

THE WINE PRESS



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President's Message

BY FRAN GITSHAM

The Ultimate Commitment to Judging

The title of wine judge conjures up an image of a triumphant taster proudly awarding a gold medal and brandishing a winning bottle. However, this statement couldn't be further from the truth.

After a long day of judging hundreds of wines, with their tongues blackened by too much tannin and their teeth tingling from the acidity in the wine, ask any one of them and they will tell you that judging is not a glorious endeavor. But their passion has them looking forward to the next day and, subsequently at the end of each competition, the next year.

What sets the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition apart from and above the rest are the 90-plus experienced judges each year who are qualified winemakers or winery principals. This group is a combination of elite seasoned professionals representing almost every AVA in California and the most qualified to fairly evaluate wines of diverse characteristics.

see FRAN, page 5



GOLDEN Opportunities

More than 90 judges taste some of the best California wines over the two-day competition held in Costa Mesa.

BY GREG RISLING

The OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition has long been a cornerstone of the Orange County Wine Society. What started out as a humble endeavor to feature California's burgeoning wine industry has blossomed into one of the most revered competitions in the nation – due in no small

part to the steady stream of volunteers who make each edition a success.

Now in its 47th year, the competition is more than winemakers anxiously waiting to see if their beloved handiwork will be rewarded with a medal. It's a festive, yearly gathering of OCWS members that culminates with the big event the first weekend of June.

see VOLUNTEERS, page 13

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Special Event

Intimate dinner with Al Lago Wines

The OCWS is thrilled to announce that we have the honor of hosting a dinner with Blair Allan and Simone Lagomarsino, the proprietors of Al Lago Wines.

The pair is a force to be reckoned with. Their individual levels of passion and dedication have earned them both impressive resumés and a lengthy list of accomplishments. They have a talent for spotting great potential and this is what led them to purchase their stunning property in the Santa Rosa Valley.

They proudly partnered with winemaker Guillaume Fabre, who further enhanced the exceptional quality of the vineyard. Each vine is carefully tended, hand pruned and picked to guarantee wines of the highest quality. Born and raised in the southeast French city of Narbonne, Guillaume



AL LAGO WINES

6:30 to 10 p.m.
Friday, June 16, 2023
Avenue of the Arts Hotel
Costa Mesa, CA



comes from a family of grape growers and winemakers.

After 24 years in Narbonne, he moved to Bordeaux. Both regions, famous for their wines, are very different from each other. It requires some grape growing and winemaking experience to switch from one to the other, such as different climates, soil types, vine illnesses and more. But life is full of surprises.

Not convinced he wanted to make wine in Bordeaux, Guillaume took a harvest internship at L'Aventure

in Paso Robles. He is currently well known for the fabulous wines of Clos Solene and Benom.

Dinner is \$70 for members, \$75 for guests.

Signups are available on the OCWS website.

— Mel Jay,
OCWS Director

New Members CORNER

The Orange County Wine Society extends a warm welcome to its newest members! Membership for the following members was approved by the Board of Directors at the May 2023 meeting: Michael and Sylvia Brahar, Nancy Harman and Jim Hurst, Lee and Maggie Hinson, Amy Mendoza and Lisa Mondati, Michael and Lynne Levine and Jeff and Kristen Molitor.

As of May 1, the OCWS has 1,103 members.

New Members: For new members trying to log onto the website, go to ocws.org. Your default login is the primary member's email address. The default password is the primary member's password. Both of these may be changed under the tab "My Account" once you log on. However, there may be only one login/password per membership.

— Rochelle Randel,
Membership Chair



Wine, pairing and education fun

Join us for the last two Varietal Hours of the season! These Zoom meetings are a great way to share knowledge and fun stories about wine. Regardless of where you are on your wine enthusiast journey, you will definitely learn something new each time we meet.

Every other Monday, from 7 to 8 p.m., a fun-loving group of OCWS members meet to discuss wines with a particular theme. Pick a bottle that you already have in your cellar or use the Varietal Hours as an opportunity to go to your favorite wine store to buy something new. Each participant shares what they like—or didn't like—about their wine(s) and some great stories related to the week's theme.

Although the event is FREE to OCWS members, sign-ups are required. Please log on to the OCWS website to register for this event no

later than the Sunday night before the Varietal Hour. Couples only need to sign up for one person since this event is via Zoom. A link for the meeting will be emailed to you on the day of the event. You can attend as many of the Varietal Hours as you wish.

