



FINGER LAKES VINEYARD NOTES

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FINGER LAKES GRAPE GROWERS' CONVENTION

Winter is here and it's time to start thinking about all the meetings ahead. The Finger Lakes Grape Growers' Convention is the largest meeting of the year for Finger Lakes grape growers. There are several important changes that you should be aware of. First, the date has been moved up to February 3, 1996. Although we have been meeting on the first Saturday in March the last few years, this change was necessary because the Wineries Unlimited meeting in Pennsylvania conflicted with our planned meeting date. Many area growers as well as some of the exhibitors generally attend the Wineries Unlimited meeting. The second major change is that the meeting will move to the Holiday Inn in Waterloo. For the last several years, the Finger Lakes Grape Program Advisory Committee has been discussing the audio and video problems that have plagued the meeting at Keuka College. The committee decided this year that the improved facilities at the Holiday Inn would greatly enhance the meeting. Viewing slides, especially field photos, was next to impossible in the past few years, and the sound system gave us

continuous problems. Another great advantage of the Holiday Inn is that all of the meeting takes place within the same building, with the meeting room and Exhibit Hall adjacent to each other, and lunch is just down the hallway. Although we will certainly miss the hospitality of the Keuka College staff and the wonderful setting of the campus, the Holiday Inn is anxious the help us make this our best meeting ever. The Holiday Inn also has a "Wine Country" theme. The talks will be held in the Chancellor Room, the exhibits and wine reception will be in the Delaware Room, and lunch will be in the Cabernet Room!

A complete program and registration information will be mailed within a few weeks. We hope that you will be able to be a part of this great tradition, now in its 47th year!

1995 HARVEST SUMMARY AND GRAPE PRICES

David Peterson

The 1995 season is being hailed by area winemakers as one of the best ever. Although bud break was at least a week late for most

varieties, the late spring and most of the summer was warmer than average and generally dry. Bloom arrived only a few days later than average. Most vineyards experienced at least mild drought stress, and berry size leading into September was smaller than normal. A few late summer and early fall showers provided just enough rain to avoid severe vine stress, resulting in a nearly ideal balance between fruit sizing and quality. September was generally cool, but a warmer than normal October helped to ripen even the most heavily-cropped vineyards. Although October turned out to be one of the wettest on record, much of the rain was after most grapes were harvested and bunch rot problems were few and far between. The season provided a nearly ideal balance between sugar, acid and flavor for most all varieties. The primary exception was Niagara, which seemed to lag behind most varieties in accumulating sugars. Many growers were having problems meeting sugar requirements for Niagara when the processors first opened, although they eventually ripened (even though they were somewhat out of order compared to other varieties and other years).

Yields were probably best described as erratic, especially from site to site. While most vineyards and varieties had at least average crops, the set problems that have plagued a few area vineyards over the past several years were even more widespread this year. In these blocks, yield loss ranged from slight to nearly 100%. All Native American varieties were affected to some extent, although the problem was observed primarily in Concord, Catawba and Delaware. For more information on this disorder, refer to *Finger Lakes Vineyard Notes Newsletter '95 #7* and *'95 #8*.

Niagara generally had a large crop throughout the area. Excellent yields were also reported with Delaware, which was expected after the small crop in 1994. Concord and Catawba yields were generally at least average, except for the vineyards with the set disorder.

Hybrid varieties also generally had average yields, although a few varieties (primarily Aurore and Dechaunac) were very light in some blocks. Trunk injury from the severe winters in 1992-93 and 1993-94 has been causing

major problems in vineyards that were not renewed since then. Although many trunks appeared to survive those winters, they are still suffering from the injury. Growth and or yield was generally poor in these blocks this year. On the other hand, blocks that have been renewed generally look extremely good now, and most had reasonable crops this year.

Nearly all vinifera blocks were recently trunk renewed, and the crops came primarily from the renewals in many vineyards. Yields in the 3-4 ton per acre range were the norm, and quality was excellent in all varieties.

Given the dry summer, more disease problems occurred than I would have expected. Powdery mildew was problematic in a number of hybrid and vinifera blocks, while black rot appeared in some Native American varieties as a result of some mid-summer infection periods. Most problems on wine grapes were due to poor spray coverage, although some growers appeared to back off from normal sprays too much, presumably as a result of the generally dry weather.

