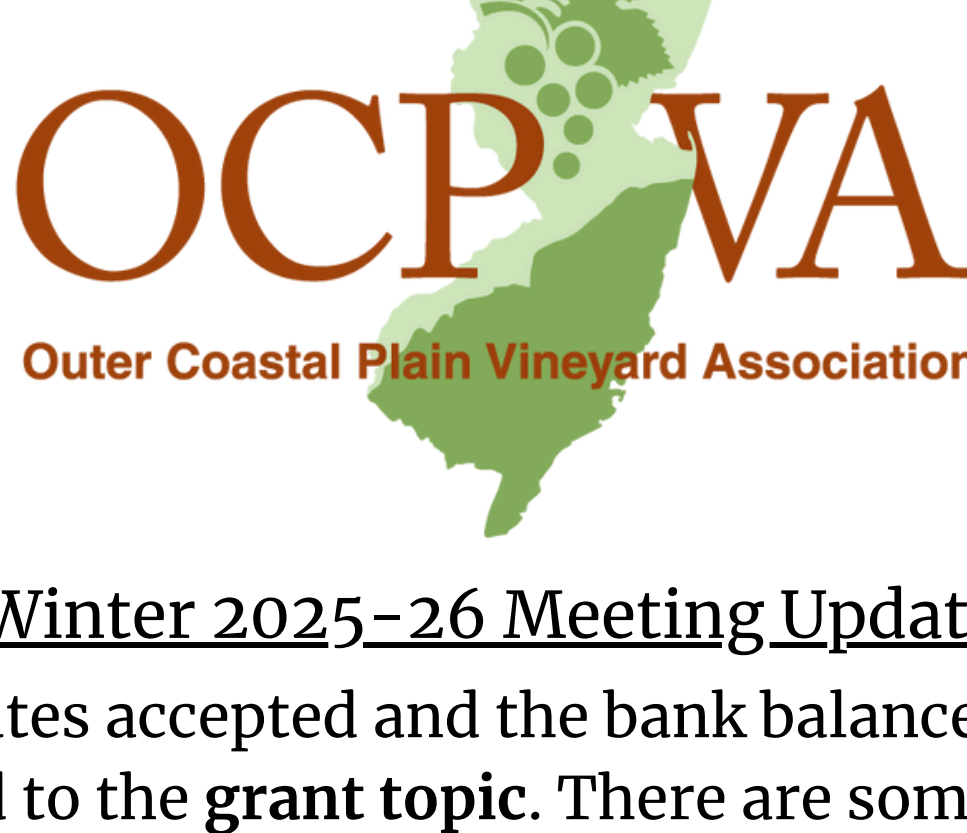




# The Vineyard Post



## Winter 2025-26 Meeting Updates

With the minutes accepted and the bank balances reported, the meeting moved to the **grant topic**. There are some good ideas but more can always help. Please share any ideas with Kelly via email.

To this point, there are discussions about a Coeur d'Est event, hiring educational speakers, reviving the Frank Salek Memorial Seminar event, a possible OCP Passport and geo-mapping NJ vineyard sizes and locations. Again, please share any ideas you may have. Grant season is upon us now! The only bad idea is the one that didn't get shared. There was also a final update on the previous grants which are now considered closed and complete.

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**Megan Hernandez** was introduced as the **OCPVA social media editor/director**. She will keep the organization current on several SM platforms so the group may become more relevant with a younger audience. Megan will be visiting wineries and vineyards as she scouts for pictorial and videographic content to share with our followers.

Email : [megan@autumnlakewinery.com](mailto:megan@autumnlakewinery.com)

Here's the Type of Content to be Focused on:

Winery features — spotlights, stories, and behind-the-scenes moments  
Event promotions — wine dinners, festivals, and live music nights  
Seasonal specials — holiday markets, new releases, and harvest highlights  
Collaborative posts — partnerships and cross-promotions between wineries  
Local tourism tie-ins — nearby dining, lodging, and day-trip ideas

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The principals of Auburn Road Winery, **Jules and Scott Donnini** carted New Jersey wine to **Italy** recently. The wines were poured with Italian restaurateurs, bloggers and wine critics and was very well received! There was particular interest in Chambourcin and San Marco. Thanks to Jules and Scott for spreading the word to the Old World!



