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8th Annual Wine Country Hospitality Symposium Reports *Trends in Local & Global Marketing*

Tourists traveling to the Wine Country are grabbing their smart phones to help them uncover memorable experiences here. Social media was one of many themes at the Napa Valley College 8th Annual Wine Country Symposium held March 26, which focused on local and global hospitality.

Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, videos, blogs, Google and Bing websites are guiding visitors to the Napa Valley for an experience they won't forget. Visitors are coming here to not only enjoy world-class wines, but a lifestyle, a culinary mecca. They come to eat freshly laid chicken eggs or pull a carrot from the soil to eat. They want to experience the vineyards, and enjoy the beauty of open space.

The daylong event was held at the Upper Valley Campus of Napa Valley College, and featured speakers who discussed a range of issues from global destination marketing, labor and employment law in hospitality to sustainable agrotourism and social media.

The social media panel said "it's time to try new things." "Your website is how most people find you," said Andrew Healy, Chief Social Officer from 3 rock marketing of Napa. "And make sure your website works with smart phones," he added.

International tourists are also a critical part of the Wine Country. Melodie Hilton, Marketing Director for the Napa Valley Wine Train, said the Wine Train makes a conscience effort to attract visitors from Japan who spend an average of \$7,200 per

person while here. Fostering relationships with the Japanese includes understanding the etiquette of their culture said Hilton and her colleagues, Ryan Neergaard and Yuri Soshizaki.

David Bos of Harvest Bos & Bos Wine told the audience that tourists want to do more than go wine tasting. "They want to experience first-hand how things grow."

Mike Taylor, owner, winemaker and General Farm Manager of Front Porch Farms echoed the same. He said they have formed partnerships with local restaurants to create unique farm-to-table dinners. This adds to the "tourist experience."

"The possibilities are endless and that is exciting to me," added Linzi Gay, Clif Family Winery, who shared the panel with Bos and Taylor talking about sustainable agrotourism.

Here's a first hand report from attendee, Susan Garden with Garden Party, décor vendor for the Symposium.

"John Williams of Frog's Leap talked about organic biodynamic farming and why they even do it. It's for the health of the plant, our health, the health of the world. His description was much more magical, full of understandable science, and gave everyone in the room a new perspective on what organic really means."

"Keynote speaker, Chef Ken Frank said 'service trumps all!' Everybody knows when they are treated well and that makes all the difference in your business."

"Many of the speakers, from Ag Commissioner, Dave Whitmer to Farmer David Bos, said that guests are coming to the wine country for a learning, healthy experience instead of just to taste wines. So farm to table adventures are rapidly increasing in popularity."

"Farmer Matt Taylor informed us that there is such growth in the local food movement that he doesn't even get to distribute his produce and grains out of Healdsburg where his farm is located because of the local demand."

"The luncheon served and prepared by NVC's own Chef Barbara Alexander and her team was first rate, beautifully presented, and absolutely delicious."

We are so lucky to have a yearly resource like this to network, learn, question, and reinvigorate our businesses here in the wine country."

- Susan Garden, Garden Party

The Wine Country Hospitality Symposium was sponsored by Napa Valley College Business & Entrepreneur Center and the Small Business Development Center.

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Photos by Nicholas Giaccio

1. "There is never any yelling in my kitchen," exclaimed Owner/Executive Chef Ken Frank, La Toque Restaurant in Napa
2. Yuri Soshizaki and Ryan Neergaard from Napa Valley Wine Train demonstrate best practices with Japanese travelers: *What to do and what not to do when receiving a business card*
3. John Williams of Frog's Leap divulged a secret: he sings to his plants!