Note that we will be going dark during the OC Fair and meeting once again starting in August. We are looking for themes and hosts for the Varietal Hours scheduled from August to December.

Please contact Carolyn at carolyn@ocws.org or George Cravens at george@ocws.org with any questions or suggestions.

We look forward to Zooming with you soon at one of the future Varietal Hours. Cheers!

— **Carolyn Christian,**
OCWS Vice President &
George Cravens,
OCWS Director

DATE	TIME	VARIETAL	Hosts
May 29		NO Varietal Hour Due to Holiday	
June 12	7 p.m.	Wine with Crazy Labels	George Cravens
June 26	7 p.m.	Wines with a Cause	Cathy & Lee Painter

The Wine Press Staff Box

The Wine Press is the official newsletter of the Orange County Wine Society, Inc. The newsletter is published monthly. *The Wine Press* welcomes input from the OCWS membership. Please forward comments, questions and suggestions to Editor@ocws.org

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2022 Wine Competition Results:
 WineCompetition.com

The Courtyard is Comin'!

Wow! Time flies. It seems like yesterday that Leslie Hodowanec and the set-up crew took down The Courtyard. But the year skipped by and it is now time to set up, decorate and dispense the wine. The set up begins July 5 and the fair, with all its fun and excitement, opens Friday July 14.

The key to a successful Courtyard is the small army of volunteers that comes forward every year to ensure that the OCWS's largest fundraiser is fully staffed and ready to pour. For those of you who have already selected your shifts (we are approaching 200 sign-ups), thanks for the enthusiasm! For everyone who is waiting, the sign-ups are open for managers, stewards, cashiers and servers on the OCWS website at ocws.org.

Teri Lane is coordinating the Responsible Beverage



Service training for the servers, stewards and managers. If you have already signed up and need to add some shifts because you might miss some of the fun, you can contact our master scheduler, Rich Skoczylas, at courtyardsignup@ocws.org.

The fair is continuing their online ticketing with daily capacity limits. But Courtyard volunteers will again be credentialed with an entry badge honored any day, even if capacity limits are reached, and a parking pass.

A special note to everyone who joined the OCWS at the fair last year: Remember how much fun it was and volunteer for some fun time behind the bar this year. Cheers!

— Fred Heinecke,
OCWS Director/ Courtyard Chair

At this time, The Courtyard sign-up confirmations are in full swing. Thank you to all of you who have signed up already to support the Orange County Wine Society's biggest fundraiser of the year. We encourage all of our members to come support the OCWS and have fun at the OC Fair—volunteer today!

SHIFTS AVAILABLE

There are available shifts that need to be filled, and with your help, we will have another successful year! A bonus is that with your volunteer fair badge, you will have access to the fair on any day and you will have a parking pass. If you have signed up and would like to add more shifts, please contact our courtyard scheduler, Rich Skoczylas, at Courtyardsignup@ocws.org.

RBS TRAINING

If you haven't signed up already to take the Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) training, sign up now. DO NOT wait! You cannot be confirmed to work your shifts until you take this training and become certified.

FEATURED EVENTS

We are very excited to be bringing back in-person seminars, the Featured Winery Program and award tastings. It's the enthusiasm of you—our volunteers—that creates a great feeling no matter what restrictions are placed on us. We are requesting a minimum commitment of four shifts per volunteer per the OC Fair's requirements.

FAIR TICKETS

All fair tickets to the public are being sold online for specific dates. There will be no walk-up ticket sales for same-day entry.

Set-up, tear-down team of volunteers needed

One of the BEST locations at the OC Fair is The Courtyard, an attractive and safe place to be while appreciating award-winning wines and supporting the largest source of OCWS scholarships.

We need a team of volunteers to transform The Courtyard—not only to make it look nice, but safe too. The Courtyard Set-Up and Tear Down teams are important to help make sure the OCWS passes various OC Fair & Event Center requirements and other inspections.

We have three days to set up the week before the fair starts and one day to tear everything down the day after the fair ends.

Set ups are scheduled on Wednesday, July 5, and Thursday, July 6. We decorate on Friday, July 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The tear down is 9

a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 14. Lunches and snacks will be provided all four days.

There will be a lot of activity on the grounds before the fair starts. This is an exciting way for members to experience the fair before it begins. Veteran and newer volunteers will enjoy being the team that makes everyone inside The Courtyard... Happy Together.

You don't have to be a fair server; you can join our Set-Up Team to help generate money for scholarships.

