

## Grape Growers Convene in the Finger Lakes

CONTACT: Linda McCandless, [llm3@cornell.edu](mailto:llm3@cornell.edu), 315-787-2417

by Linda McCandless

WATERLOO, NY: Clusters of grape growers bunched into the 52nd Annual Finger Lakes Grape Growers' Convention to soak up the latest information from specialists at Cornell and other universities, in early March, in Waterloo. Particularly well attended was the "New Growers' Workshop," held the day before the convention. The workshop attracted 126 attendees, including about 30 from the Hudson Valley.

"Interest in growing grapes continues to climb in New York, and is particularly strong in the Hudson Valley and the Finger Lakes," said Tim Martinson, of the Finger Lakes Grape Program, in Penn Yan, NY. Martinson co-organized the "New Growers' Workshop" with Steve McKay, the Hudson Valley's Cornell Cooperative Extension educator in commercial fruit production.

"The program was designed to take novice growers through all the decisions they would need to make," continued Martinson. The workshop started with 'economics'. Subsequent talks covered site selection, variety selection, vineyard layout and design, training systems, pre-plant site preparation, planting and trellis construction, weed management, and early care of vineyards through year three. The meeting closed with a panel of three growers, Jeff Morris of Glenora Farms, Rob Thomas of Shalestone Vineyards, and John Graziano, of Millbrook Vineyards in the Hudson Valley, answering questions about their experiences in the



Suggested caption: Tom Cottrell, who specializes in advising small and start-up wineries on production and marketing issues, addresses 120 registrants of the New Growers Workshop, held March 2, 2001, in Waterloo, NY. CREDIT: K.Tomlinson/CCE/Cornell

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business.

The program concluded with a wine tasting and 'grazing dinner' sponsored by *Vineyard and Winery Management* magazine, with representative wines from eight Finger Lakes and Hudson valley wineries.

### **Grape Growers' Convention**

About 300 people attended the growers' convention on Saturday. There were 45 trade show exhibits.

At the convention, New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) grape breeder Bruce Reisch announced plans for future releases of four hybrid grape varieties. Cornell enologist Thomas Henick-Kling talked about what vinifera clones to plant to obtain specific wine character.

"The program featured a special section on grape contracts," said Martinson. Pete Pamkowski, from NYS Dept. of Ag & Markets explained the state's legal requirements. Jerry White, professor of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell, talked about the case for long term contracts. The session closed with examples of contract arrangements from Oregon (Mark Chien, Penn State Cooperative Extension) and Virginia (Tony Wolf, VPI&SU, former NYSAES student).

"As small wineries grow, many are starting to buy significant amounts of grapes from other growers," said Martinson. "In the past, many have relied on informal 'handshake' deals among friends. With supply tightening, an increasing emphasis on quality, and the substantial investment required for vineyard establishment, we think that both growers and buyers will see benefits from establishing longer term relationships through contracts."

Other topics covered during the convention included spray deposition (Andrew Landers, Cornell), intensive drainage tiling (Hugh Fraser, Guelph University), insect management (Jan Nyrop and Greg English-Loeb, NYSAES, Cornell), disease management (Wayne Wilcox, NYSAES, Cornell), Concord productivity (Terry Bates, Vineyard Laboratory), and grape nutrition (Lailang Cheng, Cornell).

The program closed with the traditional wine and cheese reception. Wine was donated by 20 Finger Lakes wineries.

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