The first killing freeze did not occur until about November 5, so nearly all vineyards had a significant post-harvest period with a healthy canopy to help harden vines off. Vine condition appears to be excellent entering the winter.

The main story in 1995, as in 1994, however, was the generally weak market for juice and bulk wine varieties. While announced prices were similar to 1993 for most varieties, many growers entered harvest unsure of where they were going to sell their grapes. This occurred as the result of restructuring of contracts by Canandaigua Wine Company (the major buyer of bulk wine grapes) to bring their purchases more in line with their needs. Although it appeared that many grapes would be unsold and left hanging on the vine, nearly all grapes eventually found a market. The problem was that many grapes were sold as surplus for \$100-\$150 per ton, below the cost of production for most growers. This, combined with an equally uncertain market picture for 1996 has put some growers in a precarious financial position.



Prices paid by Canandaigua Wine Company for Concord increased slightly, while Royal and the Lake Erie Region processors generally lowered prices, compared to last year. Prices for most other Native American and hybrid bulk wine varieties were similar to those paid in 1994 or slightly higher.

Concord, Catawba and Dechaunac were the varieties most affected by the canceled contracts. Alternative markets for some of the non-contracted grapes emerged, however. About 125 acres of Native American varieties were converted to organic production practices and were purchased by a juice processor. Other processors are now expressing interest in organic grapes for 1996. A number of small Concord growers successfully switched to table grape markets, generally commanding good prices. Bulk wine grapes without contracts, however, were especially difficult to market. Varieties such as Dechaunac and Aurore have essentially no demand by the premium industry and have limited appeal as juice or table grapes.

A bright spot over the past couple of years has been the growing demand for the better quality hybrid varieties. Varieties such as Cayuga White, Vidal Blanc, Seyval, Maréchal Foch and Baco Noir had higher demand and prices than growers have seen in years. Strong sales of these varieties by premium wineries in New York and other states has helped bring prices back to profitable levels and has even created a few shortages. Prices from these markets generally were \$300-\$450 per ton, and an increased percentage of the total crop of these varieties was sold at premium prices. In past years, much of the tonnage was sold at low prices for bulk wines. Nearly all the Cayuga White and Vidal Blanc plantings now have excellent markets, and some new plantings are resulting. The supply of Maréchal Foch is substantially below demand and new plantings are likely to result. Although the premium market for Seyval and Baco Noir has grown somewhat, there is still an adequate supply, and some was once again sold at bulk variety prices.

While some wineries indicated that they were not able to get all the hybrids that they wanted, some growers indicated that they had difficulty

in finding markets for the same varieties. Why is this situation occurring, and what can be done to resolve it? The obvious solution would seem to be increased communication between growers and processors. Growers need to be more aggressive in seeking markets. Waiting for a winery to call for grapes, or waiting until harvest-time to start marketing the grapes is not the best strategy. Wineries also need to do their part by committing to buy a grower's grapes earlier in the season. I have also heard numerous complaints from wineries about not being able to find high quality hand-pruned hybrid grapes. Many growers would be willing to convert back to hand pruning if they had a commitment from a winery early enough to change practices. Growers can hardly be expected to use all the practices expected by the premium wineries without an assurance of a market, and without being paid a price to compensate them for their increased costs.

Vinifera varieties also enjoyed strong market demand and prices in some cases reached record highs. Demand was especially high for red varieties and Riesling, with prices of \$1200-\$1500 per ton for the reds, and most Rieslings were sold for \$900-\$1000 per ton. Surging demand for Riesling, small crops each of the previous 2 years and the lack of new plantings has created a shortage of this variety. The smaller crops of Chardonnay the previous 2 years helped soak up most of the surplus that had been building up in wineries, although prices from most buyers remained in the \$800-\$1000 range.

The main concern for growers of juice and bulk wine varieties in 1995 will once again be market. Most premium wineries in the Finger Lakes had record sales in 1995. The mood should be optimistic for growers of premium wine varieties, and planting of selected hybrids and most vinifera varieties appears necessary to meet their growing demand. Unfortunately, much of the currently planted acreage that does not have a good market is planted on sites that are not suited to most premium wine varieties. However, Niagara (at least 1 processor is still requesting plantings) and cold hardy, high-demand hybrids such as Maréchal Foch provide options for growers interested in replanting sites not suited for more cold-tender varieties.

