

THE WINE PRESS



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Scholarship Winners: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Napa Native

If you grew up in an area known for producing some of the finest wine in the world, are you pre-destined to work in that industry?

Being raised in the Napa Valley can definitely be a blessing for burgeoning oenophiles. For Gabriel Altamura, 35, he saw all the hard work that went into making a stellar wine time and again.

See ALTAMURA, page 13



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President's Message

BY CAROLYN CHRISTIAN

We are off to an amazing start for 2024 with several stellar OCWS events in January, including an amazing Bubbles 'n' Brunch at the Citrus City Grille and the Winery Program featuring Once and Future Wine Company and veteran winemaker Joel Peterson.

Both events sold out! We also hosted two fun and informative Varietal Hours for the new year and hard-to-pronounce varietals. Our quality wine programs are reflective of our 48 years of experience and our dedicated volunteers who make our events such great successes. It truly warms my heart to lead this amazing organization!

February Events

February is dedicated to LOVE and nothing says LOVE like wine! This month promises to be another great month for OCWS events that you will just LOVE — with a winery program from award-winning Bella Grace Vineyards and a mini-outing at the local DeFalco Family Wines.

We highly recommend calling the OCWS to be put on the waitlist for our events, as we do have cancellations and try to accommodate as many people as possible.

Our next mini-tasting—Old World Europe vs. California wines—still has spots available, so sign up soon. And everyone is always welcome to participate in our Monday evening Varietal Hours via Zoom. February's themes are Bordeaux and Women of Color wines.

Feature Events

We have dozens of upcoming events beyond February, but they do sell out, so please check The Wine Press newsletter for information on future events and sign

up on our website as early as possible.

Future events include more Winery Programs (through May), the Spring Social on April 6, the Wine Auction on April 20 and the next Bubbles 'n' Brunch on May 5.

For those who want to try their hand at

making wine, the Wine-makers Group provides education, equipment and guidance.

Details for all the events mentioned can be found in this newsletter and on our website at OCWS.org (login required). Trouble logging on? Please contact our office for assistance.

“Drinking good wine with good food in good company is one of life’s most civilized pleasures.”

—Michael Broadbent
British Wine Critic



Volunteer Opportunities

Our organization is more than just fun wine events. We are an all-volunteer organization that puts on incredible wine events! On behalf of the OCWS, I would like to thank everyone who contributes their time to the organization each year.

The number of volunteer opportunities with OCWS are endless! Consider helping at one of our events for set-up, check-in, pouring wine or clean-up. We have dozens of opportunities for our larger events as well.

The Wine Auction, OC Fair Commercial Competition, OC Fair Home Wine Competition and Wine Courtyard at the OC Fair have both active and sedentary volunteer positions. These events provide unique experiences to learn more about wine, meet OCWS members and wine-makers and share in the organization's success.

To volunteer for an event, please check the event articles posted online for instructions on how to volunteer or contact the event chair.

See MESSAGE, page 9

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 January 2024 meeting: Jerry Benzl, John and Stefanie Fuhs, David Hahn and Carrie Terrones, Donald Lank and Olga Borodina, Steve and Terri Ticer, and Maxi Wood.

As of Jan. 1, the OCWS has 1,048 members.

New Members: For new mem-

bers trying to log onto our website, and who have not already created their own password, go to OCWS.org. Your default login is the primary member's email address. The default password is the primary member's zip code. 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*,
OCWS Business Administrator

Wine AUCTION

It's about time to restock your cellar

Are you ready to restock your wine cellars (or wine racks), and support the amazing work the OCWS does?

Each year, OCWS members catalogue and serve wine at the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition and OC Fair Wine Courtyard. And the following spring, we do our spring cleaning in preparation for the next year's Competition and Courtyard.

What does this mean for you? It means a great opportunity to purchase wines at a fraction of retail!

The 2024 Wine Auction is scheduled for Saturday, April 20, 2024. The event will take place at the OC Fair and Event Center in the Huntington Beach building. If you have never attended this event, we highly recommend it. Enjoy the afternoon

with lots of wine, food, and the opportunity to support our Scholarship Program that benefits eight California colleges and universities that provide wine-related and culinary arts degrees. We have over 1,000 four-bottle lots in both silent and verbal auction opportunities. You can go home with just a few bottles or many cases!