Members can sign up now on any or all dates you may be available by emailing Les@ocws.org.

**—Leslie Hodowanec,
Courtyard Setup / Tear-Down
Coordinator and
Scholarship Chair**



The Courtyard NEEDS

Set Up
Wednesday, July 5
Thursday, July 6

Decorate
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Friday, July 7

Tear Down
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Monday, Aug. 14

FRAN, from page 1

The competition is for wines produced from California grapes and is the largest of its kind in the world and the second largest competition overall in California. In the 47 years of competition, there has been over 460 judges for a combined total of 3,326 years of experience. It is the renowned list of judges and their associated wineries that has made, and keeps, the competition at the top of its game and the most widely revered competition of California wines anywhere.

We are proud that our competition, thanks to these committed professionals, continues the high standard of judging today led by a current list of elite judges such as Fred Weibel (35 years), Joseph S. Franzia (30 years) and Steve Lohr (15 years).

Just this year alone, four judges are seeing their 20th year with us; seven



judges are reaching the 13-year point; six newer judges are seeing their third year; and there are any number of judges with years in between. Additionally, in working toward securing the future of the competition, we find seven guest judges this year with just their first year under their belts being mentored by the seasoned veterans.

The OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition would not be what it is without the entries to judge from wineries throughout the state; however, the quality and reputation of the competition itself is due in great part to the high standards set by the judges and their commitment year after year to supporting the OCWS' efforts.

Thanks is a small word to express our appreciation to the judges for continuing to gather year after year and keeping the competition elevated above the rest.

Judges, if you are reading this, please know that our heartfelt thanks always go out to you with our admiration for your expertise and our pride in you being a most integral part of the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition.

**—Fran Gitsham,
OCWS President /
2023 Commercial Wine
Competition Chair**

The Results ARE IN

The May Pinot Mini-Tasting was held at seven sites (members' homes) across the county, with over 100 people enjoying 10 wines paired with dishes prepared by the attendees. The wines were served in five blind flights of two wines each and the attendees judged each wine and voted for their favorites.

The first flight was a pair of Pinot Blanc wines, one from Oregon and one from California. Pinot Blanc is not widely known but has been used as a white blending grape in France and Italy for many years. Pinot Noir is an unstable clone that occasionally produces white grapes (Pinot Blanc). The next four flights were all Pinot Noir from different regions. Flight two featured a pair of Pinot Noir wines from Sta. Rita Hills. The remaining three flights in-

cluded Pinot Noirs from Oregon, Sonoma, Central California, Chile and France.

Pinot Noir is one of the wines where the "old world" style is noticeably different from the typical California style. The old-world style is typically less fruit-forward and more of a "food" wine.

The top four wines as rated by the attendees were an interesting mix, with one each from California, France, Oregon and Chile. The overall first place wine was in the top three at all seven sites, while the second place was in the top two spots at five of the sites. The wine from Chile finished fourth overall, but while it was chosen as the first, second or fourth place wine at three sites, two sites didn't have a single guest place it in their top three.

1st Place

2021 Alma de Cattleya
Pinot Noir
Sonoma County, CA
\$34.99

Aromas of cinnamon, sumac and raspberry paste are juicy yet dark and serious on the nose. There's a firm grip to the sip that frames the rich black raspberry core with flavors of thyme, sage and cracked pepper, adding more nuance.

Accolades: 95 WE (Wine Enthusiast);
Editors' Choice

2nd Place

2018 Domaine Matrot
Maranges la Fusslere
Pinot Noir
Premier Cru Maranges,
Cote de Beaune
Burgundy, France
\$42.99

The most southern appellation of the Côte de Beaune. The vines are planted on clay-limestone soil slopes facing southeast, giving a rich and intense red wine. A blend of black fruits and spices with soft and elegant tannins. The 2018 Maranges Cru La Fussière wafts from the glass with aromas of cherries, raspberries and candied peel, followed by a medium to full-bodied, velvety palate with good depth at the core and refined tannins that assert themselves on the back end.

Accolades: 90 RP (Robert Parker)



3rd Place

2019 WillaKenzie Estate
Pinot Noir
Willamette Valley, Oregon
\$44.99

This expressive Pinot Noir offers notes of boysenberry, blackberry and raspberry. Those flavors carry through to a juicy and intense palate that finishes with great vibrancy, purity and length. Medium ruby color and scents of cranberries and orange peel with accents of potpourri, dried tobacco, shiitake mushroom and earth. The medium-bodied palate has an alluring, dusty texture, energetic bursts of acidity highlighting citrus and tea leaf character, and it closes with a very long finish.