1995

**PRICES (\$/TON) PAID BY LARGER PROCESSORS OF
FINGER LAKES GRAPES**

	<u>Widmer</u>	<u>Canandaigua</u>	<u>Royal</u>	<u>Bully Hill</u>
NATIVE				
Catawba	225	220	210	
Concord	205	200	220	320
Delaware	200	200	200	320
Diamond				320
Dutchess		200		
Elvira	225	220	190	320
Isabella				320
Ives				320
Niagara	180	180	225	320
Niagara (premium)	225			
HYBRID				
Aurore	225	225	200	380
Baco Noir			210	380
Cascade				380
Cayuga White			280	380
Chambourcin				390
Chancellor				390
Chelois				390
Colobel				390
DeChaunac			220	
Marechal Foch				380
Rougeon			220	380
Seyval			250	385
Verdelet				490
Vidal Blanc				385
Vidal Blanc Late Harvest				560
Vignoles				380
Vincent			280	
White Hybrids	235	235		
Red Hybrids	275	275		
VINIFERA				
Cabernet Franc				540
Chardonnay	1200	700		480
Gewurztraminer				580
Pinot Noir				380
White Riesling			500	900

1995

PRICES (\$/TON) PAID BY SMALLER PROCESSORS OF FINGER LAKES GRAPES

	AMERICANA	ANTHONY ROAD	CASTEL GRISCH	CHATEAU LAF REN	EAGLE CREST	FOX RUN	DR FRANK	FULKERSON	GLENORA	HAZLITT	HERON HILL	HUNT COUNTRY	LAKESHORE	LAKEWOOD	LUCAS	SWEDISH HILL
NATIVE																
Catawba			275	300	250			250		250				325		275
Concord	300				275			240						375		275
Delaware					300			275						425		300
Diamond					300			270								300
Dutchess								300								
Golden Muscat																300
Isabella					250											
Ives	250			300	250									400		275
Niagara	300			300	275			250						300		275
HYBRID																
Aurore	300	225			240			275								
Baco Noir	350	400	375	400		325		342	275	350		350		400		400
Cayuga White	300	390	375	400	370	350		350	275		350	325		400	375	350
Chambourcin				400												
Chancellor				400				425								
Chelois				400				350								
Colobel				400				350								
DeChaunac	350				300			250							300	
Leon Millot														400		
Marechal Foch	350			400				300					350	400		400
Rosette					300											
Rougeon		375		350	300			300		300						300
Seyval	350	400		400	370	300		350	275		350	350				350
Vidal Blanc		375	350	400	400			350	275			450				400
Vignoles		500		400	400			500			350	450		500		
Vincent				400	400			300								400
VINIFERA																
Cabernet Franc		1200		1300		1200	1400	1400	1500	1300						1350
Cabernet Sauvignon		1200		1400		1200	1400	1400	1100	1300				1300		1350
Chardonnay		925	900	1000			1000	1000	750	1000	1300	1000	1000	850	1100	800
Chardonnay (sparkling)																950
Chardonnay (premium)																1100
Lemberger						1000										1000
Gewurztraminer			1000			800	1200	1200	1000							
Merlot		1200		1300		1200	1400	1400	1100	1300						1350
Pinot Blanc							1000	1200	1100							1100
Pinot Gris									1500							1300
Pinot Noir		1250		1000		1100	1200	1300	1200				1200	1300		1200
Sauvignon Blanc									1000							
Sereksia							1200									
White Riesling	825	800		1000		800	900	1100	700	1000	800	1000		900	850	950

**NORTHEAST REGION
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
FARMER/GROWER GRANT
PROGRAM**

Once again the Northeast Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) is calling for grant proposals from farmers/growers in the Northeast region.

They have indicate that the proposals should address ways to accomplish some or all of the following goals:

- reduce environmental and health risks in agriculture;
- prevent agricultural pollution;
- reduce costs and increase net farm income;
- conserve soil and water quality and protect natural resources;
- increase profitable self-employment opportunities and jobs in rural areas;
- enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

Over the past 3 years, 115 grants were awarded to growers studying a variety of projects including biological weed and pest control, low-input crop and livestock production, nutrient management, composting and alternative crop production. Several grape growers in New York have received funding in the past few years. Grape growers might consider projects in cover cropping, mulching, fertilization, and pest control, although you can use your own imagination as long as the goals are consistent with those indicated by SARE.

If you would like a copy of the grant application, please contact the Finger Lakes Grape Program Office. Or for more information, contact Wendy Sue Harper at (802) 656-0487 (Monday - Wednesday, 9 am to 4:30 pm) or write to:

Farmer Grower Grants
Northeast Region SARE
10 Hills Building, Carrigan Drive
University of Vermont
Burlington Vermont 05405-0082

If you have an idea which you think meets the criteria of this grant and would like to try to develop a proposal contact Tim Weigle at (716) 672-6830, or David Peterson at (315) 536-

5134. We would be happy to provide you with further information. Proposals must be postmarked by December 15, 1995.

ROLL WITH THE CHANGES

Barry Shaffer

American business has really been shaken up and altered in the last 15 years or so. Many of the leading companies then, are trailing now. For instance, General Motors has lost a great deal of market share to imports and domestic competition. In the computer industry, IBM is not the newsmaker Microsoft, Compaq, or Intel are today. Change is here and is here to stay. How many of us had even heard of Wal-Mart back in 1980?

So what does this all have to do with the price of grapes? Well, more than you may think! In the juice grape industry, you really see free market forces at work. We're in the midst of a fifth large national crop of Concord in a row. These large crops may be the new norm! Bearing acres have increased since 1991 boosting tonnage. Many unprofitable farms are taken over by new management and yields improve. Acreage taken out of production is usually low yielding, increasing average tonnage figures.

Demand for Concord juice may increase slowly. I think the industry has handled these past few crops well and they have minimized growth in inventories. Unless we get a spike in demand from say, health benefits from drinking grape juice, prices will continue to be depressed at these production levels. Farmers should prepare to make profits at today's prices then to wait for \$250/ton prices to bail you out. What does this have to do with change? Figure out how to make money at \$160/ton without running down your vineyards. Think about retooling your vineyards to varieties that are in higher demand. Make small changes to your operation every year like the successful companies of today. In baseball terms, go for a high batting average instead of swinging for the fences. For example, strive for a sustainable and quality crop than risking more on ripening a 12 ton crop. Remember to think lowering your **cost per ton** instead of cost per acre.

FARM TAX SCHOOLS

Farm Tax Schools will be offered in several locations in the coming weeks. The topics should be relevant to all grape growers and will include:

- Changes in 1995 Tax Rates, Exemptions, Deductions, & Forms
- New and Proposed Tax Legislation, Tax Regulations and Rulings Affecting Farmers and Individuals
- Tax Management and Reporting Recommendations
- Depreciation and Social Security Updates
- New York State Tax Legislation And Changes

The meetings will be held from 9:15 am - 3:30 pm on the following dates and locations:

December 14. Holiday Inn, Waterloo.
Contact: Mike Stratton, 158 S. Main Street, Mt Morris, NY 14510-1595. (716) 658-3250.

December 15. Treadway Inn, Owego.
Contact: Carl Crispell, 56 Main Street, Owego, NY 13827-1588. (607) 687-4020.

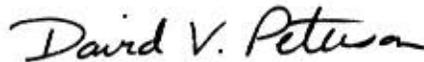
You must preregister by contacting the person listed above for the date and location where you wish to attend.

FARM COMPUTER EXPO MEETING

This upcoming meeting is intended for all agricultural producers, regardless of computer skills and experience. It will provide an opportunity to explore the applicability of farm computer use in any operation, from simple bookkeeping to advanced economic analysis. The Farm Computer Expo will bring together agricultural producers and industry representatives to discuss alternatives and options for maximizing farm profit using computer technology.

The morning session will be a general session for all agricultural producers. In the afternoon, attendees will be broken into groups according to the crops that they produce. The topic for fruit growers (including grape) will be Management Templates for Profit Planning.

An agenda and registration form follows.



David V. Peterson
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Finger Lakes Grape Program

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