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### “Mendocino Wines Are Golden”

#### 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Mendocino County Fair Wine Competition Awards

Friday, August 5<sup>th</sup> — The Mendocino wine community gathered this past Friday to celebrate the results of the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Mendocino County Fair Wine Competition, the longest continuous running regional wine competition in California. This year, the competition was dedicated to a very special friend and frequent competition judge, Ben Pearson, wine buyer for Bottle Barn in Santa Rosa, who passed away suddenly last month. Ben was beloved by all, for his warmth, wit, wisdom and kindness, and will be missed by all who knew him.

This year, there were 240 wine entries from 45 wineries. An unprecedented number of medals were awarded, with 60 Gold Medals and 100 Silver Medals. New this year were three new Best of Show Awards: Sparkling, Rose’ and Dessert wines in addition to Best of Show Red and White wines.

Special emcee for the evening’s awards ceremony at Mendocino College was Senator Mike McGuire with Assemblyman Jim Wood handing out the Best of Show award plaques. Senator Mike McGuire led a spirited impromptu fund-raising effort for the Mendocino College Foundation and over \$3000 was raised to support scholarships in viticulture from the generous winegrowing community in attendance.

Best of Show Awards, chosen from Best of Class winners are: Best of Show Sparkling – 2007 Scharffenberger Cellars Blanc de Blanc, Best of Show White – 2015 Handley Cellars Pinot Gris, Best of Show Rose’ – 2015 Seebass Family Wines Rose’ of Grenache, “Fantasie”, Best of Show Red – 2013 Graziano Carignane, and Best of Show Dessert – 2011 McFadden Farm Late Harvest Riesling.

Judge Deborah Park Wong noted “It’s a thrill to see a lesser-known variety shine the way the Graziano 2013 Carignane did in this year’s competition. Sourced from the Castanon ranch in the Redwood Valley AVA, winemaker Greg Graziano captured the very essence of these 60-year-old vines and framed their beauty in neutral oak.”

The largest flight of the competition was 2013 Pinot Noir. Ellen Landis was one of five judges tasked with this task: “Clearly 2013 was a remarkable vintage for Pinot Noir in Mendocino County, a region with climate ideally suited for this variety. Our flight of twenty-eight 2013 PN entries was impressive, as evidenced by our scores (~30% receiving GOLD medals). The wines displayed gorgeous depth of flavors, precise balance, elegance and plenty of length. Among those I have tasted, the 2014 and 2015 vintages are also noteworthy. Hats off to the talented Mendocino County grape growers and winemakers for crafting world class Pinot Noir.”

This year’s distinguished judges were: Randy Caparoso, Deborah Parker Wong, Mark Bowery, John Sverko, Laurie Daniel, Mike Dunne, Chris Sawyer, Ziggy Eschliman, Laura Ness, Greg Richtarek, Madeleine de Jean, Debra Del Fiorentino, Ron Washam and Ellen Landis.

Returning wine judge Laura Ness had this to say about the competition: “Every year, the quality of the wines continues to impress, and the diversity of expression never ceases to delight! Both the Best of Show White and Red were clear standouts, despite the stiff competition. Intensely juicy, peachy and mouthwatering, the Handley Pinot Gris is like drinking summer, and the Carignane's forthright spice and powerful fruit make it an all-around crowd pleaser. How fun to have both Anderson Valley and Redwood Valley so well and justly represented!”

Gold medal wines will be poured at the Mendocino County Fair in Boonville September 16-18, 2016.

A complete list of 2016 Mendocino County Fair Wine Competition Awards are available online at

<http://www.mendowine.com/events/awardsceremony.php>.

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