



**Cornell University**  
**College of Agriculture and Life Sciences**  
**New York State Agricultural Experiment Station**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Linda McCandless, llm3@cornell.edu, wk 607-254-5137; cell 607-227-5920

## **Cornell's wine and grape activities expand to meet demand**

By Linda McCandless

ITHACA, NY: Researchers and educators at Cornell University have not figured out how to turn water into wine, but they are figuring out how to turn wine into big business in New York.

"If Cornell were a vintage, 2006 would be remembered as a pretty good year," said Susan A. Henry, the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "Our wine and grape program has developed tremendous momentum and recognition and is capturing the attention of wine experts and educators nationally. This year, we were written up in the Wine Spectator; we have received funding for a new USDA grape genetics facility in Geneva; we have received funding from the state legislature to support viticulture research and extension in the Hudson Valley and a new grape laboratory in the Lake Erie grape region; we have expanded enrollment in our enology and viticulture program; and we have recently recruited several outstanding new faculty."

In May, the College awarded a degree to Nova McCune-Cadamatre, the first official graduate of the college's new Enology and Viticulture Program (EVP), who has taken a job as an assistant winemaker with Constellation Wines-U.S. The EVP, which currently has eight continuing students and five new students, is educating tomorrow's wine industry professionals—the first time that four-year bachelor's degrees of this kind have been offered in the Eastern United States. The program was officially launched in 2003.

Even before the official launch of the EVP, several students were attracted to study at Cornell while the new courses were being piloted. "The first non-official graduate was John Hunt," said Dean Henry. "John developed his own program while he was at Cornell. His parents own Hunt Country Vineyards in Branchport, NY. Art Hunt, John's father, was the first to approach me about the lack of trained enologists and viticulturists in New York."

In the EVP, students who are primarily interested in learning how to turn grapes into wine enroll as majors in the Department of Food Science, with a concentration in enology and a minor in plant sciences. Students who enroll in the Department of Horticulture declare a major in plant sciences in which they study the cultivation of grapes, and minor in enology. Additional courses in vineyard management and wine marketing are being added.

"Cornell's Enology and Viticulture Program is educating the next generation of winemakers and vineyard owners," said Peter Saltonstall, the owner of King Ferry Winery. "They will be much better prepared than the grape growers and wine makers of my generation."

### **New wine grapes**

Another positive aspect of the 2006 vintage year is Cornell's debut of three new wine grape varieties in July: Noiret, Corot Noir and Valvin Muscat. The three grapes are broadly adapted to the cooler wine-growing regions of the Eastern and Northwestern United States and produce high-quality varietal wines. The wines were released by grape breeder Bruce Reisch, professor of horticulture sciences, and Thomas Henick-Kling, professor of enology.

The new grapes join six other wine grape varieties developed by Cornell: Melody, Horizon, Cayuga White, Chardonel, Traminette, and GR 7.

"Historically one of the unique strengths of Cornell's wine grape breeding program is the extent to which the breeders and enologists work together to select new grape crosses based on the flavor profiles of the wine we are seeking to develop," said Henick-Kling, who evaluated the new grape crosses for their wine-making potential with wine industry cooperators.

Henick-Kling, who has worked as Cornell's enologist since 1987, has just announced he is leaving Cornell to become the director of the National Wine & Grape Industry Centre at Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, Australia.

"Thomas has built an excellent research, extension and teaching program in enology at Cornell and we appreciate his leadership," said Dean Henry. "The good news is that he leaves us with an excellent foundation on which to build. He will be sorely missed. We wish him the best of luck." She said a search for a new enologist will start immediately.

### **New wine and grape researchers, teachers, and extension educators**

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has been steadily building its wine and grape program staff to meet their growing teaching, research and extension demands. Kathy Arnick, formerly a research support specialist in the enology group of Henick-Kling, has been hired as a lecturer for the EVP, and is based in Ithaca. She joins Marc Fuchs, a plant virologist who worked on grape viruses in France, and then was hired in 2004 as an assistant professor at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva. He specializes in virus diseases of vegetable and fruit crops with a strong emphasis on grapes.

Three other positions are in the process of being filled. Final negotiations are underway with a leading candidate for a wine microbiologist, and two assistant professorships are being filled in viticulture and wine chemistry. "We expect to be able to announce

them within the next couple of weeks," said Dean Henry. All three will dedicate a significant percentage of their time to teaching in the EVP.

In the Hudson Valley, two new positions-both of which have partial responsibility for grapes-are also being filled. Peter Jentsch has been appointed extension associate in entomology, with responsibility for applied research in tree fruits and also grapes. The final candidate for a second position in tree fruit and grape horticulture is expected to be announced shortly.

"Cornell's commitment to the wine and grape industry is substantial," said Saltonstall. "Not only have their enology and viticulture programs helped make the New York wine and grape industries the \$3 billion success story we are today, but they are training increasing numbers of students for the wine and grape industry, and hiring additional researchers and extension educators. These activities will impact the industry for the next 50 years. The number of new positions coupled with the number of students in the Enology and Viticulture Program means the industry will have more of the expertise we need to meet the burgeoning demand for New York wine and grapes."

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New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, 630 West North Street, Geneva, New York 14456  
Telephone: 315.787.2011



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