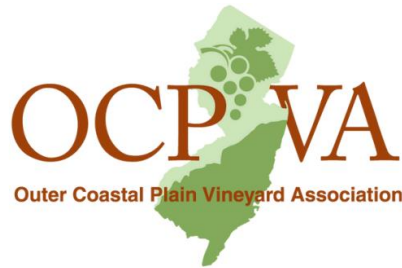


OCVPA 1st Quarter 2025 Newsletter



February Membership Meeting Updates

At the meeting, which was held on February 6th at Bellview Winery, there were several important topics discussed from WIC 2024 grant funded projects, legislative updates and Google Analytics just to name a few. Check out the entire meetings details on the OCPVA website: <https://outercoastalplain.com/minutes>

Thank you to the members who shared Merlot at the meeting! We had several fine examples, and everyone enjoyed learning the details on the making of each member's Merlot vintage.

* A special *Thank You* to the newly elected and existing board members who give their time so the OCPVA may continue its work. *



Thanks for hosting!

Follow Up:

Dr Joseph Stanzione, who runs the glass recycling project at Rowan, who spoke at the November meeting, is seeking more wineries to participate in their glass recycling and research project. The idea is that winery participants can save money on wine bottles while reducing their carbon footprint. Joe can be reached at stanzione@rowan.edu for more details.



Additional information available at:

<https://engineering.rowan.edu/programs/chemical/news/njep-re-a-grant-2023.html>

or search “Rowan glass recirculation”.

Legislation:

A large amount of legislation is currently in the works at the state government and much of it is beneficial to wineries and vineyards specifically. Please keep an eye out for this information in the future.

What you can do now is to find out who your representatives in NJ government are and when the time comes, we can all be ready to write our reps to let them know where we stand. The benefits to OCPVA could be more wine sales leniency leading to more grapes being needed from our area.

Upcoming Events: (tailored specifically to eastern wine growers)



SAVE THE DATE!!!

- **Groundwork: A Vineyard Floor Management Summit**
Sponsored by the Winemaker's Co-op March 10-11th, two-day event in and around Princeton, NJ

Click here for more information and to register.

<https://thewinemakersco-op.com/events/>

- **Grape Expectations**- an outstanding educational opportunity is coming to a new venue in Mays Landing, NJ on **March 19, 2025**.

Visit here for info:

<https://cpe.rutgers.edu/food-science-safety/grape-expectations>

- **The Eastern Winery Expo** is being held in Lancaster, PA, **March 25-27, 2025**. There is still time to register! Visit: Easternwineryexposition.com and use code **25CPVA** when registering to receive a 10% discount.

A Few Interesting Websites, Newsletters, Webinars and Articles:

2025 Agriculture Convention Educational Seminars presented by Rutgers- Now Available Online

<https://nj-vegetable-crops-online-resources.rutgers.edu/documents-archive/> (scroll down to 2025 PDF link to see the entire program list)

TTB Bootcamp for Wineries Series:

The TTB has an interesting segment on their website called “Winery Bootcamp”. It includes several videos and slideshows covering many ‘how-to’ topics that many wineries face as they interact with the TTB. See the link below.

<https://www.ttb.gov/introducing-ttb-boot-camp-wineries-series>

Vinesmith.com

This website offers some interesting information regarding wine growing east of the Rockies. Of particular interest, a slide show detailing how to convert a VSP trellis to a solar collector trellis. They claim it could be useful for high-vigor varieties/growing conditions. They also offer a comprehensive and intuitive guide to spraying vineyards with many of the chemicals many of us use now and an organic spray section. Worth a look: www.vinesmith.com

American Vineyard Magazine

Informative piece on Spur Creep is available now with tips on preventing this inevitable condition when repetitive spur pruning is employed. Spur Creep refers to the yearly lengthening of spurs that can displace the fruit zone within the canopy over time.

[Click here to read:](#)

<https://americanvineyardmagazine.com/preventing-spur-creep-for-cold-climate-grapevines/>

NJ Pest Training

Online pesticide training is available from NJ Pest Training. All courses are claimed to be approved by NJDEP. Various courses are offered to gain credits for existing licenses or to gain a certification and many courses are offered in Spanish.

www.njpesttraining.com for more information.

Potential Winter Injury In NJ Vineyards- Rutgers Plant and Pest Advisory:

See the low temps in your area during these two winter events and find out how to check for winter damage before wrapping up the pruning season.

