State of the Industry

Nearly 1,500 people packed the State of the Industry general session to hear the latest data and forecasts for the future from some of the wine industry’s top leaders.

Christy Canterbury of Smith & Wollensky Restaurant Group, New York, predicted that the United States is set to become the number one consumer of wine in the next 12 – 18 months, while Nat DiBuduo of Allied Grape Growers said, “We’re in a surplus position in the market right now. For market balance, we need to be below average production for the next two years or increase consumer demand.”

Bill Turrentine of Turrentine Brokerage told the audience, “Global competition puts pressure on California pricing. As we come into better times, we need to tweak the price/quality relationship to keep competitive globally.”

Jon Fredrikson of Gomberg, Fredrikson & Associates presented a very optimistic view of the wine market’s performance, citing increases in sales virtually across the board, with significant gains for domestic wines despite foreign competition.

Fredrikson also unveiled his pick for Winery of the Year as Kendall-Jackson. He based his selection largely on the dramatic 650,000-case increase in sales of the winery’s Vintner’s Reserve Chardonnay. This was achieved in spite of raising the price to reflect their belief in its higher quality.

Record Breaking Crowds

A record-breaking 10,400 wine and grape industry professionals filled the Sacramento Convention Center for the 13th annual Unified Wine & Grape Symposium.

“Even though we had the biggest crowd in our 13-year history, the event was close to seamless. We had many positive comments on our program and overall event experiences,” said American Society for Enology and Viticulture Executive Director Lyndie Boulton, whose organization is a co-host of the Unified Symposium.

“Session attendees heard good news on many fronts, while speakers also reminded them that global competition continues to put pressure on the American wine industry,” said Karen Ross, president of the California Association of Winegrape Growers, which also co-hosts the Unified Symposium. “Altogether, the program sessions covered a wide range of issues key to the continued success of the American wine community. Fortunately, there were record numbers listening.”

In 2008, the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium will again be held at the Sacramento Convention Center, January 29-31. For additional information, go to www.unifiedsymposium.org.
Many of the PowerPoint presentations presented by the program speakers are available on the Unified Symposium Web site at www.unifiedsymposium.com.

“We make every effort to ensure that as much information as possible is available to people in the industry so that they have the tools they need to make the correct decisions in 2007,” said Dan Howard of the ASEV.

However, Howard points out that not all the presentations will be online. “Some of the presentations include proprietary or preliminary information, and the speakers, while willing to present to a live audience, are not able to have this information posted online,” said Howard.

Audio versions of all the sessions that are available for purchase online at www.unifiedsymposium.org.

Have a topic for next year’s Unified Symposium program? Think you are able to provide what it takes to be on the program committee? If you answered “Yes” to either question, contact Camron King at camron@cawg.org. King will pass your topic along to the organizers or place your name on the list as a possible committee member.

We’d like to extend one final thanks to this year’s Diamond and Headquarters Hotel Room Keycard Sponsor, Hewlett-Packard, Inc., and our Silver Sponsors, ETS Laboratories and Bank of the West. The Unified Symposium would also like to thank WineJobs.com for sponsoring Tuesday’s General Session; Wine Business Monthly for sponsoring Wednesday’s General Session; and Wines & Vines for sponsoring Thursday’s General Session.