The OCWS Wine Auction is limited to OCWS members only and tickets are available online. At \$25/person, the event is one of the best deals around! Volunteer opportunities are also available before, during and after the event. Sign up online when you purchase your event tickets.

We look forward to seeing you in April.

—*Carolyn Christian*,
OCWS President

OCWS HISTORY & FUN FACTS

The OC Wine Society has been around since the mid-1970s and was founded by a group of home winemakers. Over the years, we have developed into one of the largest wine enthusiast groups in the nation. As we approach our 50th anniversary, the History Committee is gathering information to share about our organization's history.

The number of entries in the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition has varied over the years. In the 1980s, we even had 16 wine coolers entered into the competition.

The committee is asking members to share their historical photos, event programs and fond memories. This month we would like to encourage long-time members

Competition #	Year	Entries	Awards
1	1977	92	43
10	1986	2734	902
20	1996	2306	1023
30	2006	3185	1625
40	2016	2313	1620

to help us gather old paper issues of our newsletter, *The Wine Press*, from 1976 to 2005. You can either scan a good-quality copy of the newsletter or bring it to us to scan for you. Please contact us if you have any historical information to contribute.

—*Carolyn Christian, Hank Bruce,*
Jane Goodnight, Linda Flemings,
OCWS History Committee

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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2023 Wine Competition Results:
WineCompetition.com



Bella Grace Vineyards

6:30 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 9, 2024

Avenue of the Arts Hotel
3350 Avenue of the Arts
Costa Mesa, CA

Sign-Up Deadline:
Sunday, Feb. 4



Bella Grace started with a pair of serious wine lovers who had the same thought, “What if I quit my job and start a winery?”

The owners, husband-and-wife team Charlie and Michael Havill, who were initially involved in engineered products and life insurance and shared the love of winemaking, did just that!

They purchased land in Amador Country and started growing Primitivo, Zinfandel, Grenache, Vermentino, Grenache Blanc, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Mourvedre without the use of pesticides or inorganic substances. Working the vineyard, the estate-grown grapes were sold to regional commercial wineries and home

winemakers. From selling the high-quality grapes, Charlie and Michael started producing their own wines and Bella Grace was born. They have entered the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition for several years and have won numerous awards. Do not miss this tasting!

—*Rich Skoczylas,*
Winery Program Coordinator

Menu

Salad Course:

Dinner starts with a salad of butter lettuce, roasted tomatoes, crispy pancetta, bleu cheese crumbles and creamy peppercorn dressing, warm artisan breads and rolls with sweet butter.

Entree Options:

- Chicken—Grilled chicken breast with a marsala wine sauce, mushrooms, parmesan herb risotto and seasonal baby heirloom vegetables.
- Fish—Mahi Mahi with a macadamia nut crust, heirloom cherry tomatoes, asparagus, miso-honey brown butter.
- Vegetarian—Spaghetti squash with roasted mushrooms, lemon parmigiano-reggiano broth, Campari tomato,



**BELLA
GRACE
VINEYARDS**

sweet corn, fresh spinach and pistachio gremolata.

\$56 members, \$61 guests

Be sure to pick up your meal ticket when you check in to show the waiter. Meals are ordered in advance and cannot be changed at the event.

Sign-Ups

Sign up on the OCWS website to attend this event. Attendees can self-park in the hotel garage and get their

ticket validated at OCWS check-in or pay \$10 for valet parking. Dinner begins promptly at 6:30 p.m. with the meeting following at about 7:30 p.m.

Members may bring their own wine to enjoy and share during dinner. Be sure to wear your name tag. As we need to contract the meals with the hotel, the last day to sign up or cancel and receive a refund is Sunday, Feb. 4.

Volunteers Needed

We need a couple of volunteers to help with check-in from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please indicate you can help when you sign up to attend this event.



Double Bond Wine

6:30 p.m.
Friday, March 8, 2024

Avenue of the Arts Hotel
3350 Avenue of the Arts
Cota Mesa, CA

Sign-Up Deadline:
Sunday, March 3



There's a saying that a winery makes wine with the end goal to make good wine. But that simply is not Double Bond...What?! So, Double Bond doesn't just make wine. They make that moment you hope for when you open a bottle; the poured anticipation swirling around your glass, then dancing on your palate and finally lingering long after the sip has gone.