There was some discussion about holding an event geared toward Coeur d'Est blends and their respective producers. It can be the subject of the upcoming grant season. The producers of this wine would hold an event to stir interest in the **Coeur d'Est** blend. A venue within or outside the organization would host. Funds from the grant would cover that and the food. More to come on this topic.

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**In the Vineyard** discussions began with Jim bringing up Colletotrichum Fungus in Cayuga. It is somehow related to Anthracnose. Click [HERE](#) to read about it. Jules said she will soon be culling some Cab vines with red blotch disease. Click [HERE](#) to investigate red blotch. Mark noted that Larry had identified tobacco mosaic virus in four Chambourcin vines. Read about TMV [HERE](#).

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The **wine spotlight** at the meeting was **Chambourcin**. Several examples were poured from different members. There were a few dry varietals, one that was aged in bourbon barrels, one port-style, a Coeur d'Est and a **1993** vintage varietal. Dante was good enough to share an older vintage of wine he made from his 1993 harvest of Chambourcin. The wine is still holding up and very drinkable. The color was as pure as could be expected with little magenta left and a rich, inky, ripe red maroon with no oxidation. This wine is a testament to the aging power of the tannins in Chambourcin. Well done, Dante and thank you for sharing this extraordinary example! It was the highlight of the evening!

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## Upcoming Events of Interest

**Grape Expectations** will be held on **Thursday, March 12** at **Foresgate Country Club** in Cranberry, NJ. The event will include a marketing component for the first time due to the business climate currently surrounding the alcohol industry.

Check with **Hemant** for more details. [hlg50@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:hlg50@njaes.rutgers.edu)

**Eastern Winery Expo** will be held for the first time in **Richmond, VA** on **March 24th to the 26th**. This event is the largest gathering of wine equipment, vineyard tools and education east of the Mississippi and promises to be a highlight of the expo circuit this year.

Check [HERE](#) for up-to-the-minute info.

The **Winemaker's Coop** will host **Red Wine Rising-An East Coast Perspective** on **February 23th and 24th** in Princeton, NJ. Many highly regarded speakers from the industry and educational institutions will present their perspective on red wine production as it relates to the east. Check [HERE](#) for tickets.

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For your consideration and requested vote, you have received an email asking to approve or disapprove of a change to the by-laws of the OCPVA. Briefly, it asks whether or not we should extend membership opportunities to the entire state of NJ. Currently, membership is only offered to those who qualify inside the OCP. The board is unanimously in favor of this change. The goal is to 1) increase membership, 2) widen the circle of educational opportunities, 3) engage with those prospects that we already must benefit from OCPVA grant funds activities. Please read the email and respond with yes or no to the change in by-laws.

Your vote matters!

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## 2025 OCPVA Review – some of what has been accomplished in the past year.

**OCPVA wines** showed well at the EWE convention last March. Many examples of red and white wine were poured from the OCPVA table to the delight of the wine community. Amongst the standouts were San Marco, Coeur d'Est and Chambourcin. Your carefully grown fruit goes into these wines and this is a testament to OCP fruit and wine! Keep up the good work!

The OCP is planning to have a table at the event this March in VA and volunteers are needed to pour wine. Interested parties should reach out to Kelly. Any member of the OCPVA who is attending the event can pour!

The **inaugural Terroir Showcase** was held last summer. The event is the first of its kind in that it is not a competition but rather a showcase to bring many renowned judges, winemakers, and media bloggers from around the world in contact with 100% NJ grown wine. Many of the judges were ecstatic with what they were tasting! Many were new to NJ wine and all had good things to say. A high percentage of the entries received showcase status while nearly all entries medaled in some regard.

Major ads in **Edible NJ** were placed in lieu of wine dinners to use current grant funds. This pivot came quickly and decisively by the board to make certain grant funds were spent wisely. There were three different ads in three different issues of Edible Jersey magazine to highlight NJ-grown wine.

As seen above, steps have been taken to bolster media presence by adding a new **social media editor/director, Megan Hernandez**. This is in response to the sluggish alcohol trade and focuses directly on our wineries and vineyards to place OCP in front of a new market of consumers.

