



For Immediate Release

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Promote your wines at the unique and affordable El Dorado County Fair Open Wine Competition

Placerville, CA (April 19, 2016) – Swirl...sniff...taste...these are some of the basics we learn when enjoying the fruits of the vine in liquid form. Yet there is so much more to award winning wine, and entering the El Dorado County Fair Open Wine Competition gives wineries the opportunity to compete with their peers—and go for the gold.

Wine competition is serious business. Our staff at El Dorado County Fair continually refine the competition and strive to be unique. Some distinctive things we do include the order of the flights; they are set up based on residual sugar. Ample judges are invited so their palates won't get overtired, then we judge sweepstakes refreshed after a two-hour lunch. Each panel consists of a judge from each industry: Educator (winemaker, enologist, professor – *Are there flaws?*), Media (print, blogs, radio, TV – *Would I want to talk about this wine?*), Wine Sales (Restaurant, Wine Buyer, Tasting Room – *Would I want to sell this wine?*). No one affiliated with a winery will ever judge his or her own wine. The judges keep their individual score sheets (with their notes) and receive the results the next day so they can link their notes to the wines they especially love, and wish to purchase or praise (depending on their industry).

To see the full list of confirmed judges, please visit our wine competition page at <http://eldoradocountyfair.org/commercial-wine.html>. A few of our judges' bios are below.

Mike Dunne— former food editor, restaurant critic and wine columnist for the Sacramento Bee who continues to contribute a weekly wine column and other features to The Bee. He is a frequent judge on the competition circuit, tracking results and observations from his wine travels on his blog, A Year in Wine.

In addition to his weekly wine commentary, Dan Berger's Vintage Experiences, **Dan Berger** writes a nationally syndicated wine column for Creators Syndicate as well as articles for Decanter, Robb Report, Cheers, Beverage Dynamics, and numerous other publications. He is a judge at many wine competitions, including shows in Australia, Slovenia, Belgium and across the United States, judging in at least a dozen competitions each year. He also coordinates two wine competitions in California. He is a speaker at wine symposiums and universities on topics such as wine marketing, trends in the industry, regional character of wines and the healthful benefits of moderate consumption. He also speaks to assorted large groups interested in learning about wine.

Did you know that **Larry Van Aalst** served as a mentor to Kosta Browne Winery founder and winemaker Michael Browne? The man behind the award-winning wines said that as an 18-year-old, he began working at Equus Restaurant in Santa Rosa, CA and sommelier Larry served as his mentor. "Larry taught me what to look for in wine from the perspective of a sommelier," Browne said. "He said to focus on pinots because the right pinots are the best in all the world."

Larry broadcasts the popular *What's Cookin' on Wine: Sonoma Wine Report* every Wednesday on CRN Digital Talk Radio and is a professional wine judge for over ten competitions annually including West Coast Wine Competition, Grand

Harvest Wine Competition, North of the Gate Wine Competition, San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, Sonoma County Harvest Fair, Indy International Wine Competition and Mendocino County Wine Competition.

Mike Wreyford, aka Mike the "Wine Guy" is a food, wine, travel and lifestyle expert. This writer, blogger, foodie, wine enthusiast and spontaneous traveler is the host and producer for "The Good Life," a popular weekly radio talk show. Mike combines his lifetime of travel, 30+ years in the restaurant/bar business, an ongoing appreciation of wine, along with his marketing and entrepreneurial expertise, to share his passion for food, wine and travel with fans and businesses.

She's called the Queen of Pinot noir, the guru of grapes and, occasionally, the vine whisperer. But there's a certain element of the maternal in viticulturist **Prudy Foxx**. Grapes can grow almost anywhere, but that doesn't mean they should, says Prudy, who works primarily with high-end vineyards. Growing grapes can be an expensive endeavor and it can lead to heartbreak. "The challenge is to plant the grapes on a site with the highest potential to produce premium fruit with minimal intervention," she says. "You want the grapes to express the terroir they grow on, and they will do that beautifully when the vineyard is in balance."

Craig Handley, owner and winemaker of Pleasant Valley Vineyards relies on her expertise. "She's by far the best viticulturist I've ever come across," he said. "She's a walking databank on vineyards. Prudy does this out of the love for the vines."

Michael Cervin is the author of the book *California Wine Country* and he covers wines and spirits for The Hollywood Reporter, Forbes, The Tasting Panel, Fine Wine & Liquor Magazine, Decanter, Palate Press, Draft and many others. As a professional judge he has served at competitions in Portugal, Puerto Rico and throughout California including The Critics Challenge, the San Francisco International Wine Competition and the California State Fair. He is the wine buyer for Pierre Lafond Montecito Market and writes a wine and spirits blog, Boozehoundz. Additionally, he is the Geneva, Switzerland Correspondent for Forbes Travel Guides and is the restaurant reviewer for Santa Barbara and Ventura counties for Gayot.com

Jil E. Child is a certified Sommelier and a partner of Wine Tours of the World, a full service, wine tour company specializing in custom wine vacations. For nine years, she was employed by Kendall Jackson Wine Estates, performing different positions such as sales, distribution, education and private wine tasting tours and events. Her 20-year winery and hospitality experience has given her the opportunity to teach *Introduction to Tasting Room Management* at Sonoma State University. Jil also enjoys consulting within the wine industry and is both a panel coordinator and professional wine judge with various wine competitions throughout California. During the day, she is Wine Competition Coordinator at the multi-media magazine, Vineyard & Winery Management.