The meticulously curated grapes, unhurried aging, hand-crafted French oak barrels, heavy bottle and purple-stained natural corks sealed

with thick foils are all supporting characters in the production that is you opening a bottle of their wines and imbibing in all that Double Bond is.

John Klacking's fascination with wine started with a wine-making kit as a teenager that matured at UC Davis, where he and his collegiate roommates brewed their own beer and produced homemade wines. They spent their free time blind tasting the results of their efforts and frequented Napa wineries.

After graduation as a PhD biochemist, John eventually be-

gan collecting world-renowned premium wines and became consumed with the process of making fine wine and producing the very thing he spent so much time trying to find around the world.

Eventually in 2007 he established his own winery, Double Bond. He has earned numerous awards and distinctions from the nation's top competitions and judges, including the OC Fair Commercial Wine Competition.

—Rich Skoczylas,
Winery Program Coordinator

Menu

Salad Course:

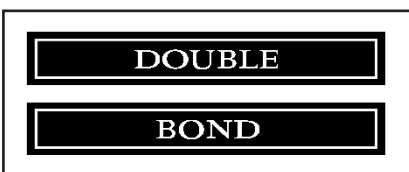
Dinner includes a salad with warm artisan breads and rolls with sweet butter and a choice of the following entrees:

Entree Options:

- Chicken—Chicken parmesan with a rich tomato marinara sauce and mozzarella orzo pasta with wilted spinach.
- Fish—Herby tilapia with wilted greens and mushroom orzo pasta.
- Vegetarian—Cauliflower parmesan with a rich tomato marinara sauce and mozzarella orzo pasta with wilted spinach.

\$56 members, \$61 guests

NOTE: *Meals are ordered in advance and cannot be changed at the event.*



Volunteers Needed
We need several volunteers to help place hand-outs on the tables at 5 p.m. and with check in 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please indicate you can help when you sign up to attend this event.

Reminders

Pick up your meal ticket when you check in to show the waiter.

Sign up on the OCWS website to attend. Attendees can self-park in the hotel garage and get their ticket validated at OCWS check-in or pay \$10 for valet parking. Dinner begins promptly at 6:30 p.m.; meeting follows at about 7:30 p.m.

Members may bring their own wine to enjoy and share during dinner. Be sure to wear your name tag. As we need to contract the meals with the hotel, the last day to sign up or cancel and receive a refund is Sunday, March 3.



San Pasqual Winery

6:30 p.m.
Friday, April 12, 2024

Avenue of the Arts Hotel
3350 Avenue of the Arts
Costa Mesa, CA

Sign-Up Deadline:
Sunday, April 7



San Pasqual Winery, a frequent award-winning winery, is a small, family-owned winery located in La Mesa. Owners Linda and Mike McWilliams are relative newcomers to the winery business, beginning in 2009 by establishing San Pasqual Winery.

Their tasting room became an instantly popular gathering spot with the community. In 2013, they moved winery operations to an industrial area after successfully campaigning to revise an outdated zoning statute

that prohibited “fermentation” activities.

San Pasqual produces 3,000 to 4,000 cases of small hand-crafted lots using grapes sourced from local vineyards and renowned viticulture regions throughout California. Most of these wines are sold directly from the winery and tasting room locations to give a more personal connection with the people who enjoy their wines.

Their wines include Chardonnay, Cabernet Franc and Cab-

ernet Sauvignon, plus lesser known varietals such as Tannat and Teroldego.

They also produce a line of unique passion fruit-based wines (including habanero-inspired “Hot Passion”), that goes perfectly with the San Diego climate.

One of their many achievements include their Malbec—selected to represent California-style Malbecs in Cahors, France, “home” of Malbec.

—Rich Skoczylas,
Winery Program Coordinator

Menu

This evening starts with a light, sit-down, plated dinner. Each attendee will receive a menu card picked up when you check in that you show your server the meal you have selected.

Salad Course:

Crisp Romaine lettuce hearts with roasted heirloom tomatoes, pepitas, shaved parmesan and creamy Caesar dressing, warm artisan breads and rolls with sweet butter.

