

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 varietals 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>

Texas Conference, February 20-22, 2020

Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association (TWGGA, “twigga”) hosts their annual conference every February. Locations alternate each year between Dallas Metro area on even years and Central Texas generally between Austin and San Antonio on odd years. This year the conference was in the Irving, TX Convention Center very near DFW Airport.

I spent most of this conference in the trade show booth, which is the largest grape/wine industry trade show that I frequently attend. It’s not on the scale of Unified (CA) or EWE (Syracuse), but it had over 160 booths. That’s pretty big for between the coasts. Attendance at the conference and trade show is abundant. Our booth stayed pretty busy throughout.

The conference itself had four session tracks: Viticulture, Enology, Sales, and Business Operations. Each track had four sessions on Thursday, two sessions Friday with lots of trade show time in between, and four more sessions Saturday. Notable speakers included Dr. Justin Schreiner, Dr. Pierre Helwi, and Dr. Andreea Botezatu from Texas Agrilife Extension, Dr. Cain Hickey from Univ. of Georgia, Dr. Marco Palma from Texas A&M, Michael Kaiser from WineAmerica, Dr. Carl Hudson, Dr. Brian White, Kimberly Frost, Luke Holcombe, and several well known vineyard and winery owners from across Texas.

The big banquet was on Friday evening which is a change from previous years, but all went very well. Here is a link to the conference schedule and power point presentations: <https://www.txwines.org/2020-presentations-2/>

Missouri Conference, March 4-6, 2020

University of Missouri hosted the Show Me Grape and Wine Conference and Symposium in Columbia, MO at their Hampton Inn and conference center on campus. The schedule this year had grad students giving fifteen minute presentations about their individual research projects through lunch on Wednesday followed by marketing presentations by Jim Moisson from Paul Hobbs Wines, Dr. Nicholas Johnston of SE Missouri State Univ., Rebecca Ritz of Bauerhaus Design, and Barry Tunnell of Tannin Wine

Bar and Kitchen. The day closed out with an industry update from Jim Anderson from the Missouri Grape and Wine Board and the Great Taste of Missouri that evening.

Thursday's program focused primarily on viticulture with presentations from Dr. Dean Volenberg from Univ. of Missouri, Dr. Mizuho Nita from Virginia Tech, grape breeder Ed Swanson from Cuthills Vineyards in Nebraska, Dr. Helen Waite, Dr. Megan Hall from Univ. of Missouri, and Dr. Kevin Rice from Univ. of Missouri. Michael Jones of Scott Labs gave a presented on cider production around mid-day.

Rebecca Ritz had an exceptional presentation including several points related to data from the Silicon Valley Bank annual wine report. She also offered good advice regarding winery website design and user friendliness including having specific buttons on the site for "Plan my visit," "Reserve a tasting today," and "Sign up for email list." She also had ideas on how to maneuver one's winery to appear atop the list when consumers search "best winery near me," which included video content on the site as well as frequently updating and adding website content.

Dr. Johnston presented results of some wine consumer surveying pertaining to Millennial wine consumers profiles and responses to alternative packaging. This presentation was interesting enough that we invited him to speak at the wine marketing workshop hosted by Highland Community College on April 21st.

The viticulture talks were all excellent. They included presentations on grape rot, grape bunch rot, and trunk diseases. Dr. Waite also provided a nice demonstration and hands-on practice in dissecting grape buds. Ed Swanson offered several interesting new grape varieties from crosses he has conducted as well as a wine tasting. Dr. Hall presented some remarkable preliminary findings regarding early-season vineyard sprays (activated yeast applied during flowering) which seem to be affecting cluster sizes, berry sizes, cluster compactness, and fermentation times. Her research is in early stages, but the results of these spray practices were quite impressive. Can't wait to see how her experiments turn out in the coming year.

The conference concluded with an Advanced Beginner Grape School on Friday conducted by Dr. Volenberg. Here is a link to the full conference schedule and power point presentations:
<https://gwi.missouri.edu/events/2020conference.htm>

Unfortunately, HCC V&E staff anticipated traveling to and participating in the following conference which were cancelled due to the pandemic:

April 23-24: Newsom Grape Day (Plains, TX)

April 26-28: National Viticulture and Enology Extension Leadership Conference (Ithaca, NY)

May 27-31: VESTA Annual National Summit (Portland, OR)

June 15-18: American Society of Enology and Viticulture (Portland, OR)

HCC V&E Vineyard Field Day

July 28th, HCC V&E hosted a field day at the Research Vineyard next to the Highland campus in Wamego, KS. Approximately 30 students and industry members attended the field day. The day began with a tour of the research vineyard and a review of vineyard practices at work in that particular vineyard led

by Viticulture Instructor / Vineyard Manager Candice Fitch-Deitz. The discussion including spray schedule, spray equipment, tensiometer and rain gauge, canopy management, pre-harvest activities, and harvest parameters.

Following the lunch break, HCC V&E Enology Instructor / Winemaker Matthew Kahl led tour of 456 Wineries followed by an outdoor wine tasting of various wines grown in the research vineyard as well as bench trial of semi-sweet Chambourcin.

Unfortunately, HCC V&E had scheduled a blind tasting of Kansas Chambourcin wines with the KVFWA group at their quarterly meeting. However this was cancelled due to the pandemic. HCC V&E also had planned to host a marketing workshop in December which was also cancelled due to the pandemic.