

## **Traditions and Trends in Hospitality**

*By Carolynne Gamble*

“The Napa Valley is the center of the tourism universe,” declared Napa County Agriculture Commissioner, Dave Whitmer at the recent Napa Valley College Wine Country Hospitality Symposium. His comments set the stage for the full day, packed house venue, which did indeed deliver THE latest/greatest/hottest new trends in hospitality. And it’s all good news!

### **Sustainability**

Napa Valley is a culinary Mecca and sustainability is key. It’s a value, a lifestyle, and the tourist is hungry to learn. Both Sonoma and Napa Valleys offer wine with sustainable practices and varietals for everyone. We have food from award winning chefs, and world-class uber-luxury hotels.

### **Restaurants Serving Local Grown Foods**

We promote and increase wellness and a local food system. We offer as a resource the Napa County Local Food Advisory Council to increase local agriculture and food.

### **Steward the Land with Conviction**

We thank our Land Trust/Ag Preserve for hard work and numerous battles won. We reap the rewards and promise to steward the land with conviction. And here’s the hardest task: banning harsh chemicals. We are not there 100%, but we are regulated.

### **Spreadsheets, Checklists and Breaking the Mold**

“It’s all about service, and employee service trumps all,” exclaimed keynote speaker Ken Frank, Owner/Executive Chef of LaToque Restaurant. “Make your team happen first!” Teaching a team about great service will make you thrive. It’s a carefully crafted art form.

### **Deliver an Experience**

Clif Bar Winery is 98% vineyards and 2% diverse crops, garden vegetables, chickens and turkeys. A CSA program is offered with pickup at the wine tasting room, reported Linzi Gay, General Manager of Clif Family Winery. Over 250 wine club members attend a harvest party where they revel in farm freshness – olive oil, fresh preserves, and a genuine farm experience, strategically linked with local businesses. There is a strong connection between farm education and the wine tasting room.

### **Eco-Tourism ~ A Marketing Opportunity**

The eco-tourist wants to connect with nature. Safari West practices conservation through education and has 200 hours of training for employees, reported Aphrodite Caserta, Director of Marketing. Educational tours are offered for school children all over the Bay Area.

### **Dynamic Vineyards and Farms – From Tasting Room to Gardens**

“Tourists want to learn about all about ‘green.’ They seek a new experience,” shared Dave Bos with Harvest Bos and Bos Wine. “Other than grapes, the tourists are most excited about chickens, old vines, and the farm experience. The vineyard/farm is used as a model for education. Employees are invested in organic, biodynamic farming, and the vegetables and fruit are shared by all involved in the farming.

### **Global Marketing and Big Ticket Spenders**

“Understand cultural differences, particularly practices in Asia,” cited Melodie Hilton, former manager of Napa Valley Wine Train. The Asian traveler plans carefully, spends more money and appreciates added value.

### **Key Marketing Strategies**

If you are not into mobile marketing, you are falling behind. You can buy texts and use “texting” as a marketing offer. E-marketing is highly effective, and list management is crucial. Market specifically to the tourist and travel groups AND the FIT (frequent individual traveler). Study and understand who they are. Maintain a relationship. Dare to enter the wide-open land of international social media.

### **Social, Social, Social**

“Your website must have a mobile optimized version, and no squeezing and pinching allowed,” reported Andrew Healy with 3 rock marketing. “Be on Facebook and Twitter, and know that Google and Facebook ads do work, even with low budgets.”

### **Applause Applause from Garden Party**

“John Williams of Frog's Leap talked about organic biodynamic farming and why they even do it, noted Susan Garden with Garden Party. “It’s for the health of the plant, our health, the health of the world. His description was much more magical and full of science, and gave everyone a new perspective on what organic really means. We are so lucky to have a yearly resource like this to network, learn, question, and reinvigorate our businesses here in the wine country,” added Susan.

### **Unified College/Hospitality Team**

“The Wine Country Hospitality Symposium represented a coordinated effort by many elements of Napa Valley College, said Business and Entrepreneurship Coordinator, Charlie Monahan.

“The welcome by Dr. Ron Kraft set an inviting tone. The Business and Entrepreneurship Center teamed with the Napa Small Business Development Center, the Napa Valley College Cooking School, the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program, along with Viticulture and the Wine Marketing Program to present a first class, quality event. There were expert speakers, meaningful breakouts and wonderful food and wine. The Upper Valley Campus was an ideal setting and the Napa Valley College Foundation assisted the logistics. This produced a BEST EVER Symposium, now in its 8<sup>th</sup> year!”

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*Sidebar*

**Thank You Wine Country Hospitality Symposium Sponsors**

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1. "There is never any yelling in my kitchen," said 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!