

Wine adventurers revel in county's fine wines, good food, warm hospitality

Contributed by Editor
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LAKE COUNTY & Wine Adventurer's from nearby San Francisco and as far away as Ohio and Florida converged on Lake County this past weekend, July 26 and 27, to enjoy Lake County Winery Association's fourth annual Wine Adventure.

Approximately 1,200 people participated in the event.

"That's a 14-percent increase over last year, and it doesn't include an estimated 300 to 350 designated drivers," said Matt Hughes, chairman, Lake County Winery Association (LCWA) and winemaker, Zoom Wines.

A total of 24 member wineries and tasting rooms of the LCWA opened their doors to guests at venues scattered around the county, giving visitors a chance to experience the breadth of the wines offered from Lake County's five distinct viticultural areas.

"The event is about our wines, which we're very proud of, but it's also about pairing wine with food," explained Gregory Graham, owner of Gregory Graham Winery in Lower Lake. "Each Adventure venue offered an array of foods, carefully selected to complement its wines. For example, we served a chilled gazpacho with our Sauvignon Blanc, and with our Syrah we paired lamb lollipops grilled with a Moroccan spice rub. Not only do the pairings enhance the tasting experience, but they also give our guests ideas for food and wine pairings once they get back home."

Online ticket sales were a new feature of this year's adventure. Guests had the option of purchasing their tickets in advance through the association's Web site (www.lakecountywineries.org) or day of event at any participating winery.

"We received very positive feedback from adventurers who purchased their tickets on-line," said Nicole Johnson of Cougar's Leap Winery in Kelseyville. "Each year we look for ways to make the event more efficient and enjoyable for our guests. This year we found the online ticket sales really saved time when guests checked-in at their first winery."

As in past years, the participating wineries and tasting rooms endeavored to make the event a total experience, with some wineries offering barrel tastings, winery tours and entertainment.

"We had 595 guests over the two days," said Kaj Ahlmann, owner of Six Sigma Ranch and Winery in Lower Lake. "Since our winery is in a ranch setting, a friend brought over his border collies, and while our guests were tasting wines and enjoying hors d'oeuvres, the collies herded sheep, all day, in plain view of the event site & it was quite a conversation piece."

"This is the premiere event for wine lovers looking to find undiscovered gems," said Hughes. "In one weekend 20-plus wineries pop onto the radar screen and Lake County stands side by side with the best regions of California. It is the support of our family and friends, with whom we share our passion, that makes the adventure possible, so we raise our glasses in their honor and toast to the success of future events."

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