Zoran Ljepovic, QC/QA winemaker for Constellation Brands International, started his winemaking career at Badel 1862 in Croatia. He completed his MS degree in Enology at Fresno State under Professor Barry Gump. There he developed a passion for wine judging during weekly tastings organized by Fresno State Enology Society. Zoran also teaches a Napa college wine analysis class and VESTA on-line classes in enology. He consults winegrowers in winemaking in California, Michigan and Croatia and judges at various wine judging competitions such as Finger Lakes (FLIWC), Watkins Glenn (EIWC), Indiana (IIBC) and California State Home Winemakers Competition in Lodi.

Chandra Richter began her scientific career at UC Santa Cruz where she earned her BS degree. She continued her studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder where she earned her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology. After completing her doctorate work, she joined the scientific team at E&J Gallo Winery where she manages a research group.

Laura Ness, otherwise known as "Her VineNess," is an accomplished wine journalist and wine critic whose passion for wine was ignited by a visit to France when she became intimately familiar with the concept of terroir. This appreciation for wines of place drives her quest to explore and appreciate the wines of California's fascinating wine regions, from coast to foothills and everywhere in between. She regularly judges a variety of wine competitions and is the founder of the Santa Cruz Mountains Wine Taster's Guild, a professional tasting panel that reviews and rates wines. She writes regularly for publications including the Mercury News, Edible, Wine Business Monthly and the popular online website, wineoh.tv

Back Room Gold Awards are also unique to this competition. The 30+ back room staff who pour for the judges choose their favorite Red, White or Zinfandel in a blind tasting—your typical customers—which makes this, in effect, a People’s Choice Award. In addition, Jody Gray, CEO of El Dorado County Fair shares, “Ours is probably the least expensive competition around; we keep the cost low, so that wineries can make entering an easy choice. Our goal is to promote the wine.”

In partnership with the Media Windfall Group, over 20,000 copies of the results program will be published and distributed throughout El Dorado County, Amador County and the Lodi area. We keep hearing that this is not just the hottest competition in Sierra Foothills and Lodi, but also the hottest *little* competition in Northern California. And boy, are we proud...

To enter El Dorado County Fair’s Open Wine Competition, get your application, entry form and mailing labels at eldoradocountyfair.org/commercial-wine.html. Don’t delay – wine entries are due by May 13th. If you would like to get an invitation in the mail or by email, send your address and/or email address to fair@eldoradocountyfair.org or call the fair office at 530.621.5860.

Calendar:

Who/What: El Dorado County Fair Open Wine Competition Tasting
Includes appetizers and unlimited wine tastes.

When: Friday, May 20 at 6:30 pm

Where: El Dorado County Fair & Event Center, 100 Placerville Drive, Placerville, CA

Tickets: \$30 per person for the public • \$10 per person for participating wineries
\$20 for Industry not entered in competition
21 years old or older • Be prepared to show ID
Limited Tickets available—pre-purchase required by May 13.

Who/What: El Dorado County Fair, “Cowboys & Carousels”

When: Thursday, June 16 – Father’s Day, Sunday June 19

Where: El Dorado County Fair & Event Center, 100 Placerville Drive, Placerville, CA

Tickets: Pre-sale: \$8-Regular, \$6 Junior & Senior; During the Fair: \$10-Regular, \$7 Junior & Senior.
Attendees with active duty military ID get in FREE. Parking \$6 per car.

Who/What: Annual Family Blast

When: Monday, July 4th, 2016 | Gates open at 4 pm | Fireworks when dark

Where: El Dorado County Fair & Event Center, 100 Placerville Drive, Placerville, CA

Tickets: \$6.00 Parking in the Tiers, \$3.00 per person (walk-in at gate), Kids 6 and under are free!
\$15.00 per carload; includes parking on grounds and gate admission for up to 6 people
\$ 45.00 for RV's includes overnight parking on grounds and gate admission for up to 6

Who/What: Cowboys and Cornbread

When: Sunday, July 17 from 11 am to 4 pm

Where: El Dorado County Fair & Event Center, 100 Placerville Drive, Placerville, CA

Tickets: \$15 Per Carload (up to 6 people per car, includes on grounds parking)
\$6 parking in tiers, \$3 per person walk-in, 6 & under free
Tasting Ticket for Chili & Salsa – \$10 - Adults | \$5 - Children 11 & under
Brewfest – \$15 Unlimited Tasting Wristband (must be 21 years or older to participate)