

Six Well Known Wine Regions Join Declaration to Protect Wine Place & Origin

By Peg San Felippo

From Daily News Links, 03/22/2007

Washington D.C. - Sonoma County and Paso Robles wine regions in California, along with Chianti Classico, Italy; Tokaj, Hungary; and Victoria and Western Australia became part of the signatories of the Joint Declaration to Protect Wine Place & Origin Wednesday. This doubles the regions participating to 12, adding to the founding members of Napa Valley, Oregon, Washington, Walla Walla Valley, Champagne, Porto, and Jerez.

The belief of the organization and its members is that geographic place names of wine regions have the sole birthright of the grapes that are grown there, and when these names appear on wines that do not contain fruit from that region, they lose their integrity and their relevance. The commitment of those involved is to join together to maintain and protect the regional names, which is viewed as a fundamental tool for consumers in identifying where the grapes are grown and the wines produced.

The expansion of members to the declaration adds to the growing focus to protect names supports accurate and fair labeling issues of wine regions. In 2005, the California Supreme Court ruled a wine labeled "Napa Ridge" was required to source its grapes to the Napa Valley or cease to use the name on its label. The following year the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal. In addition last fall Governor Schwarzenegger signed a bill requiring any wine with "Sonoma" on the label contains at least 75 percent wine made wine from grapes grown in Sonoma County.

"Americans are more knowledgeable than ever before about wine and will not settle for anything less than authentic products. Consumers have a right to know that the information printed on a bottle's label accurately reflects the origin of the wine they are purchasing. When a place name is misused, a part of the identity of that distinctive wine region is lost," said Pete Downs, representing the Sonoma County Vintners.



*Tom Shelton, President-Joseph Phelps Vineyards (past President of NVV Board of Directors) Linda Reiff, Executive Director, Napa Valley Vintners Stacie Jacob, Executive Director, Paso Robles Wine County Alliance Ed Matovcik, Vice President, Government Relations-Beringer Vineyards (NVV Board Member)
Photo courtesy of Stewart Davis.*

Stacie Jacob, Executive Director of the Paso Robles Wine County Alliance expressed what a positive it is for Paso Robles to be part of the Declaration. "It is an honor that our region has grown to the stature to be recognized as an important part of the wine industry. We believe that this organization supports Paso Robles' vision of a wines' "sense of place." It also follows suit with our master plan for Paso Robles which is to eventually develop 11 separate AVA's for the region."

"This is truly a unique and constructive situation," said Cesar Saldana, representative of Jerez. To have competitors in the wine industry actually join together to help and work in a team effort will be a benefit to everyone globally."

Along with the declaration, it was announced that Napa Valley has been named as a Geographical Indication (GI), making it the first wine region in North America to be protected and recognized in the European Union.

"We are proud to be a part of this effort.," said Peter McCrea, of The Napa Valley Vintners Association. "We welcome other wine regions to the table. Their participation will further the global movement to protect wine origin and names."

As part of the event, representatives of the wine regions met with Members of Congress, Bush Administration officials and other dignitaries which were followed by a congressional wine tasting and reception.