Entree Options:

- Chicken—Herb-crusted breast of chicken with crushed fingerling potatoes, roasted baby vegetables, herb



oil, carrot puree and fennel orange reduction.

- Fish—Grilled salmon with mustard dill sauce, tomatoes and red onion on top and crushed fingerling potatoes served with grilled zucchini.
- Vegetarian—Eggplant pomodoro with fresh plum tomatoes, green olives and capers served over angel hair pasta.

\$56 members, \$61 guests

NOTE: *Meals are ordered in advance and cannot be changed at the event.*

Reminders

Sign up on the OCWS website to attend this event. Attendees can self-park in the hotel garage and get their ticket validated at OCWS check-in or pay \$10 for valet parking. Dinner begins promptly at 6:30 p.m. with the meeting at about 7:30 p.m. Members may bring their own wine to enjoy and share during dinner. Be sure to wear your name tag. As we need to contract the meals with the hotel, the last day to sign up or cancel and receive a refund is Sunday, April 7.

Volunteers Needed

We need a couple of volunteers to help with check-in 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please indicate you can help when you sign up.



Have you ever wondered how California wines compare to wines from their country of origin?

We've done tastings of California Pinot Noir and Rhones against ones from France, but this time, we'll expand things a bit to compare Italian, Spanish and other European wines against a California version of the same varietal.

Guests will rate the wines tasted blind in pairs, try to identify the one that came from California vs. Europe, then discuss their ratings. Overall ratings from each site will be published in The Wine Press wrap-up article.

Hosts: Mini-Tastings are held at various host sites around Orange County. If you would like to host this event, please e-mail George Cravens at george@ocws.org or call/text him at (949) 510-5318. You may need to sign up and pay until hosts are selected. Reimbursement will be made for all host sites.

Locations: Host sites and directions will be announced to those at-

Old World vs. California

6-9 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 24, 2024

Various Host Sites

Sign-Up Deadline:

Monday, Feb. 12

tending 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 office.

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

Mini-Etiquette: Each person attending brings a potluck dish (appetizer, entrée, side dish or dessert)

ready to serve a small portion to 16 people. Please coordinate your food selection with your host site to ensure an appropriate balance of food types served during the evening.

Please plan on arriving promptly at 6 p.m. so the event can get started on time and bring your own wine glasses for tasting—keep in mind the wines are served in flights of two.

Chef of the Evening: There will be a special bottle of wine that evening as a prize for Chef of the Evening. Our winning Chefs of the Evening can also have their recipe published in the The Wine Press.

Sign-Up Deadline: The cutoff date for online sign-ups is Monday, Feb. 12. After this date please contact the OCWS office to determine availability or to be added to a waiting list.

Cancellation Deadline: The cancellation deadline is Feb. 12 for a refund. After that date, due to the advance purchase of wines, you will not receive a refund unless there is a waiting list.

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, OCWS member and self-proclaimed chef Denise Scandura got busy in her kitchen. She started a blog, titled it Dishes by Denise and aspired to post a recipe every day. Her Chicken Pot Pie was one of them. The dish also garnered Chef of the Evening honors at the Gold Medal Mini-Tasting last fall.



Chicken Pot Pie

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb. chicken breasts
- 3/4 stick of butter
- 7 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 3 cups chicken broth (left over from cooking chicken in the crock pot)
- 1/2 cup of heavy cream
- 12 oz. frozen vegetables (carrots, peas, corn and green beans)
- Salt and pepper
- Paprika
- Egg
- Premade pie crusts (2)

Instructions

ADD chicken breasts to slow cooker in a single layer. Cook on low 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours. Let cool then shred. Be sure to save the broth from the chicken.

PREHEAT oven to 350 degrees.

MELT butter in an oven-safe pan, then add the flour, stirring constantly until it becomes a roux. This takes a few minutes; wait until it becomes slightly brown.

SLOWLY add the warm broth and cook until the mixtures thickens, then add heavy cream (or half & half).'

HEAT vegetables in microwave on high 4-5 minutes.

ADD chicken and vegetables and sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika to taste.

NOTE: Since my pan is so large, I use both pie crusts, mold them together and roll them out. If you don't have a rolling pin, you can use a bottle of wine.

ROLL dough gently onto the rolling pin. Put it over the pie and roll it out. This is a tip that works well. Cut 3 to 5 slits on the pie dough so steam can escape.