Accolades: 93 RP (Robert Parker)

4th Place

2018 Montsecano
Pinot Noir
Casablanca Valley, Chile
\$40.99

This 100% bio-dynamic hand-harvested, single vineyard Pinot Noir is aged and fermented completely in concrete egg. Dark ripe cherry and black fruits jump out of the glass with underlying raspberry fruit notes. A condensed and dark spiraling mid-palate shows layers of minerality and complexity with hints of wet crushed rock (granite), sage, clove and blueberry. Rich full fruit, mineral driven with a long, generous, smooth finish.

Accolades: 95 RP (Robert Parker)

Chef of the EVENING

Wendy Taylor took home accolades for her Cassoulet dish at March's Rhone Mini-Tasting.

It was Wendy's first time making this recipe

"I also never had used Duck Confit before," says Wendy, who joined the OCWS with husband Stacey 20 years ago when the newly married couple sought out an activity they could enjoy together. "It was very flavorful and everything including the fat of the confit was used. It was a perfect complement to the Rhone wines served."

Cassoulet

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb dried white beans
- 8 1/4 cups cold water
- 2 cups beef broth
- 1 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 2 cups chopped onion (3/4 lb.)
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped garlic (6 large cloves)
- 1 (3") piece celery, cut into thirds
- 3 fresh thyme sprigs
- 1 Turkish or 1/2 California bay leaf
- 3 whole cloves
- 3 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs plus 1/2 cup chopped leaves
- 1/4 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1 (14-oz.) can stewed tomatoes, puréed or finely chopped with juice
- 4 confit duck legs* (1 3/4 lb. total)
- 1 to 2 Tbsp. olive oil (if necessary)
- 1 lb. cooked garlic pork sausage* or smoked pork kielbasa, cut crosswise into 1/3"-thick slices
- 2 cups coarse fresh breadcrumbs (preferably from a baguette)
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper



INSTRUCTIONS

SOAK AND COOK BEANS:

Step 1

Cover beans with cold water by 2" in large bowl and soak 8-12 hours. Drain in colander.

Step 2

Transfer beans to 6- to 8-quart pot and bring to boil with 8 cups cold water, broth, tomato paste, onion, and 2 Tbsp. garlic. Put celery, thyme, bay leaf, cloves, parsley sprigs, and peppercorns in cheesecloth and tie into bundle with string to make bouquet garni. Add bouquet garni to beans, then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until beans are almost tender (45 minutes to 1 hour). Stir in tomatoes with juice and simmer until beans are just tender (about 15 minutes).

PREPARE DUCK AND SAUSAGE:

Step 3

Remove skin and fat from duck legs and cut skin and fat into 1/2" pieces. Separate duck meat from bones, leaving it in large pieces, and transfer meat to bowl. Add bones to bean pot.

Step 4

Cook duck skin and fat with remaining 1/4 cup cold water in a 10" heavy skillet over moderate heat, stirring, until water is evaporated and fat is rendered, about 5 minutes. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, until skin is crisp, 3-6 minutes more. Transfer cracklings with slotted spoon to paper towels to drain, leaving fat in skillet. (You should have about 1/4 cup fat; if not, add olive oil.)

Wendy says she loves this type of recipe for a potluck because it is all in one dish.

"A casserole dish is awesome for keeping the heat in the dish while traveling and waiting to be served at the event location," Wendy says.

The recipe is a variation of one she found online, only Wendy altered the recipe by adding cooked, chopped carrots, celery and onion to the dish prior to baking.

Step 5

Brown sausage in batches in fat in skillet, then transfer to bowl with duck meat, reserving skillet.

Step 6

Preheat oven to 350°F.

MAKE BREADCRUMB TOPPING:

Step 7

Add remaining tablespoon garlic to fat in skillet and cook over moderate heat, stirring, 1 minute. Stir in breadcrumbs and cook, stirring, until pale golden, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in chopped parsley, 1/2 tsp. salt, 1/4 tsp. pepper and cracklings.

ASSEMBLE CASSEROLE:

Step 8

Remove bouquet garni and duck bones from beans and discard, then stir in kielbasa, duck meat, remaining teaspoon salt and remaining 1/4 tsp. pepper.