<https://plant-pest-advisory.rutgers.edu/potential-winter-injuries-in-the-new-jersey-vineyards-2/>

Immigration Law is all the buzz around agriculture especially at the larger farms since the new administration has taken office. Find out how to protect and prepare yourself and your staff with the article from Growing Produce daily newsletter.

[Prepare for Immigration Enforcement](#)



I thought I'd break from the usual farm life hacking experiences to share some thoughts on the current state of the industry.

Disclaimer! The views contained herein are strictly my own and based on months of reading current and historic, publicly posted materials and as such, taken by the reader solely as opinion with a few facts sprinkled in.

West Coast grape growers are feeling the lack of interest in finished wine in a big way. The 2024 crush report indicates that the white grape crush was down in 2024 over 2023 by 18% and red grape crush was down 27%. It was stated that this year is the lightest crush since 2004. Current recommendations for CA growers are to remove 50,000 acres of vineyards to decrease supply. Hundreds of thousands of tons of grapes are not being harvested and left to rot because there are no contracts for the fruit. Other wine growing regions are feeling similar pinches.

These are some staggering numbers, and it goes back to public interest in wine. More specifically, the interest of the newer generations in opting for alternative alcoholic drinks or none at all. According to statistics, the Boomer generation was our primary market but as they age and/or leave us, they simply can't keep pace with their previous consumption habits. Lower demand for wine equals lower demand for grape. As warehouses bulge with our finished product, our prospective clientele is migrating towards lower alcohol alternatives like sangria, pre-mixed canned cocktails, hard seltzer or complete abstinence.

The wine industry shares its pain with the spirits industry and the beer industry and as such, we are competing with those industries for what seems like a smaller share that we once enjoyed. Cannabis has also now taken a slice of the modern market. As the World Health

Organization releases bold statements like “there is no safe level of alcohol consumption”, our prospects are fleeing to the trendiest new bar that pops up that serves only mocktails and offers board games as entertainment. Grab a friend, order up a lavender Sprite and cranberry and play Scrabble! How novel! If we only knew it could be this easy! These up-and-coming establishments use inexpensive ingredients, cheap entertainment and still charge \$12.50 for a mocktail without the libations’ consumption liability!

Closer to home I have seen an increase in grape for sale over the last several years as we buy less each year for our winery production. I have seen ton prices approach \$3,000.00 as vineyard input costs jumped with the advent of Covid but never really receded once the pandemic waned. It is especially difficult to collect the higher costs from the consumer since the demand is already lower. Couple this with the fact that a good bottle of well-known red wine is readily available at the local liquor store for \$18.00 to \$20.00 while I try to peddle an obscure brand for \$28.00 to \$32.00 in our tasting room. I would say that most of our customers don’t know the difference and would be just as satisfied with the liquor store red.

Is it possible that we have elevated wine to a height that has become “not worth the effort” to understand by today’s clientele? Is wine too difficult to comprehend by the average human? Did it used to be fun but now it is a little snooty? I haven’t been around it long enough to answer those questions reliably but just long enough to raise them. We do more things at our winery to try to boost sales, but all those things cost something. There’s a salesperson on staff part time now trying to gain outlets. We are now open on Monday and Tuesday with part-time staff there.

We do more private events than ever which can sometimes backfire. We will try to expand our fair-weather festival season. The vineyard is becoming more mechanized. It is a combination of saving some

money AND selling more wine. I've come to realize that there is no single magic change but rather, success will come from many smaller changes.

I'd like to think we are a charming and loveable bunch of wineries and vineyards in a niche market of the smallest variety. Businesses like these need to differentiate themselves from the Gallos and the Mondavis of the world. We are small, intimate, friendly, and fun. We are FUN! We need to build this type of loyalty and always be giving a reason for our clients to come back whether we say it out loud directly to them or just give a super fun experience that they will certainly not forget.

I've settled on increasing staff awareness as my 2025 goal. I want to gather them and talk about listening to our customers more intently. I want to hear what each of them thinks we can do to sell more wine. Let's read into what the customer is saying to us and read their body language for signs of why they are not buying. We can satisfy those reasons until they have no more reasons to avoid a purchase. Maybe the label needs an overhaul or perhaps we need more enchanting stories to tell. Maybe we need a postcard mailer with a picture so intriguing that it will have to be saved on the fridge. Maybe we just need to listen better.

I write all this as I reluctantly taste our next 'mocktail of the month' and fend off requests to put ice cream in my precious wine!

Like the gladiators of ancient times, if we all stick together, we all have a better chance of survival. Join your state and local wine/grape associations.

Thanks for reading,

Mark Hernandez