CRACK an egg and whisk it up. Take your pastry brush and brush egg on top of the pie.

COOK for 35 minutes or until crust is golden and the filling is bubbling hot.

Wine WISDOM

What does % ABV on my wine's label mean?

Winemakers are required by federal and state laws to list the alcohol level of a wine on the wine's label. And "% ABV" stands for percentage alcohol by volume.

Since wine labels get printed before final alcohol levels can be measured, California laws permit some leeway on the stated alcohol level.

If your wine's label states 14% ABV or less, the allowed variance is 1.5%, and if the label states 14.1% ABV or higher, the allowed variance is 1%. So, a wine labeled 14% ABV can be as high as 15.5% or as low as 12.5% and a wine labeled

12.5% ABV can be as low as 11% and as high as 14%, while a wine labeled 14.1% ABV can be as high as 15.1% and as low as 13.1%.

Too much math? Nevermind. If you like the wine then enjoy it. Cheers!

Do you have a question on wine? Please submit it to us at office@ocws.org.



—Linda Flemins, CL Keedy and the Wine Education Committee

Spring SOCIAL

Let the good times roll!

Our Spring Membership Event is fast approaching and we are taking a slice of New Orleans and all of its festive spirit. On April 6, from 3-7 p.m. in The Courtyard at the Orange County Fairgrounds, we will be wining, dancing, eating, auctioning and enjoying good times with our members and their guests.

New Orleans is a city filled with history, superstitions, religion, celebrations and beauty. Although the date for an official Mardi Gras will have passed, we will still bring that celebration into The Courtyard, along with the French Quarter, the Garden District and the music from New Orleans in our setup.

To keep the party rolling, we plan to have live music, door prizes, a silent auction, incredible food from the Cook's Caucus and free-flowing wine from the OCWS Wine Cellar.

Grab your beads, masks and party attitude and join us for the fun.

Tickets are \$45 per member and \$55 per guest. Watch the Events section of the calendar for the opportunity to purchase tickets. They do go quickly!

Parking is free for this event. A park-



ing map will be emailed a few days prior to the event.

Volunteers will be needed for the sign-in desk, wine servers, set up, clean up, food servers and silent auction assistance.

You can volunteer on the website when you purchase your tickets.

The last day to purchase tickets is April 3, 2024, by close of business of the OCWS office at 4 p.m.

—Alice Polser,
Membership Events Co-Chair
—Betty Jo Newell,
Membership Events Co-Chair

MESSAGE, from page 2

Communications

It is important to stay informed of our upcoming events. We communicate with our membership through Constant Contact, the announcement of our monthly newsletter, weekly upcoming event reminders and emails on specific events. If you are not receiving these announcements, please check your spam folder or contact

our office for assistance. While your logon to our website is only available using the primary member's email, our eblasts are sent to both members and co-members, if we have emails for each on file. Please log on to your OCWS account to check your member and co-member emails listed in your profile.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our future events! Happy Valentine's Day to you all!

Donations WANTED!

The Spring Membership Event has a few ways to support the OCWS Scholarship Program.

The Wine Wall: You can win a bottle of wine for \$20. We typically raise at least \$1,000 for scholarships each time we have the Wine Wall.

The Silent Auction: All proceeds go to the scholarship program. At the most recent silent auction, we raised just over \$1,000.

Donations: We are looking for donations of wine. The wines must be valued at \$20 or more. It is so fun to win a great bottle of wine and just as fun to watch people try a bottle you donated!

Consider donating wine-related items in great condition, but that you may have in duplicates, such as:

Tickets to sporting events

• • •

Gift cards

• • •

Baskets

• • •

Gardening tools and plants

• • •

Snacks, cooking utensils, seasonings, grill tools, etc.

Donations can be dropped off to the OCWS office. If you leave your name and the estimated value of your donations, we can provide a receipt for the items. Thank you!

—Alice Polser,
Spring Membership
Event Co-Chair

Varietal HOUR

Check out the FUN that never stops!

Who would like to attend a FREE wine event and not even need a designated driver?

How about attending an event with like-minded people who enjoy wine?

How about attending without even getting up off your couch?

Well, the OCWS has been hosting these exact events the past three years and we've been fine tuning and improving them as we go.