Step 9

Ladle cassoulet into casserole dish, distributing meat and beans evenly. (Meat and beans should be level with liquid; if they are submerged, ladle excess liquid back into pot and boil until reduced, then pour back into casserole dish.) Spread breadcrumb topping evenly over cassoulet.

BAKE CASSEROLE:

Step 10

Bake in lower third of oven until bubbling and the crust is golden, about 1 hour.

The Gold Medal Mini-Tasting is a chance to taste many of the Gold Medal and Double Gold wines from this year's Commercial Wine Competition. The tasting will feature different varietals that won Gold Medals and we try to obtain as many Double-Gold winners as possible.

This event is always a sell-out, so please sign up early! Note: If you are interested in hosting, please contact George Cravens (george@ocws.org). This event is always very popular, so we will need quite a few hosts. The weather should be nice for an outdoor tasting if you have space. If you'd like to request a specific host site or to carpool with another member, please add a comment on your sign-up.

When possible, the event will be held outside.

Locations: Host sites and directions will be announced to those attending approximately one week prior to the event. We try to place you at the location nearest your home or to accommodate your specific site request; however, your assigned host site is also based on the order in which your sign up is received in the OCWS

Gold Medal Mini-Tasting

6-9 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 26, 2023

Various Host Sites

Sign-Up Deadline:
Friday, Aug. 11



office. The cost to attend the tasting is \$35 for members and \$40 for guests.

Dish: Each person/couple attending will sign up with their host site to bring a potluck dish (appetizer, entrée, side dish or dessert) to serve a small portion to 16 to 18 people. There will be a special bottle of wine that evening as a prize for Chef of the Evening (voted on by the attendees of each site). Our winning Chefs of the Evening may have their recipe published in The Wine Press.

We are planning for 10 sites for this mini-tasting. Sign-ups will open on July 1. Due to the high attendance at our Mini-Tasting Programs, we encourage you to sign up early as sites tend to fill quickly. Once sign ups fill up, please call the OCWS office to be added to the wait list.

The cut-off date for online sign up is Friday, Aug. 11. After this date, please contact the OCWS office to determine availability. Due to the advance purchase of wines, you will not receive a refund if you cancel after the cancellation deadline: Aug. 14.

—George Cravens,
OCWS Director



Chefs of the EVENING

In addition to tasting fabulous wines, the May Pinot Wine Mini-Tasting attendees brought a delicious dish to share and then voted on a Chef of the Evening. Congratulations to all the winners and a big thank you to the Mini-Tasting hosts! Look for recipes at ocws.org. The results of the Chef of the Evening at each host site are:

Hosts: Dave & Barb White
Chef: Deb Webber—First Lady Dip

Hosts: Kim & Kristyn Grime
Chef: Cynthia Peterson—Turkey Southern Chile

Hosts: Virginia & Karl Kawai
Chef: Dino Amico—Venetian Mac & Cheese

Hosts: Betty Jo & Jay Newell
Chef: Irene Scott—Chicken Enchiladas

Hosts: Chris & Hank Bruce
Chef: Scott Lewis—Smoked Ribs

Hosts: Beverly Genis & Bob Topham
Chef: Shelly Cohen—Sweet & Sour Cranberry Cocktail Meatballs

Hosts: Wendy & Stacey Taylor
Chef: Janet Riordan—Chocolate Pistachio Tart

—George Cravens,
OCWS Director

Sign ups coming for quarterly meeting, potluck

The next Winemakers Group quarterly meeting will be on Saturday, July 8. Signups will open on the OCWS website in early June.

The beach-area meeting location will be announced approximately two weeks prior to the event. Cost to attend is \$5 per person to cover supplies. All OCWS members are welcome to attend.



As usual, this is a potluck event. Attendees are asked to bring a potluck item to share and a bottle of wine per person (commercial or homemade). I'm sure some of the award-winning wines from the Home Wine Competition will be there to taste.

For non-winemakers, this is an excellent opportunity to see what our group is all about and sample some of the great wines we produce.

Winemakers, our testing team will be providing SO2 testing for your wines. Watch for an email with more details as the date approaches.



Kit winemaking class geared toward beginners

If you've ever wanted to learn to make wine, here's your chance. John Lane from our Winemakers Group will be conducting a Kit Winemaking Class on Saturday, June 17, at the OC Fair and Event Center.

This is a great introductory class for learning how to make wine.

A wine kit contains most everything you need to make a batch of wine: grape concentrate, additives, oak, basic equipment and instructions. It's like following a recipe and having all the ingredients, only you'll make wine instead of a meal. A kit can produce two to three cases of wine, ready to enjoy in about two months.

