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Foppiano Vineyards Leads The Way As Innovators by Initiating And Hosting The First Annual Petite Sirah Symposium

HEALDSBURG, CA: On August 6, 2002, Foppiano Vineyards hosted the First Annual Petite Sirah Symposium at their winery on Old Redwood Highway. The day-long grower/producer symposium provided Petite Sirah growers and producers an exclusive and unique forum from which to share ideas and expertise. The mission of the symposium was to ultimately bring the consumer a better Petite Sirah.

Focusing on viticultural, enology, and marketing issues, the group discussion forums that occurred throughout the day were designed to begin the free exchange of ideas and opinions about today's important issues regarding growing, producing, and marketing Petite Sirah. Based on questions that participants had submitted in advance, each session was moderated and guided by an industry media specialist. The schedule follows:

9 a.m. – The day's emcee and wine writer David Jones (*Wineworks*), began by introducing the symposium's host, Louis M. Foppiano. To the delight of all, later that morning Louis M. Foppiano introduced Foppiano's president, Louis J. Foppiano.

SESSION I – "Flavors of the Soil" panel discussion was moderated by wine writer Dan Berger (*Dan Berger's Vintage Experiences* and syndicated columnist), and revolved around how flavors of the soil ultimately impact flavors of the Petite Sirah grape.

SESSION II – "Flavors of the Vine," moderated by Steve Pitcher (*The Wine News*, as well as other independent writings), was joined by U.C. Davis's world-renowned geneticist Dr. Carole Meredith. Dr. Meredith's DNA findings on Petite Sirah conclusively link it back to its noble heritage from France's Rhone region.

SESSION III – “Flavors of the Wine” was an informal, walk-about tasting of Petite Sirahs. Dr. Carole Meredith was present to answer any questions that had not already been addressed earlier in the morning. Producers (and some growers) brought their “signature” Petite Sirah for this tasting. The wines were grouped by appellation for comparative tasting by all attendees.

SESSION IV – “P.S. Oenophiles” was a panel discussion on winemaking. Moderated by Gerald D. Boyd (*San Francisco Chronicle*), this panel was also hosted by celebrated Petite Sirah winemakers and producers; Foppiano’s Bill Regan, Concannon’s Tom Lane, and Quixote Vineyards’ Carl Doumani (formerly of Stag’s Leap Winery) and Doumani’s winemaker, Steve Galvan. All members were available to answer (and ask) questions.

SESSION V – “The ‘Hot’ New Rhone” was moderated by Jon Fredrikson (*Gomberg/Fredrikson Report*). Fredrikson came prepared with statistics on the growing and producing of Petite Sirah that clearly indicate it is produced in very small amounts.

According to Fredrikson:

- 2001 case sales for California Petite Sirah was approximately 200,000 to 250,000 cases
- 2001 United States acreage was 3,700 acres
- 2001 Petite Sirah tonnage was 15,000 tons

However, according to the growers and producers who were present, their efforts to increase their Petite Sirah plantings has been steadily increasing as of late.

When asked about the day’s success, Louis M. Foppiano stated, “This kind of symposium seems to be the first of its kind. We had a tremendous response and turn-out for our first annual. Lots of attendees voiced that they didn’t think a group of growers, producers, and winemakers would openly share their thoughts. That wasn’t the case at all. The flow was stimulating and lively. This was clearly a great idea, and the sharing that we’ve just experienced is going to create a much better product. Although, we all love the fact that it’s an artisan wine, and we’re not shooting for massive production, Petite Sirah **does** have the potential to knock everyone’s socks off when they finally ‘get’ it.”

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