Could we solidify the deal by promising that you will laugh, learn about wine and talk with other OCWS members via Zoom? I thought so! We're always happy to have new members join the fun and you will likely learn something new (or have the chance to teach us something new) and meet some people who enjoy wine.

Each event has a theme, but we never "kick anyone off the island," so it never matters if you follow the theme. The setting is very casual, with stories told about each of the wines we're drinking, what we do (or don't) like about them, where we got them, and more.

Regardless of your knowledge of wine, the Varietal Hours have something for everyone. Varietal Hours are held



every other Monday from 7 to 8 p.m.

All you need is a computer (or phone) and internet connection. If you are new to the Varietal Hours or to Zoom, please feel free to contact Don

Phillips at don@OCWS.org or George Cravens at george@OCWS.org for help and information, even if it means contacting us days before the event. We will walk you through the process and even do a short Zoom meeting just for you to get you comfortable with the process.

The event is open to all OCWS members, but sign-ups are required. Please log on to the OCWS website to register for the event no later than the Sunday night before the event. Couples only need to sign up for one person since this event is via Zoom. A link for the Zoom meeting will be emailed to you on the day of the event.

We are also looking for hosts for upcoming Varietal Hours. It's fun and easy to do. Please contact Don or George at the above emails if you wish to host, or with any questions or suggestions. A Varietal Hour survey was also sent out, please be sure to fill it out if you received it.

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

**—Don Phillips,
Varietal Hour Co-Chair**

DATE	TIME	VARIETAL	HOSTS
Feb. 5	7 p.m.	Bordeaux Wines	Stuart Fricke
Feb. 19	7 p.m.	Women of Color Wines	Dione McCreia & Danielle Duenas
March 4	7 p.m.	San Diego County Wines	Your Name HERE
March 18	7 p.m.	African Wine	Janet Riordan
April 1	7 p.m.	Fool Us With Something Different	Your Name HERE
April 15	7 p.m.	Low-Priced Wines (tax savings!)	Your Name HERE

Winemakers GROUP

Finding the perfect fit as a wine drinker

Do you remember the 1980s and the Members Only fashion line of clothes? I sure do. As an impressionable youth, I thought wearing those clothes was cool. It kind of made me feel like I was in a secret club.

No special membership—
or snazzy jacket—
needed to join the OCWS Winemakers Group.

The funny thing was you didn't have to be a member of, well, anything to wear those.

You didn't need a membership card. There was no secret handshake. You just had to wear the clothes and you were a member. You were IN.

Fast forward to today. I get emails all the time from OCWS members asking to become a member of the Winemakers Group. I've got good news for everyone: You don't have to join the group. You don't need a

special membership to participate. Heck, you don't even need to wear special clothes. You are already IN.

You see, the Winemakers Group is not an exclusive club with a secret handshake. We welcome all OCWS members who want to learn more about wine. The Orange County Wine Society was founded to promote wine appreciation. The Winemakers Group just has a different slant on that. To us, appreciating wine means more than just tasting it. We want to understand the winemaking process so we can appreciate wine from a different perspective.

It's like the difference between simply eating a meal and understanding how it's prepared. We want to know the different steps involved in winemaking. We want to see how those steps affect the final product. We want to understand how changing those steps changes the wine's outcome.

If that sounds interesting to you then please join us at our Winemakers Group events.

This year we will be conducting several seminars designed to help you understand the winemaking process. As a member of the OCWS, you're welcome to attend these seminars and par-

ticipate. No special Winemakers Group membership required. There is a catch, though. You need to let us know you want to get our emails and notifications so you'll know what the Winemakers Group is doing.

The next time you log into the OCWS website, go to the "My Account" tab and click on "My Profile" where you'll see all your contact information. Go to the line that asks "Interested in Home Winemaking?" and set it to "Yes." Now you'll get all our special winemaker emails. You're IN.

I look forward to seeing you at future Winemakers Group events. No secret handshake or membership card required. Cheers!

— Ed Reyes, ed@ocws.org





2024 volunteers needed for a 'good time'

With a new year upon us, preparations for the largest OCWS fundraising event of the year are already under way. Mark your calendars now for The Courtyard at the 2024 OC Fair, which runs July 19 through Aug. 18. With a commitment of only four shifts, you receive a pass that affords you access to the fair any day without restrictions and a parking pass.