Since our first kit winemaking class 10 years ago, approximately 175 OCWS members have taken part. Over half of our new winemakers started from these introductory classes. Using kits, many members have produced medal-winning wines at the OC Fair Home Wine Competition.

Kits are a great springboard to making wine from grapes.

At this class you will learn: kit selection, equipment needed, space requirements, step-by-step kit instructions, monitoring your wine throughout the process, racking/clarifying, storage/aging and bottling.

John will demonstrate the process using two separate kits, a Chardonnay to begin the class and a Chilean Malbec to finish. At the end of the class, participants will bottle the Malbec and get to take it home.

Cost to attend is \$25 and attendance is extremely limited. The class will last roughly four hours. There will be a short break with light snacks served. Sign up now on the OCWS website to attend.

Who knows, maybe next year you'll be entering your wines in the 2024 OC Fair Home Wine Competition.

— Ed Reyes,
ed@ocws.org

2023 COMMITTEE

I can't thank my 2023 Wine Auction Committee enough for the amazing job they did this year:

- Chris Bruce – Data Entry
- Hank Bruce – Wine Distribution
- Damian Christian – Event Food and Wine
- Kevin Coy – Wine Pulling & Wine Moving
- Sue England – Volunteers and Workers
- Ellen Flynn – Check-in
- Fran Gitsham – Verbal Auction
- Scott Green – Computers
- Rochelle Randel – Check-in
- Janet Riordan – Check-out
- Tricia Shelton – Check-out

VOLUNTEERS

We could not do the Wine Auction without an army of volunteers. My sincerest thanks to each and every person who donated their time. A special thank you to Bill Redding and his dedicated team who catalogued and prepared the wines prior to the event.

BIG SPENDERS

Hats off to our top 10 spenders for their generous bids that made this event successful:

- Kathy & William Schymick
- James & Pamela Clauss
- Gloria Franklin
- Will Holsinger & Lynelle Hustrulid
- Mike & Cathy MacKenzie
- Dorothy Pemberton
- Bob & Judy Koebnitz
- Lou & Shelley Cohen
- George Euan
- Ed Reyes & Debbie Renne

Wine auction enjoys successful turnout

It has been my privilege to chair the LOCWS Wine Auction for the third year in a row. Many hours of preparation went into our second largest fundraiser of the year and I would like to recognize a host of people who made the event a great success (see lists at left).

This year we held a prize drawing for the volunteers. Congratulations to the following winners: Maleia Leiter—pair of tickets to Jimmy Buffet party; Greg Basile—pair of tickets to ZD Tasting program; Dorothy Pember-

ton—wine gift basket; Lorraine Hammonds—pair of tickets to any 2023 OC Fair wine seminar; Mike MacKenzie—\$50 voucher to be used for future OCWS event; Tina Chan Fornadley—1-hour massage; and Monica McCarthy—1-hour massage.

Many thanks to everyone who made the 2023 Wine Auction a huge success. Look for details about a new online auction to be held later this year featuring artwork, wine and wine experiences.

**—Carolyn Christian,
OCWS Vice President**





Courtyard transformed into tropical paradise

Twice a year, the OCWS holds events for the membership of the Orange County Wine Society. This year, the spring event was held on April 30 at The Courtyard on the Fairgrounds. The theme was “Jimmy Buffett Party.”

Despite being a long way from Margaritaville, the 150+ members and guests came out to enjoy the beautiful afternoon, tremendous music and outstanding food.

The Cooks’ Caucus prepared a sumptuous selection of delicious Cheeseburgers from Paradise, Parrot Legs, grilled pineapple, mango salsa, plantain chips, Caribbean-style beans and rice, quesadillas and Frito green salad. As if those island fares left any room for dessert, a delectable key lime sheet pie rounded out the platefuls. Aye, there was plenty to go around as many of the motley crew found themselves returning for additional helpings of the mouthwatering spread.

The Three 2 Sevens filled the

afternoon with great music and lots of dance tunes and the dance floor was packed all afternoon. Despite refraining from donning coconut bras or grass skirts, the band serenaded their audience with Jimmy Buffett songs to keep with the theme of the party.

The wine servers were busy pouring California wines from the cellar. A margarita machine was rented to make strawberry Roseritas. The frozen concoctions were so delicious none of the 100 that were made had a chance of wasting away again in Margaritaville. Speaking of which, has anyone seen my lost shaker of salt?

