 for the lab. Of that, \$5,000 was pledged by Anheuser Busch, \$1,000 from King Ferry Winery, and \$1,000 from The International Food Network. The National Bank of Geneva and Waterloo Container sponsored the dinner.

Researchers, winemakers, brewers, and industry representatives who will use the facility attended the dinner as well as community leaders, politicians, and wine connoisseurs.

Susan A. Henry, dean of Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, was the master of ceremonies.



Suggested caption: Cornell enologist Thomas Henick-Kling (left) models the Budweiser leather jacket about to be auctioned by Harris Wilcox (right) for \$300, at the Fourth Annual Gala Dinner and Wine Auction held at Casa Larga Winery, in Fairport, NY, on behalf of the Cornell Vinification and Brewing Technology Laboratory, on March 9. CREDIT: Way/NYSAES /Cornell

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".... a wonderful time," was the consensus of one elevator full of patrons, each shepherding a case of wine as they left the dinner. "The food was superb."

The lab represents a university/industry partnership on the part of Cornell and the Experiment Station. When the project was launched in 1997, the Station sought \$250,000 to \$500,000 in start-up funds, and hoped to establish a \$1 million endowment for staff and programming. So far, over \$266,000 has been earmarked for the project from the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. Over \$97,000 has been donated by industry and local wine trails, including \$10,000 from the Seneca Wine Trail. In addition, industry has donated over \$145,000 worth of equipment, including presses, and stainless steel tanks. At last year's dinner, the NY Chapter of the American Institute of Wine and Food established a \$26,538 endowment for scholarships for industry representatives to attend workshops.

The 2,000 sq. ft. laboratory was specially designed for enology and brewing studies. The former machine shop in the Food Science & Technology building at the Experiment Station has been completely renovated. Flooring, drainage, steam lines and ventilation were installed, and an outside delivery and grape crushing area were added. A research/teaching scale brewhouse will be dedicated to brewing technology. The other end of the laboratory holds wine fermentation tanks and an analytical laboratory and office. The central workspace includes de-stemmers, crushers, presses, filters, bottle fillers, and heating and cooling equipment for wine making and brewing.

The lab builds on the Station's well-established programs in enology and fermentation science. Previously, the 10,000 sq. ft. Fruit and Vegetable Processing Pilot Plant at the Station was used for fermentation studies, but New York's burgeoning wine and brewing industries required a separate facility to properly serve their needs. Since 1976, more than 150 farm wineries have been established in New York State. Numerous pub and microbreweries have been started in the last 15 years.

The lab is the premier site in the East for collaborative research and development in the art and science of wine making and brewing. The facility is used by faculty and staff at Geneva, as well as wineries, breweries, suppliers, equipment manufacturers, educators, consumers, national associations, and students. It is a test site for new technologies and procedures. Workshops, research projects, and certification programs help integrate the brewers' and winemakers' experiences with the resources and scientists at Geneva. The goal is economic development through applied science and technology combined with training programs that result in high quality products for consumers.

Last fall, the laboratory produced its first wine. Development of the lab will continue over the next few years as more equipment is acquired for scale-up of new ideas and training of industry personnel and students.

According to Karl Siebert, professor of biochemistry, who directs the brewing program, the Food Science department at Cornell is considering implementing classes in fermentation science to provide undergraduates an opportunity to use the lab in Geneva and learn more about the science of brewing and winemaking. Food Science 430, "Understanding Wine and Beer," currently provides students with an introduction to wine and beer science through the study of the effects of agricultural raw materials, processing procedures, and sensory perception.

Richard Durst, chairman of the Food Science & Technology department at the Station, oversees the Lab. Thomas Henick-Kling, associate professor of enology, directs the enology program. Siebert directs the brewing program. An Enology Extension Associate is being hired to manage daily operations.

"This partnership is an outstanding example of the increasing cooperation between the private sector and the university," said Jim Hunter, director of the Experiment Station.

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