A collaborative between **OCPVA and Rutgers** provides an intern for the association to use as needed. The intern is a communications student so it was decided to initiate an internship that focuses on marketing and how NJ wines are being viewed and perceived by the youngest consumers of drinking age. Hours of surveys with the target group will be documented and the results will be available to all membership for review.

A newer meeting format is in discussion and all members are encouraged to contribute ideas. Current ideas for quarterly meeting improvement include educational or industry speakers, less board discussion, and more grower education. Please submit your thoughts as members to Kelly for consideration.

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## Being Nice is Free

I'll admit I can be a slow learner. It took me 50 years to figure out what life-long politicians and diplomats have known from an early age. They are always nice to people they meet. They understand the benefits of pleasantries, good manners and hospitality. We all know that, behind the scenes, they are in the rat race to finish first and they will do or say anything to get what they want. They also know that it can't be done alone and that they will need some allies along the way to get what they want. A lesson can be taken from their actions in public. Being nice is free.

I guess it was 15 years ago as my wife and I were traveling to a surprise party and we were late and in danger of ruining the surprise. I don't ever want to be that guy! I was driving the back roads through Monroeville about 25 mph over the limit when I passed a local policeman. He had me dead to rights and now I am really going to be late!

"Do you know why I pulled you over?" came belting out of the nice, young officer. I thought of all the other times I had been pulled over (there are plenty) and how I used to try to have a good reason (read as BS) for my offense. It never worked and I always got a ticket! Let's try something different! "Yes sir, I do know. I was not paying attention and was going too fast." The statement took the officer back a bit as he hesitated a few seconds. "Where are you going?", he asked. I said I was going to be late for a surprise party and thought I could make up the time by speeding. "But you got me, sir, I don't have a good excuse for speeding", I finished, tail between my legs, hoping for the best.

He took my info and sat in his car as I've seen many times before. It gave my wife plenty of time to scold me and say I told you so, making the wait feel even longer! The officer returned and I was shocked to receive only a warning on paper and another verbal scolding! Wow, not too bad. It was free to be nice to the officer by not insulting his intelligence and simply taking responsibility for my actions. The benefits are clear, I got what I wanted, aside from being extra late for the party.

I have not received a traffic ticket since that day.

Practice being nice to suppliers, sales people, cashiers, fuel attendants, especially anyone bringing you food, and anyone you come in contact with. Everyone you meet has demons, meaning there is probably strife somewhere in their daily life that you can't possibly know about. Everyone has a life-battle going on, but it does not preclude a one of us from carrying on the daily grind! It is therefore imperative to set yourself apart from the herd. Be nice. It's free.

I once bought a Snickers bar at Wawa and handed it to the fuel attendant because I knew his shift was nearly over and he must be hungry. You can't imagine the look on his face and how grateful he was for the small thought. He always remembers me when I come in for fuel now. I recently brought him a pair of hand warmers.

I can now talk to anyone about anything on the spur of the moment. Things most folks have in common are the weather, family and/or spouses, vehicle trouble, work commute, high egg prices, or whatever is affecting us all at once. It doesn't matter the topic so long as you can start a conversation. There are some people that you just can't do this with, but I've found most people want to talk and be listened to.

I try to have relationships with every person I encounter from the cashier lady at Tractor Supply to the dispatch guy at United Rental Equipment. Any one of these people would help me if I needed it and it was within their power to do so. I do it to be noticed and remembered. If I get nothing in return, it's still good, because being nice is free.

None of this could help if you are not genuinely interested. Folks will pick up on phony chit chat faster than downy after heavy rain! You need a sparkle in your eye and sincerity in your voice. If you don't really care, you will be exposed pronto. Use words like sir, yessir, yes ma'am, please and thank you, have a nice day and hold the door the next guy. Remember the Golden Rule. Use the person's name in the conversation occasionally if you know it. Use sir or ma'am if you don't know it. These will go a long way in gaining positive attention. Tip your hat to an elderly woman for no reason. I guarantee you'll get a smile!

If you can do these things, a bonus is that you'll be saving up for when you truly need to be ticked off! When the time comes, you can really let 'em have it! It will be particularly effective if you do it in front of folks who know you are nice. But until then, be nice, it's free!

Mark Hernandez