

Kansas Conference, Jan 18, 2020

Kansas Grape Growers and Winemakers Association holds their annual conference in January. This year was a one-day event, January 18th in Lawrence, KS. The conference had two tracks of sessions, viticulture and enology. Invited viticulture speakers were Sarah Mayfield, University of Arkansas; Dr. Raymond Cloyd K-State Entomologist; Dr. Dean Volenberg, University of Missouri; and Wayne Peterson, Midwest Growers Supply. Invited enology speakers included Michael Jones, Scott Labs; Brent Baker, Old Woolam Custom Bottling; and Erin Norton, Midwest Grape & Wine Institute at Iowa State University.

In the days preceding the conference, weather worked against the conference organizers as some of the vendors were unable to make the trip. The actual day of the conference was cold, but clear roads. The session led by Sarah Mayfield focused on some new varieties of grapes being bred at UA, two are named and two not yet released for public purchase. She had wine samples from all four which are hybrids between *V. vinifera* and native north American grapes.

Dr. Cloyd spoke about various pests and some pesticides which may be useful to combat the pests, and as always was an entertaining speaker. Mr. Peterson gave an update on his chemical business and also spoke briefly on mechanization. Dr. Volenberg spoke on plant nutrition and red blotch disease.

Mr. Jones wasn't able to get to Kansas due to weather, so a substitute spoke about enological enzymes sold by Scott Labs. Mr. Baker gave a rundown of his mobile bottling line, and Ms. Norton spoke about tannins in Marquette before and after being subjected to Flash Détente as well as giving information about the testing capabilities in the lab at Midwest Grape & Wine Institute.

Colorado Conference, Jan 21-23, 2020

Colorado combines their annual Horticulture Society and Viticulture & Enology conferences and call it VinCO, held in Grand Junction, CO. The conference is typically three days. For the Horticulture folks, Tuesday is a bus tour of (usually) three sites such as orchards, vineyards, packing plants, etc. while Viticulture and Enology starts conference sessions Tuesday. Wednesday and Thursday are filled with conference sessions and vendor show concluding with a grand banquet Thursday evening.

This year I chose to participate in the Tuesday bus tour which visited Williams Packing Shed (Cedaredge, CO), CSU Western Campus (Orchard Mesa, CO), and Talbott's Cider Co (Palisade, CO). Williams and Talbott's were incredibly impressive packing plants for apples, peaches, etc. Both places also crush and press apples. Williams makes around 100,000 gallons of hard cider each year while Talbott's reported making a combined 600,000 gallons apple juice and hard cider. At Talbott's I got to see a piece of equipment previously unknown to me, a belt press. This impressive machine is around 25 feet tall and is a series of rollers lined with belts. The apple mash is conveyed to the top of the machine and dumped in where the mash then is compressed between the series of belts and rollers until every drop of liquid is extracted. It's quite an efficient piece of equipment which I'd never seen before.

At CSU Western Campus we were fed a delicious lunch followed by a walking tour. Horticulture folks (nearly everyone) toured the CSU research blocks of apple and peach trees while just two of us were guided through the viticulture research blocks including a trellis trial, the NE1020 grapevine trial block, and flanking both blocks are some rows of *vinifera* vines grafted to various rootstocks and planted with the graft at varying elevations in relation to the surface. A fairly recent development in CO is that the majority of their old vines are own-rooted *Vitis vinifera*, and phylloxera has been discovered on a

widespread scale in recent years. Most vineyards are making plans to convert to grafted *V. vinifera*. Some will pull vines and start over, and others are inter-planting grafted vines with the intention of bringing new vines up to the wire while old vines decline with the hope that there will be no missed harvest seasons. A HUGE undertaking!

Finally, I attended two viticulture sessions led by Miranda Ulmer (CSU Viticulture Extension) and Fritz Westover (Virtual Viticulture Academy). Both were well prepared and conducted. Miranda spoke about the grafted vine research while Fritz spoke about observing vine leaves to detect initial signs of disease, blight, or other vineyard issues. This is a good conference also including tracks in business/marketing and enology. I was unable to attend those sessions as I had to spend time in the vendor booth recruiting students for VESTA online programs. Here is a link to the full conference schedule, too vast to list here: <https://www.winecolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2020-VinCO-schedule-10.22.pdf>