As each guest entered The Courtyard, they were given a ticket for a chance to win a door prize. Three lucky people won a prize with a bottle of wine plus either a wine carrier or tropical “It’s 5:00 o’clock Somewhere” shirt.

Over \$1,800 was raised for scholarships through the Wine Wall, run by Rochelle Randel, and via a silent auction and wine-related items donated

by members Lynda Edwards, Jay and Betty Jo Newell, Richard Ward, Linda Flemins, Fran Gitsham and Glenn and Alice Polser and items purchased by OCWS. The bidding was fierce but friendly and all lucky winners were delighted with their prizes.

Some people claim there is a woman to blame but under the tremendous work of Betty Jo Newell, the individual table settings and centerpieces, hanging decorations and palm tree coolers for water and beer captured the perfect equatorial atmosphere. Additionally, many of the guests wore their brightest tropical shirts or parrots to fit the oceanic ambience.

Thank you to all the volunteers and attendees for making this party so much fun. As Jimmy Buffett says, “Life is a journey not measured in miles or years, but in experiences.” The afternoon spent with Jimmy as our inspiration was a truly enjoyable experience!

— Alice Polser,
Event Chair

Calling all photographers

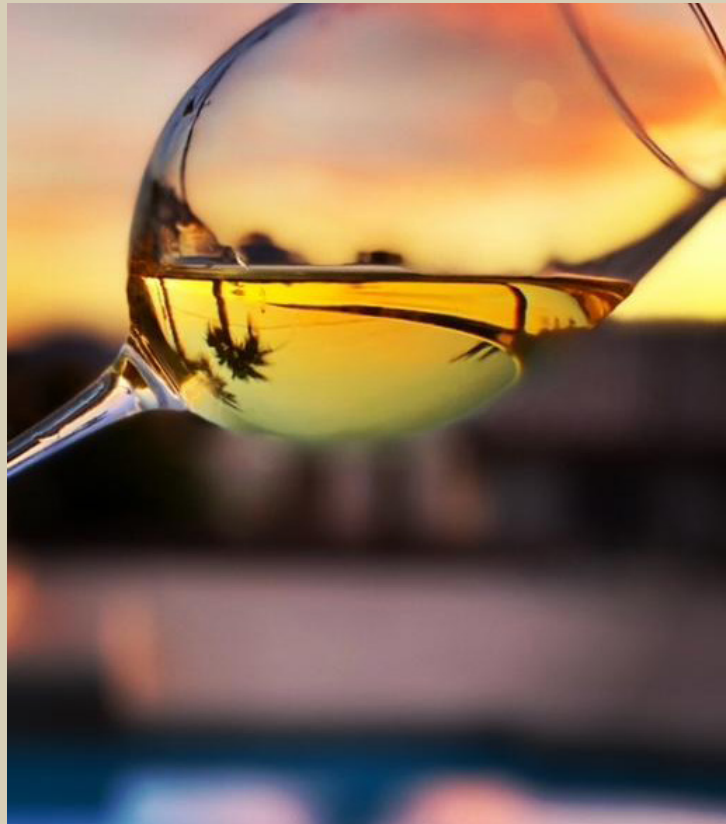
The OCWS sponsors a photography contest and you are invited to participate! As you might have guessed, the subject is “wine,” but this can mean many things to many people.

Do you have a great shot of the sun filtering through the vines just before picking? Or an action shot of wine being poured with some great swirls in the glass? Perhaps a romantic shot of a couple toasting each other?

These are a few ideas and I’m sure you have many more of that great shot involving wine in some way.

Each month the photography committee will select a Photo of the Month for publication in the upcoming The Wine Press as well as on the OCWS website. The winner will also receive a bottle of wine from the OCWS wine cellar. The ultimate goal is to publish an OCWS calendar consisting of the 12 best photos of the year. These may or may not be the 12 monthly winners.

If you have any questions, email Jim@JBurk.net. Jim is the OCWS photographer and head of the OCWS photography committee.



CHARDONNAY SUNSET

OCWS member Tricia Shelton took this month’s winning photo in Lake Havasu City while sitting with her husband in the jacuzzi right before sunset. The couple, members since April 2019, were enjoying a glass of Ridge Reserve Chardonnay when Tricia used her Apple iPhone 11 Pro Max in portrait mode to capture the end of a beautiful day.

