



### **2007 Sonoma Harvest Report**

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The 2007 Sonoma County harvest was smaller than average, but extremely high in quality, said panelists at the 2007 Sonoma County Harvest Report, co-hosted by the Sonoma County Vintners and Sonoma County Winegrape Commission on Monday, November 12 at Paradise Ridge Winery in Santa Rosa.

A new element this year for the panel discussion was the addition of grape growers, who were each paired with a winemaker to offer an overview of growing conditions during the season. Peter Marks, MW, moderated the panel, which included Steve Dutton of Dutton Ranch, Dan Goldfield of Dutton-Goldfield Winery, Adam Lee of Siduri Wines, Marne Coggan of Sonatera Vineyards, Dan Barwick of Paradise Ridge Winery, Ulises Valdez of Valdez Vineyard Management, and Steve Reeder and Leland Reichel of Simi Winery.

Steve Dutton spoke for all when he said, "The crop size was down, but we harvested beautiful, beautiful fruit this year. If someone's not making great wine from this vintage, they're in the wrong business."

Several themes recurred throughout the discussion:

#### **Low winter rainfall**

The less-than-usual amount of rain this past winter, in some cases down by about one-third, affected both the timing and the size of the vintage. It caused an early budbreak, which meant that even though harvest began in mid-August the growing season was long enough for the grapes to fully ripen, and also led to small berry size. This reduced overall cluster weight but resulted in highly concentrated fruit.

#### **Smooth, even growing season**

Dan Goldfield commented that everything ripened really evenly this year, a sentiment echoed by the panel. Steve Reeder noted that while there were a few heat spikes in the warm Alexander Valley, they occurred before veraison and did not have an impact on quality. Otherwise, sunny weather and warm but not hot temperatures up to mid-August allowed the grapes to evenly develop both sugars and flavors.

#### **A tale of two harvests**

Warm weather in mid-August combined with

the early budbreak to commence a fast-and-furious initial harvest. Everything seemed to be coming in at once, as early-ripening varieties were a bit late and later-ripening varieties were a bit early. Just as tank space was about to become an issue, fog and cool weather arrived in early September to put a temporary halt to harvest, and in many cases, put sugar development into reverse. Most Sauvignon Blanc was in at this point, along with some Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Zinfandel.

“Some Pinot Noir was ready early, and then there was a ten-day break before the rest came in,” said Adam Lee. “Surprisingly, there’s not much difference in flavors between the early-picked and the late-picked wines; they’re both impressive.”

The respite in harvest was followed by sun and cooler than average temperatures, leading to a long, drawn-out harvest of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Syrah. Low humidity during this period in the second half of September and October prevented any disease pressure, allowing growers to pick only when the fruit was ideally ripe. Unlike 2006, botrytis was not an issue at all, with several panelists commenting on the exceptionally clean and healthy fruit.

Steve Reeder stated that the relaxed pace allowed him the time to go out and taste every single block before it was picked. “What we’re looking for is physiological ripeness and flavor development, and this year we got it -- brown stems, crisp seeds, and round, developed tannins.”

### **Quality**

Panelists uniformly enthused about the quality of the 2007 vintage. The even growing season and cool finish to the harvest allowed phenolics and flavors to keep pace with sugar development, while the small berries delivered exceptional concentration.

Overall yield for the 2006 harvest is estimated to be 190,000-195,000 tons, well off the last two years’ record-breaking 231,000 tons in 2005 and 216,000 tons in 2006.

### **SINGLE VINEYARD TASTING**

The 2007 Vintage Report was followed by a Sonoma County Single Vineyard tasting event with 56 wineries pouring more than 150 single-vineyard wines. Honore Comfort, executive director of the Sonoma County Vintners, stated, “This tasting represents what makes Sonoma County such a world-class growing region -- these wines are a pure expression of the diverse soils, climates, and growing conditions of our AVAs.” More than 200 trade and media attended the successful event.

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