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RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY WINEGROWERS BACKGROUND

The Russian River Valley Winegrowers (RRVW) is a nonprofit marketing and educational group dedicated to promoting the Russian River Valley as the premier region for growing cool climate grapes while producing wines that showcase the diversity of the AVA's six neighborhoods. Generations of farmers and winemakers here are continuing a long legacy of producing distinctive wines of exceptional quality, authenticity, and integrity. They take seriously their responsibility to be good stewards of the land that sustains them through environmentally sound, socially equitable, and economically feasible practices.

It's a legacy that began in the 19th century when immigrants from Mediterranean countries settled in the Russian River Valley and began planting vines. While most vineyards were "gardens" for personal family consumption, commercial wineries sprang up, and by the dawn of the 20th century there were nearly 200 wineries operating.

Then came Prohibition in the United States and it dealt a devastating blow to the region with many wineries going out of business. Some winemaking families continued to make wine illegally and others converted to bootlegging a sugar and water base wine known as "Jackass brandy" to survive during this period. When Prohibition ended, the few vineyards that were operating sold their grapes to bulk jug wine producers. But in the 1970s winemakers in the Russian River region began to focus on quality wine production and began using their grapes for local bottlings. The 1973 vintage of Foppiano Vineyards claims to be the first to include the words Russian River on their wine labels.

As bigger winery names moved in and began producing wines, the reputation of the Russian River Valley and its wines began to grow. Local grape growers and winemakers knew they had something special. In 1994 two wine industry visionaries, Saralee Kunde and Warren Dutton, led the charge to create and formalize the RRVW as a marketing and educational organization. In 1996 the group became a nonprofit trade association that supports grape farmers and wineries.

Today the RRVW has more than 200 members including growers, wineries, and sponsors. Members gain access to marketing, media, educational seminars, events and resources as part of their membership. In addition, they become part of a broad community of Industry professionals who meet on a regular basis to share their passion and expertise with each other. The RRVW provides regular marketing, publicity and community relations support through consumer events that promote the Russian River Valley as one of the world's premier winegrowing regions.

ANNUAL EVENT

The Paulée Dinner is an annual “must do” event that takes place in August. The Paulée tradition originated in Burgundy and is celebrated in the Russian River Valley by winemakers, collectors, and wine lovers. Winemakers and guests share special, limited and rare vintages from their personal collections. The wines are paired with an elaborate multi-course dinner prepared by Sonoma County chefs in a stunning location. It is a magical night honoring the wine industry.

In 2020 the RRVW will restore their annual Grape to Glass event at Richard’s Grove and Saralee’s Vineyard in Windsor. This early summer outdoor event gives the public a chance to taste the numerous varietals and unmatched quality of wines that are produced in the Russian River Valley. Wine lovers will have the chance to meet winemakers and grape growers from the region and learn more about their work in the area that many call “America’s Burgundy.” Of course, great food and live music are part of the celebration.

SIX NEIGHBORHOODS

Just like a city filled with diverse communities, the Russian River Valley AVA consists of six smaller areas called “neighborhoods” stretching from Sebastopol to Santa Rosa and from Forestville to Healdsburg. A new UC Davis study shows scientific proof that each neighborhood is made up of unique soils and terroir that exhibit specific characteristics in the wines resulting in unique textures and aromas for each area. Combine these characteristics with the superb growing conditions in the valley and the result is wines with uncommon depth and richness that maintain bright, natural acidity.

The Russian River Valley community welcomes wine lovers to come along on the journey to explore and understand the terroir of the six distinctive growing areas and to find the neighborhoods that make their palate feel at home. In addition to the full variety of wines in the Russian River Valley, guests can also experience world class food, meander the country roads, cycle the rolling hills, nap under a redwood, or kayak the Russian River. It is an area that fills all of a traveler’s senses.