We are looking for new managers, cashiers and stewards. Many members have expressed an interest in volunteering for a new position and, if you are one of them, we would like to hear from you now. Previous experience is helpful, but training will be provided.

If you are interested in one of these positions, please contact Rich Skoczylas at Rich@ocws.org.

Keep an eye out for future articles in The Wine Press that will provide more information about required training for The Courtyard positions, benefits and schedules and when sign-ups for The Courtyard will open.

This year's fair theme is "Always a Good Time." Ask any courtyard volunteer and he or she will tell you that's exactly what happens when you work a shift and help people learn more about the OCWS.

It's the hands of many who make The Courtyard a success year after year and we need YOU!

—Rich Skoczylas,
OCWS Courtyard Scheduler

RBS certification requirements for The Courtyard shifts

Before we know it, the OC Fair will be upon us again. The largest OCWS fundraising effort of the year will be taking place for a total of 23 days, Wednesdays through Sundays July 19 through Aug. 18.

Volunteering at The Courtyard is a unique and fun experience. Beginning next month, you will be seeing information about signing up for shifts but, in the meantime, it is important to know that all Courtyard volunteers handling wine in any capacity are required to be RBS (Responsible Beverage Server) certified through the ABC (Alcohol Beverage Commission) pursuant to fair requirement.

It is highly recommended that you obtain certification sooner than later in order to sign up for Courtyard shifts when available.

If you received your RBS certification within the last two years, then your

EMAIL US

Please send an email to RBS team members Sue England and Linda Flemins at RBS@ocws.org letting them know you need to be RBS certified this year.

ONLINE CLASS

Once you have sent your request for certification you will receive an email from #1 Premiere with your username and password and a link to the online course. You may take the class one chapter at a time or all at once. The online course is followed by an online exam with ABC. Once you are RBS certified you are ready to serve at the OC Fair!



certifications are still in good standing for this year. Certifications are valid for three years.

How do I get started? Check out our tips below!

Thank you so much for your volunteer efforts! You are what makes the OCWS the great success it is.

3-STEP PROCESS

Instructions will be sent to you when you register.

1. Create an RBS account with Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC).
2. Take a course with the RBS course provider that the OCWS has selected.
3. Take a final quiz with ABC online and obtain the RBS certificate, which is valid for three years.

PLEASE NOTE

Each OCWS member will need a valid individual email address that will be used to set up your account. Your own individual email address will be your username for the online system.

ALTAMURA, from page 1

“I always was part of the workforce, growing up lower-to-middle income,” Altamura said. “To me, wine making is a testament to hard work. It forces you to be present in your environment.”

Altamura’s first passion was cooking. He was able to live and work in Melbourne as a chef for a year before returning to the United States where he enrolled at Napa Valley College. While taking classes, he got his introduction into winemaking as a cellar worker at Laird Family Estate.

He then learned the trade and his interest grew while working part time at Groth Vineyards & Winery. Imagine getting to walk among rows of Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay grapes – what some might say is an embarrassment of riches right at your fingertips.

“I felt a greater connection when I did my first harvest,” Altamura said. “You don’t need to be a super intelligent person to make wine. You just have to put in the hard work.”

Altamura eventually took courses at the University of California, Davis, one of the premier universities in the winemaking world. Taking classes at UC Davis afforded him the ability to be resourceful, and answers to what seemed like complex questions were readily attainable.

It was at UC Davis that Altamura received a scholarship from the Orange County Wine Society. Getting the financial help alleviated the stress and allowed him to focus on his studies, he said.

“It was a really special moment for me and I will always be grateful,” Altamura said. “It’s nice to see people, who you don’t know, rooting for you.”

In 2022, Altamura received his degree in enology and viticulture. Since then, he’s been busy working at JH Wine Consulting in the Bay Area. Founded by esteemed winemaker Jean Hoefliger of Alpha Omega fame, the company does a little bit of everything – managing vineyards, sourcing grapes for certain labels and helping build a brand. Altamura said a year’s worth of experience at JH Wine Consulting feels like it would take three

years somewhere else.

Altamura knows the stereotypes that come with the Napa tag. He is somewhat conflicted because while Napa is so alluring for wine enthusiasts, as a native it can be somewhat constricting.


Altamura’s days are definitely busy. He oversees five satellite locations, sampling and analyzing the grapes and controlling inventory to ensure JH customers get the best results.

“It’s like if you grew up in Bordeaux – it’s all you know,” he said. “You need to put out a good Napa cab or what else

are you doing here?”

He hopes to one day run his own operation. He believes that his generation – and the generations who follow – will have to deal with the challenges of climate change and how to best grow grapes under those conditions.

For now, Altamura is focused on producing exemplary wine that is served in restaurants and homes throughout California and abroad.

“There is no shortage of good wine,” he said. “I think one of the big challenges is, how do you get noticed?” 

SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

California State Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo has a wine and viticulture program in their College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences. This program is the largest in the nation and combines the study of cultivating wine grapes with the study of wines, winemaking and the wine business.

The campus has a 14-acre vineyard for students to practice successful strategies needed to understand all aspects of winemaking throughout the fertile California coastal region. Students also learn about beverage compliance and understanding the many complex rules and regulations of the industry.

Several of Cal Poly’s students have gone on to work as winery founders and owners, viticulturists, enologists, production assistants and cellar workers, as well as many other areas of management and marketing associates.

The OCWS support of the Cal Poly Program is greatly appreciated and in 2023 the OCWS contributed \$5,100 to their general scholarship fund in the wine and viticulture program.

Each month we will be highlighting one of the colleges or universities supported by the OCWS scholarship fund.

Just a friendly reminder there is always time to make a donation to the OCWS Scholarship Fund for 2024. There are two ways to donate:

Mail a Check – Complete your check using the same instructions as above, and mail it to the OCWS office. A donation letter will be sent to you.

OCWS
P.O. Box 11059 • Costa Mesa, CA 92627
Attn: Scholarship Fund

Donate Online – Log on to your account at OCWS.org and go to the scholarship donation page: OCWS.org/product/scholarship-donations/. You can make your donation online and print a receipt for tax purposes at the same time.

*–Damian Christian,
Scholarship Chair*

**OUT IN THE WILD**

Orange County Wine Society member Shilo Bartlett captured the beauty of “Limerick Lane Old Vines with Wild Mustard” near Limerick Lane Cellars in Healdsburg, California, with a Nikon camera.

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 an upcom-

ing *Wine Press* as well as on the OCWS website. 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.

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
 - 5** you submit it make sure it is your property. Please get permission from any people in the photo.
 - 5** The photo must be submitted in one of the following formats: JPEG, RAW, TIFF or Photoshop. 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.
 - 6** In the event that insufficient entries are entered in a month, the committee reserves the right to move any contributed photos to the next month.
- 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2024

FEBRUARY 5	VARIETAL HOUR / BORDEAUX WINES VIA ZOOM
FEBRUARY 9	FEATURED WINERY / BELLA GRACE VINEYARDS AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA
FEBRUARY 17	OCWS MINI-OUTING DEFALCO FAMILY WINES & FOODS / FOUNTAIN VALLEY
FEBRUARY 19	VARIETAL HOUR / WOMEN OF COLOR WINES VIA ZOOM
FEBRUARY 24	MINI-TASTING: OLD WORLD EUROPE VS. CALIFORNIA WINES / VARIOUS LOCATIONS
MARCH 2	OCWS MINI-OUTING DEFALCO FAMILY WINES & FOODS / FOUNTAIN VALLEY
MARCH 4	VARIETAL HOUR / SAN DIEGO COUNTY WINES VIA ZOOM
MARCH 8	FEATURED WINERY / DOUBLE BOND WINE AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA
MARCH 18	VARIETAL HOUR / AFRICAN WINE VIA ZOOM
APRIL 6	SPRING SOCIAL OC FAIR & EVENT CENTER / COSTA MESA
APRIL 12	FEATURED WINERY / SAN PASQUAL WINERY AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA
APRIL 20	WINE AUCTION OC FAIR & EVENT CENTER / COSTA MESA
MAY 5	BUBBLES 'N' BRUNCH LOCATION TBD
MAY 10	FEATURED WINERY / SAN SIMEON WINES AVENUE OF THE ARTS HOTEL / COSTA MESA