

FINGER LAKES Vineyard Notes

Newsletter 3

March 20, 2006

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JAMIE HAWK JOINS FINGER LAKES GRAPE PROGRAM



Jamie Hawk

I'm Jamie Hawk, Sustainable Viticulture Community Educator and newest member of the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County team. My position is funded through a grant from the New York Farm Viability Institute. I will coordinate and implement the activities of a statewide sustainable viticulture project under the guidance of Tim Martinson. The goals of the project center on a grower self-assessment sustainable practices workbook that will be used in cooperation with individual growers to examine their production

practices, leading to changes that are both environmentally and economically friendly.

Born and raised in Bath, NY, I earned a degree in biology from Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1991. From there I spent time in Alaska, South Carolina, and the Isles of Shoals (in the Gulf of Maine) before entering graduate school in Rhode Island. While studying the interactions of climate variability, nutrient dynamics, and primary production in Narragansett Bay, I received my MS degree in biological oceanography in 1998.

My next adventure landed me in Zambia in south-central Africa with the Peace Corps. For over two years I worked side-by-side with rural farmers, teaching them the ins and outs of sustainable fish farming – everything from site selection to pond construction, fish biology and reproduction to harvest techniques, and marketing their product to managing their income. I designed and led numerous training events and farmer tours, all the while promoting the benefits of sustainable agricultural practices.

In 2002, I returned to Africa, this time spending a year in Tanzania and Kenya with the non-governmental organization Global Education Partnership. I administered two divisions, one in each country, that fostered youth and community development through education and entrepreneurial training. Teens were taught basic business skills that stressed a social responsibility as well as a profitable bottom line, community-raised funds were matched for school improvements, and teachers received training in topics ranging from diversity in the classroom to interactive teaching techniques and AIDS education. I was instrumental in the design and management of these programs whose underlying theme was always community development through the actions and attitudes of individuals.

I began working at Hunt Country Vineyards in Branchport in 2003, progressing my way to Assistant Vineyard Manager by the end of 2004. At that time I authored a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant proposal that sought to investigate the use of permanent ground covers to reduce the amount of herbicide used under the vineyard rows and the need for mowing between the rows. The project was funded in early 2005, and I continue to manage its implementation on a part-time basis.

So whether teaching fish farming in Africa or performing research in the vineyard rows, the story remains the same – I seek to promote the ideals of sustainable living (environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social responsibility) through practical solutions. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about the new sustainable viticulture project, by phone at our Penn Yan office (315 536-5123) or via email (jdh73@cornell.edu). I look forward to working with you all!

SUSTAINABLE VITICULTURE PROGRAM: A NEW STATEWIDE INITIATIVE BY INDUSTRY AND EXTENSION.

*Timothy E. Martinson
Finger Lakes Grape Program*

The Finger Lakes Grape Program, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, and Long Island grape extension programs have been awarded a \$150,000 grant from the New York Farm Viability Institute for a project entitled, *Reorienting Grape Extension and Industry Outreach to Promote Documentation and Adoption of Sustainable Viticulture Practices in New York Vineyard*. The project will help us complete a *Grower Self-Assessment Workbook* for sustainable vineyard practices, and will also allow us to do individual outreach to help growers understand and use the resulting workbook as an educational tool.

Background. The project came out of interest expressed by major processors, small wineries, and individual growers throughout the state. National Grape Cooperative, Canandaigua Wine, and the NYS Wine Grape Growers asked us to develop this initiative. Representatives of these groups, the Long Island Vineyard Technical Group, and individual winery owners have participated on a steering committee to help write the workbook and to decide

on goals for doing so. In addition, the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee has had representatives on the committee.

What is sustainable viticulture? Sustainable viticulture involves using practices that are environmentally sound and economically feasible to produce grapes. California guidelines also emphasize social equity - i.e. that worker safety and adequate compensation are also important. Growers in the Finger Lakes have adopted many sustainable viticulture practices - such as diversion ditches, drainage, cover crops in row middles, mulch, different timing and reduced rates for N fertilization, and IPM practices - over many years, with little fanfare or recognition. Sustainable viticulture programs are aimed at both documenting where growers are doing well, as well as areas where there could be some improvements.

What is the workbook, and how is it being developed? The grower self-assessment workbook presents several questions about production practices. It covers all production areas, including viticulture, pest management, weed management, irrigation management, soil and water management, and pesticide management. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, but different management options are ordered from most sustainable to least sustainable. The workbook is being developed from an earlier draft written by Alice Wise and Long Island growers, and the Ag Environmental Management worksheets familiar to many in the Finger Lakes. We have had a series of seven meetings with the steering committee, and have gone through each question with our grower panel.

What happens then? After our draft is done in April, we will test it out in each region of NY with several growers, and will also have a few growers in each production area review it. After modifications, we will introduce it to the grower community at large. The grant will support technical assistance to growers to help go through the workbook process, either individually or through group meetings.

What else will this grant support? Our three grape extension programs will combine forces to produce a newsletter insert, tentatively titled 'Sustainable Viticulture Corner', in which we will tackle in detail how sustainability can be integrated into your farm operation. An early example is likely to be nitrogen fertilization - an area where costs are going up, there are potential environmental impacts and we believe

that there are opportunities for growers to modify practices (as many of you have already done).

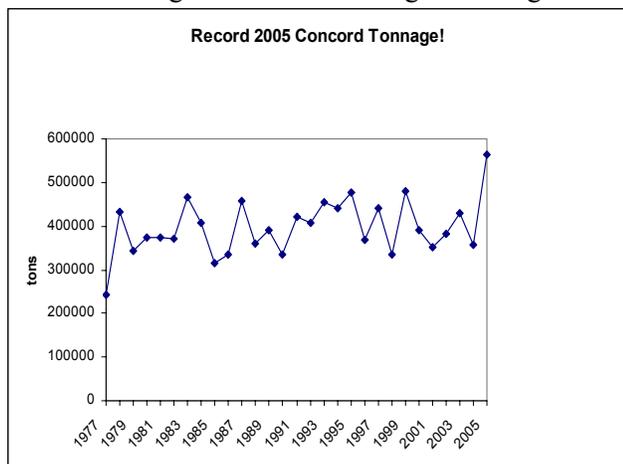
In addition, we will post information about this topic on a dedicated web site that will track ‘where the industry is at’, as well as detailed information about the program.

Our program, in partnership with the industry and soil conservation districts, will parallel existing programs in California, Oregon, Washington, and other programs abroad in New Zealand, Switzerland, and South Africa. The most important aspect, however, is that this will be a grower and industry-driven project that reflects the diversity of the NY industry and our local growing conditions. Stay tuned, as you will be hearing a lot more about this in the coming months.

JUST HOW BIG WAS 2005’S JUICE GRAPE CROP?

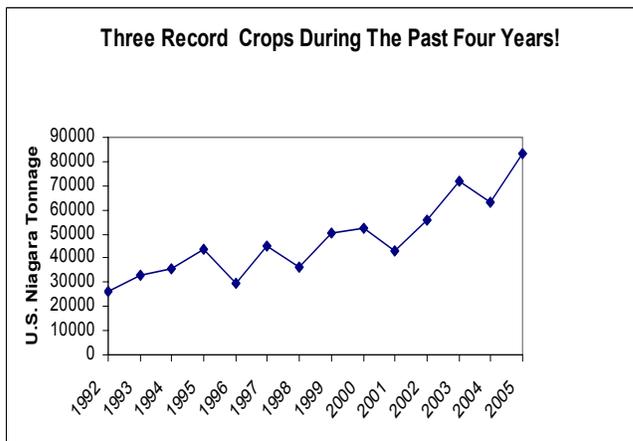
Barry Shaffer

All major growing areas had large crops, but did we have merely a large crop or a record crop? We seem to have record high Concord and Niagara tonnage!



Reported 2005 Concord tonnage is over 563,000. That is over 200,000 more tons produced than in 2004 (admittedly a light year)! This huge crop is why I think inventories will be a critical factor in determining 2006 pricing. Growers should take whatever steps they need to produce a quality crop in 2006, there will be little reason for processors to take poor quality fruit with these inventories.

What about Niagara production? Much of the same conclusions apply due to another record crop. Production has increased faster than demand has grown for Niagara-based products.



Reported 2005 Niagara production was over 83,000 tons! While that seems small in comparison to Concord numbers I’d say that Niagara demand could be quenched with around 50-55,000 tons!

I’m afraid that these expected large inventories will put downward pressure on 2006 Concord and Niagara prices. The long-term average for a Concord price cycle is 11 years from bottom to bottom and from top to top. The last bottom was 1995, so maybe, just maybe, 2006 could be the bottom of this cycle.

THE FUTURE FOR GROWING GRAPES IN THE FINGER LAKES



Jerry White
Department of Applied Economics
and Management
Cornell University

At the end of my talk on March 4 at the Finger Lakes Grape Growers’ Convention on the topic, “Lessons Learned from Progressive Growers Over 28 Years with the NY Grape Industry,” I was asked a question by Tom Mitchell. I had already used up my allotted time, and the program was running behind schedule anyway! I deflected the question with humor rather than taking the time necessary to answer the question. But the question was an important one, and I would like to address it in a few paragraphs.

The question was, “If you were 35 years old would you invest money growing grapes?”

The context of my remarks at the Convention had been directed toward operations in the Finger Lakes that were primarily growing grapes, not those operations with wineries. I had noted that the current situation is

encouraging in that there are now many more marketing options for growers who have the varieties that farm wineries are demanding. With over 200 wineries in the state, and healthy growth continuing, it is clear that the demand for grapes for small wineries will continue to grow—someone will supply grapes to those wineries.

The problem currently is that well over two thirds of the market for grapes in the Finger Lakes is still with major processors, and prices are depressed in these markets, especially for native varieties. National Grape Cooperative is going through extremely challenging times at the moment, as outlined in the Grower Income and Grape Markets session by Randy Graham, Chairman, who also serves as Chairman of the Board of Welch's, Inc. Several other cash market processors take most of the grapes produced in the Finger Lakes, the major player being Canandaigua Wine Company. As I noted in my talk, for the types of grapes being marketed to cash market processors (mostly native varieties for wines sold through national distribution), the low cost producer rules!

So what is the future for Finger Lakes farms involved mostly in growing grapes for sale to major processors? Very simply, there will be some farms continuing to operate successfully in this enterprise. They will be different, however, in several ways from most farms now engaged in this business. How will they be different? They will be

- Larger, and fewer in number
- Operating only on the best sites (soil and micro climate)
- Growing a different mix of varieties (less native varieties and more high end hybrids and vinifera)
- They will need a different set of skills. In addition to growing more efficiently (higher yields and/or reduced costs), they will also need to be more entrepreneurial, pro-active, and marketing oriented in order to market to the growing small winery sector—both in the Finger Lakes and in the entire eastern United States

This may seem harsh, but if you think about it, it is the reality of American Agriculture, and indeed production agriculture in developed countries all over the world. The number of farms in the United States peaked soon after World War I, and since that time, the bar has gotten higher for each successive generation of would be farmers! First new technology was the major factor driving the changes—now, in

addition to new technology, globalization is having a major impact. These factors mean challenges, but new opportunities in global markets such as China and India, which was pointed out by Randy Graham in his remarks.

The Finger Lakes industry, although challenged by climate and by having many farms with site limitations, has some distinct advantages. The Finger Lakes has a growing small winery sector that is currently the largest concentration of small wineries in the eastern United States, and is close to major population centers in the northeastern US. These small wineries will demand more grapes in the future. We have an infrastructure in place, including knowledgeable agribusiness personnel providing inputs and services for growing the crop; lenders; processors; and world-recognized research and extension programs as well. We have the traditions that come from over a hundred years of being a national player in the wine industry.

Having said all that, we cannot “rest on our laurels.” But for those young growers who are knowledgeable, entrepreneurial, industrious, and farming on good sites with adequate capital, I am confident that the future for growing grapes in the Finger Lakes will be rewarding!

QUESTION BOX ANSWERS

Martin Goffinet
Dept. Horticultural Sciences
NYSAES Geneva

[Ed. Note - Each year at the Convention we have the 'Nelson Shaulis Question Box' session to answer questions posed by growers. Here are answers to the questions that we didn't have time to get to during the convention. - TEM]

Deer problems - what are effective control methods? Paul Curtis provided me with the information a grower needs concerning deer protection. Although this question was answered by me at the conference, it bears repeating because there is a nice publication on the web that growers can access.

Go to the site <http://wildlifecontrol.info>

Click on the NE Damage Management Cooperative link

Click on Publications

Under Wildlife Damage Management Fact Sheets, click on White-tailed Deer

it can be printed from the web site in PDF format

Curtis stated in correspondence to me that effective deer control for vineyards will usually include a combination of fencing and/or hunting of antlerless deer. Use DEC DMAP permits during the hunting season, or nuisance deer permits during the growing season. Both types of permits require an application to the DEC regional office. Invisible fencing with dogs might be a low cost option?? It has worked in orchards and nurseries for owners who like to handle dogs, but Curtis was not aware of any grape grower who has tried this. *Note from TEM - One grower on East Seneca Lake has successfully used invisible fences and dogs for the past five years in his vineyard.*

Joseph Sheehy - Is anyone doing biodynamic farming in the Finger Lakes? (Martin Goffinet) For information:

Go to the Web at <http://biodynamics.com/>

Also visit the web site of the Demeter Association at http://www.fbts.com/demeter_certification.htm

The first site listed above gives the background of the Biodynamic farming movement and provides information on its philosophy and what must be done to implement the approaches of, and actually do, Biodynamic farming. The second site gives information on the organization that certifies farms as "Biodynamic." It gives all the factors and practices that are to be incorporated into this method of farming if a person wants to pursue the practice.

Richard Figiel, Silver Thread Vineyard, said that he has been experimenting with biodynamics at his vineyard but was not yet up to the level where the full requirements for "biodynamic viticulture" could be met. Nor could Figiel name other vineyard operators in the Finger Lakes who is up to full compliance. Figiel also state that there is more activity in California and much more in Europe, including many of the most prestigious estates. The best reference at this time is the winegrowing book by Nicolas Joly (see below), who is the winemaker at what is perhaps the most venerated estate in the Loire Valley.

Marty Schlabach, Librarian at the Geneva Experiment Station, has brought to this discussion two books about biodynamic wine and viticulture. These are listed below. The second one listed is the book that Figiel mentioned.

[1] Biodynamic Wine, by Monty Waldin, published by Mitchell Beazley, London, 2004.

[2] Vin du ciel la terre. [In English titled Wine From Sky To Earth: Growing And Appreciating Biodynamic Wine], by Nicolas Joly. [Translated by George C. Andrews], Acres U.S.A., Austin, Texas, 1999.

What are important viticulture and winemaking practice for Bianca? Bruce Reisch, Grape Breeder/Geneticist at the experiment station in Geneva, suggested that Herman Amberg might be the best person to answer about Bianca. I had talked to him about answering at the convention, but we ran short of time. Reisch stated that if you are looking for a cold hardy hybrid, don't choose Bianca. His experience was that it had trouble with trunk hardiness even before the past two severe winters. It may be moderately resistant to downy mildew but not to powdery mildew. It's catching on in Hungary, but doesn't yet look so promising here.

Tim, you probably will anyways, but talk about the New Zealand symposium if you have time. (Tim Martinson). I'm working on a longer article for the next newsletter. In a nutshell, the most interesting idea I came away with was the concept of 'farming for flavors'. While NZ produces other wines, their 'signature' product is Sauvignon blanc. Since 1985, they have built a 14,000 acre, 56,000 Ton export wine industry out of this product, grown primarily in the Marlborough region of the South Island. Its success is attributable to the fact that their climate and soils ('terroir') produce high concentrations of a few flavor-active compounds that define the varietal character. Compared with other Sauvignon blanc regions, Marlborough wines have 4 to 10 times the concentration of these flavor-active chemicals as Sauvignon blanc produced elsewhere. It's the basis for a 'regional identity'. Because the wineries and growers know this, they can gear their efforts in adapting viticulture and winemaking practice to optimize flavors. This is 'farming for flavor'. Can we do this in the Finger Lakes to produce a regional style for our top-end Rieslings? If so, it would be a powerful marketing tool that could build a true regional 'brand' for high-value products.

WINE INDUSTRY WORKSHOP FEATURES SESSIONS ON VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTS FOR JUICE GRAPES AND ‘NEW HYBRID VARIETIES’.

Tim Martinson

Two sessions of special interest to growers and wineries will be held at the **35th Annual New York Wine Industry Workshop** on April 4. There is a modest \$15 registration fee for each session.

AM Session: Presentation of New Hybrid Grape Varieties, held from 9-11 AM on April 4, will feature a repeat of the session we had at the Grape Growers Convention. Commercial and Research wines made from NY73.0136.17, 70.0809.10, and 62.0122.01, along with *Vitis amurensis* hybrid from Dr. Frank’s winery will be tasted. Viticulture and winemaking techniques for these varieties will be discussed.

PM Session: Value Added Products - Alternatives for utilization of grape varieties traditionally used for Juice Production will be held from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM. Presenters will include Floyd Better, International Food Corp. on “The future of the Concord Grape Industry”, John Brahm, Arbor Hill Grapery on “Squeeze More Products out of Concord”; Tim Murphy, Brick Village, Sherman “New Upscale Food Products from NYS Grape Varieties” and Olga Padilla-Zakour, Cornell University Food Venture Center, “Opportunities to utilize native NY grape varieties in the Beverage Industry”

Both sessions will be held in the Food Research Laboratory, rm 251 at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station. Registration will be limited to 30 at each session. For more information contact Thomas Henick Kling 315-787-2277 or Dragana Dmitrievic 315-787-2263 or visit www.nysaes.cornell.edu/fst/faculty/henick/wiw

Grape Grower Convention Thanks!

Timothy Martinson

Once again, our Annual Grape Growers Convention has come and gone. The two-day meeting involved 480 growers, exhibitors, and speakers, with around 230 attending both days, and 100 attending either the Friday or Saturday sessions. Twelve breakout sessions

were held on Friday, while Saturday’s program provided the joint research update session and the Trade show, featuring 43 commercial exhibitors. The meeting came together with the efforts of many that I’d like to acknowledge:

The **Grower Advisory Committee** provided the ideas that were turned into the program. Each year, we get together after harvest and start with a blank sheet of paper and throw out ideas. The weed, soil health, Financial Planning, and Grower Innovation sessions came directly out of ideas from the advisory committee. Members also contacted suppliers for special sponsorships, and helped out with various tasks at the convention.

The support staff at CCE of Yates county, including **Linda Baube**, **Bill Wilsey**, and **Barb Elias** handled registration, program printing, trade show registrations, and numerous other tasks.

Thanks to the **42** speakers who made presentations at the convention. Special thanks to the growers who participated, including **Jim Bedient**, **Randy Graham**, **John Santos**, **John Wagner**, **Peter Martini**, **Rick Waite**, **Steve Difrancesco**, **David Peterson**, and the **Frank family**.

Special thanks goes to the **NY State Women for Wine**, headed by **Donna Gridley**. They organized and poured wines for the wine reception and also for the New Hybrid Variety tasting that was part of our program.



Bob Pool gave the keynote address at the Saturday morning session.

Several companies and organizations provided special sponsorships beyond renting a trade show booth. The **New York Wine and Grape Foundation** provided support for the Financial Management for Growers sessions.

The following organizations donated \$500 each to the program as lunch sponsors:

BASF
Innovative Fence
Farm Credit of Western NY
Finger Lakes Harvester & Vineyard Equipment
Helena Chemical

The following were \$250 Coffee Break Sponsors:

Double A Vineyards
R. E. & H. J. McQueen
UAP Northeast
Lyons National Bank

The following wineries donated wine for the wine and cheese reception, and the **Keuka Wine Trail** sponsored the reception:

Atwater Estate Vineyards
Barrington Cellars
Casa Larga Vineyards
Cayuga Ridge Estate Winery
Dr. Konstantin Frank
Fox Run Vineyards
Fulkerson Winery
Goose Watch Winery
Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards
Hosmer Winery
King Ferry Winery
Lamoreaux Landing Wine Cellars
Lucas Vineyards
Miles Vineyards
Penguin Bay
Rooster Hill Vineyards
Sheldrake Point Vineyards
Swedish Hill Vineyards
Ventosa Vineyards
Wagner Vineyards
Welch's / National Grape Coop



Thanks also to our trade show exhibitors:

American Grape Harvester
Bayer Cropscience
BDI Machinery Sales Co.
Belle Terre
Cerexagri, Inc.
Concord Nurseries Inc.
Double A Vineyards
Durand-Wayland, Inc.
Eastern Wine and Grape Archive
Empire Tractor
exhibitor
Farm & Country Insurance
Farm Credit of WNY, ACA
Finger Lakes Harvester
Gowan
Green Hoe
Growers Nutritional Solutions
H & W Equipment
Helena Chemical Company
Innovative Fence and Trellis Supplies
J. Wagner Construction
JMS Flower Farms
Kepner Equipment
Kersch's Ag Lime
Lakeland
Morton Buildings, Inc.
New York State Wine Grape Growers
NY Wine and Grape Foundation
Paige Equipment
Panhandle Forest Products
Plummer Supply
Raynox 2000 Inc.
Saxco Canada
Spec Trellising
Syngenta
The Lyons National Bank
UAP Distribution
Valent USA
Waterloo Container Company
Wine Packaging by Naylor
WPB Welding

Viticulture 2007. Next year, in place of our convention, We will be having another larger convention, in conjunction with the NY Wine and Grape Foundation and the Lake Erie and Long Island grape programs. **Viticulture 2007** will be held **February 7-9, 2007** at the **Rochester Convention Center**. Look for more information soon about this special meeting!

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 4-7. 35th Annual New York Wine Industry Workshop. NYSAES, Geneva, NY. The program includes seminars on wine marketing hosted by NY Wine and Grape Foundation and the annual Unity Dinner. Also included is a trade show and technical seminar focus on wine bottling. Information and registration at <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/fst/faculty/henick/events.html>



Cornell Cooperative Extension

Finger Lakes Grape Program

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Newsletter No.3
March 20, 2006

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is published monthly by
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