THE RULES

- 1** Entrants must be OCWS members in good standing and the submitted photo must have been photographed by the OCWS member when he/she was an active member.
- 2** The photo must be somehow wine oriented. It may be of a winery, vineyard, the winemaking process, the finished product or simply the consumption. But don’t limit yourself just to these ideas!
- 3** The photo or photos may be submitted to the OCWS photography committee anytime but will be considered only for the month it was submitted. There is a limit of five (5) submissions per month.
- 4** Upon submission, rights to the photo are given to the OCWS for marketing purposes, so before you submit it make sure it is your property. Please get permission from any people in the photo to use for OCWS marketing purposes.
- 5** The photo must be submitted in one of the following formats: JPEG, RAW, TIFF or Photo-shop. Any size is acceptable, but it is preferred to be at least 3000x2400 pixels, which is an 8”x10” shot at 300 dpi for printing.
To submit a picture, attach it in an email to Jim Burk at Jim@JBurk.net. Be sure to include your name, phone number, picture location and picture title. Photos are due by the last day of the month to be considered for the next month’s winner.



Volunteers and judges make the OCWS Commercial Competition a success each and every year.

VOLUNTEERS, from page 1

“It’s really very satisfying to see it all come together,” said Leslie Brown, who has served on the competition committee for 15 years. “I’ve never seen volunteers anywhere who have the devotion like ours do. It’s really enjoyable to be with all those people come competition weekend.”

The amount of time spent to successfully pull off the competition truly is a Herculean effort. Leslie estimates roughly 6,000 volunteer hours are needed from a couple of hundred volunteers along the way, beginning in the late summer/early fall when preparations begin for the next competition.

It wasn’t always that way. Only two varietals were judged at the first competition: Chenin Blanc and Gamay Beaujolais. At the time, the competition was created to mirror what was being done at the Los Angeles County Fair.

But while other competitions have wilted away, the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition has navigated its way through hardships, including a global pandemic, to continue to serve as a shining beacon in the world of winemaking.

“

At the end of each day of the competition, it’s like a treasure hunt during the bottle grab.

—Ms. Courtney

”

“No one dreamed of this in the beginning,” said Jane Goodnight, a longtime OCWS member who has been on the competition’s steering committee that is primarily responsible for tallying the judges’ scores and determining if a wine receives a medal. “It’s amazing to me that it’s still here. It has survived and thrived.”

In planning any big event, details are crucial. For the competition, updating the computer program for data entry was a monumental task but has been tremendously beneficial. Swapping out traditional wine glasses with Austrian crystal several years ago clarified the scores of good wines going up and bad wines going down.

“Good wines showed better and

we started seeing more Double Golds,” Leslie said.

Beside the camaraderie, one of the biggest benefits is getting to take home recently opened bottles of wine to taste. As Brown puts it, “People really work hard for a third to a half bottle of wine.”

“It’s like you get a sneak peek of what’s going to be poured at the fair,” said Ms. Courtney, who has been a steward at the competition over the past five to six years. “At the end of each day of the competition, it’s like a treasure hunt during the bottle grab.”

Jane suggests members who haven’t yet experienced competition weekend give it a try because you not only are rewarded with free wine and the opportunity to rub shoulders with winemakers but you can create new friendships.

“I always recommend doing it because the organization was put together to run this competition,” she said. “It’s fun, it’s work and you may be tired because you were on your feet most of the day but if you are really interested in wine, you become more interested after talking to people.”



2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 3-4

**OC FAIR COMMERCIAL WINE COMPETITION
HILTON HOTEL / COSTA MESA**

JUNE 10

**OC FAIR HOME WINEMAKERS COMPETITION
ORANGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS / COSTA MESA**

JUNE 12

**VARIETAL HOUR
WINE WITH CRAZY LABELS / HOST: GEORGE CRAVENS**

JUNE 16

**INTIMATE DINNER WITH AL LAGO WINES
AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA**

JUNE 17

**KIT WINEMAKING CLASS
ORANGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS / COSTA MESA**

JUNE 26

**VARIETAL HOUR
WINES WITH A CAUSE / HOSTS: CATHY & LEE PAINTER**

JULY 8

**WINEMAKERS GROUP QUARTERLY MEETING
LOCATION TBD**

JULY 14-AUGUST 13

**OC FAIR
ORANGE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS / COSTA MESA**

AUGUST 26

**GOLD MEDAL MINI-TASTING
VARIOUS LOCATIONS**

DECEMBER 1

**OCWS HOLIDAY DINNER DANCE
AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA**